

THE ROAD TO BAKER STREET

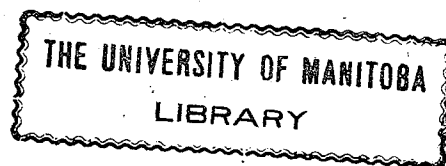
A STUDY OF THE GROWTH OF THE DETECTIVE ELEMENT IN ENGLISH FICTION

FROM

THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO TO 221-B BAKER STREET

by

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**"WITHIN
THIS
ANFUL
VOLUME
LIES
THE
MYSTERY
OF
MYSTERIES!"**

**Sir Walter Scott,
"The Monastery", Chapter XII.
(with apologies)**

PREFACE

From the outset, the problem of an adequate title for a thesis of this scope presented itself. The present title; "A Study of the Growth of the Detective Element in English Fiction from 'THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO' to '221-B. BAKER STREET'," has been chosen as the one most likely to convey at a glance the content of the work in question. The intention of the writer is to present, as far as is possible, the historical background in English literature of such present day "thrillers" as "The Roman Hat Mystery",¹ and "Murder in the Calais Coach".²

There have been stories of mystery and detection from the beginning of time; "And the Lord said unto Cain, 'where is Abel thy brother?' And he said, 'I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?'"³ So began the first mystery story, and down through the ages so many authors have applied themselves to this type of literature that their numbers are legion.

With this in mind, the writer is forced to be quite dogmatic as far as the subject matter of this thesis is concerned. Despite the fact that the tale of terror enjoyed great vogue in Germany,⁴ and the beginnings of

¹ "The Roman Hat Mystery" 1929, by Ellery Queen.

² "Murder in the Calais Coach" 1934, by Agatha Christie.

³ Genesis; 5, 9.

⁴ "Horrid Mysteries" by Marquis Grosse 1796, and the works of E.T.A. Hoffmann, were particularly popular.

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the modern detective novel are to be found in the "Memoirs" of Monsieur Vidocq,¹ and in the novels of Monsieur Gaboriou,² the present work undertakes to deal only with novels in the English language, principally to limit the extent of the survey, and also to avoid the use of translations and the attendant dangers of misconception. Horace Walpole's "Castle of Otranto" has been chosen as a convenient starting point, because it is the first Gothic novel of any importance in the English language. From there, the intention is to trace the history of Gothic Romance to its very end in the works of Charles Maturin, 1820; the belief being that these so called novels of terror aroused much the same emotions in the hearts of their readers as do the works of Sax Rohmer³ or Edgar Wallace⁴ in our own time.

Naturally enough, there could be no "detective" novels until there were detectives, so, with the advent of Sir Robert Peel's "Metropolitan Police Force"⁵ in 1829, we may expect our first detective to appear in English

¹ Francois Eugene Vidocq (1775-1857). Chief of the detective department of the Paris police. The "Memoirs" were published in 1828 in his name but it is doubtful whether Vidocq wrote any of them.

² Emile Gaboriou (1833-1873). An extremely prolific French author. "L'Affaire Lerouge" 1866, ensured his fame. His detective was a Monsieur Lecoq.

³ Sax Rohmer (1883-) Creator of the Insidious Chinese, Doctor Fu Manchu.

⁴ Edgar Wallace (1875-1932). Author of the celebrated play "The Ringer," and an extremely prolific mystery writer.

⁵ Popularly known as "Peelers" or "Robbies".

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1

literature. Ten years later Monsieur Dupin stalks the scene, and the English detective novel is born.

Generally speaking, the Gothic Romances were the spawning ground of at least three types of modern "mystery" stories, all of which appeared in profusion soon after Gothicism was dead; ghost stories, mystery stories, and riddle literature. It is with the latter branch that we are immediately concerned. Riddle literature poses a problem for the reader, a problem which must be solved before the story is completed. If the riddle is a good one, as it should be, the average reader will be unable to solve it, so the author must present the solution either in his own person or through the medium of some character in the story. "Voilà!" the detective is born.

It is with some misgivings that the other two outgrowths of Gothic literature are passed by. Sheer weight of material is responsible for this. In the case of the detective story, it is possible to pick a fairly clear path through literature in following its development. Until 1890, first-rate writers in this field were few in numbers, while with ghost and mystery stories the opposite is true. From 1764 to the present day there have been thousands of excellent stories written in these two fields, most of them now lost for ever. To trace even a small portion of them would require years of research in some of the oldest libraries in the world, and any attempt at classification would be doomed to failure.

1
Edgar Allan Poe's detective in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue."

This thesis, then, will fall into two distinct sections, each with its own special introduction. The first section ^{will} ~~to~~ be known as "The Gothic Period", the second entitled "The Detective Story". The first section will contain a critical study of the six most important Gothic novels, all of which, with one unfortunate exception, ¹ ₂ are now almost completely forgotten. The second section will take up the history of the actual detective novel and trace its development from Monsieur Dupin to Sherlock Holmes. It is hoped that the whole will present the reader with an interesting background upon which to base his "conclusions" as he pits his wits against those of Hercule Poirot, Philo Vance, Father Brown or Ellery Queen.

J. M. C.

1

- "The Castle of Otranto" 1764, by Horace Walpole.
- "The Old English Baron" 1777, by Clara Reeve.
- "The Mysteries of Udolpho" 1794, by Anne Radcliffe.
- "The Monk" 1795, by M. G. Lewis.
- "Frankenstein" 1818, by Mary Shelley.
- "Melmoth the Wanderer" 1820, by Charles Maturin.

2

The exception is "Frankenstein." "Unfortunate" because of the misconception of Mrs. Shelley's moving story that has been presented and fostered by Hollywood.

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SECTION I

THE GOTHIC PERIOD

THE GOTHIC PERIOD

INTRODUCTION

It has long been the fashion among writers and critics to regard the Gothic revival in English literature of the latter part of the eighteenth century as a reaction from the neo-classicism of the preceding period; a desire to escape from the neatly-penned couplets of Alexander Pope into the more romantic field of the mysterious and the imaginative. The truth of this none will deny; but it is not the whole truth, for Romanticism was not only a reaction from neo-classicism, it was also a logical outgrowth of the neo-classical period.

From this it will be surmised that Classicism did not reign supreme in the years between 1700 and 1770. Alongside of the intense classicism of the period there existed an element known as sentiment; an element which was to aid materially in the overthrow of neo-classicism and in the ascension of romanticism.

It cannot truthfully be said that all literature of this neo-classical period was essentially pure. Pope was the classical dictator of the age, and along with his may be mentioned the equally important names of Swift, Addison, and Johnson. But contemporary with these masters of classical prose and verse, were others of scarcely less import; Steele, Collins, Gray, Defoe, Richardson, Goldsmith, and Sterne. These men, with one notable exception, were "sentimentalists", some more than others, but each one in his own way contributed to the eventual rise of romanticism.

¹

Defoe was a realist rather than a sentimentalist.

Steele, with his sentimental comedies and periodical essays in the "Tatler" and the "Spectator", was filling a need of the time. His public, both in the theatre and in the coffeehouses, was predominately middle class and they desired stories dealing with their everyday lives, yet capable of stirring their emotions to their very depths. This early theatrical work of Steele was soon to be surpassed by such masters as Goldsmith and Sheridan.

With Collins and Gray, sentiment invaded the poetic field. In language and style these men were still very much under the classical influence, but the sentimental content in their verse is too obvious to be overlooked, and to Gray especially goes added importance because of his intimate friendship with, and great influence on, the procreator in England of the Gothic novel of terror, Horace Walpole.

As we move into the field of the novel, the immense popularity¹ of Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" bears mute testimony to the desire of the reading public for tales of adventure; while with Richardson, Goldsmith, and Sterne, we find an increasing emphasis on the emotions. Richardson's² novels throw light upon the secrets of conscience, the working of the passions, and the struggle of instincts. Nineteen years later, Goldsmith

¹ There were six editions in three years. "Robinson Crusoe" was published in 1719, by 1744 it had been translated into five languages.

² "Pamela" published 1740; "Clarissa" published 1747; "Sir Charles Grandison" published 1753.

renewed the inspiration of sentiment¹ and brought it nearer to the average human being, at the same time removing the Puritanical strain so common in Richardson. With Sterne the sentimental novel reached the extreme² limit of its principle. Here we have emotion purely for the sake of emotion.

However, from the above it must not be assumed that the age was becoming romantically or even sentimentally inclined. The date is 1760,³ and Samuel Johnson is the acknowledged dean of literature, neo-classicism is still very much alive. Yet there is growing up a desire for emotional literature, a desire fostered by Richardson and Sterne, and unable to find emotional stimulus in the dry reasoning of the age of Johnson, both the writers and the reading public naturally turned to the past. As Louis Cazamian so aptly puts it:

The relics of the past were examined and explained, the cult of memory became a hallowed art. The Middle Ages lived again as a period of faith or picturesqueness, of simplicity, of pathos, of all that lacked in a century of rational lucidity, at the heart of which was growing the tedium and even the disgust of itself.⁴

It was but a short jump from "A Sentimental Journey" of Laurence Sterne to the early romantic "Castle of Otranto" of Horace Walpole.

¹ In "The Vicar of Wakefield" published 1766.

² "Tristram Shandy" 1760-1767; "A Sentimental Journey" 1768.

³ The first volumes of "Tristram Shandy" were published in this year.

⁴ A History of English Literature, Legouis and Cazamian, p. 912.

CHAPTER I

HORACE WALPOLE AND "THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO"

"I am going to build a little Gothic Castle at Strawberry Hill"¹

The English novel of terror, it is generally conceded, originated with Horace Walpole's literary curiosity of 1764, "The Castle of Otranto." The story of how Walpole came to write this tale of mystery has been so often quoted it can scarcely be omitted here. He revealed the source himself in a letter to the Reverend William Cole:

Shall I even confess to you, what was the origin of this romance! I waked one morning in the beginning of last June, from a dream, of which, all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle, ... and that on the uppermost banister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour.²

To any person familiar with the events of Walpole's life such a dream is not surprising. "A very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story,"³ Walpole himself declared. A delicate youth, Horace Walpole had been unable and unwilling to indulge in the rough and tumble life of the eighteenth century Universities; and, together with his friend Thomas Gray, he had spent his leisure reading the plays of Dryden, and a great amount of romantic and pastoral poetry. Leaving Cambridge in 1739, Gray and Walpole took the Grand Tour, the latter remaining abroad until September of 1741.⁴ In June of 1747, Walpole declared to Sir Horace Mann that he had purchased "a little newfarm at

¹

Horace Walpole in a letter to Sir Horace Mann, January 10, 1750. In Selected Letters of Horace Walpole (Everyman, 1926), p. 139.

^{2 & 3}

March 9, 1765. Ibid., p. 165.

⁴

The two friends quarrelled in April of 1741 and separated, Walpole returning home alone. The exact cause of their sudden separation remains obscure.

Strawberry Hill;¹" and so, as later transpired, the first step was taken towards the evolution of the Gothic romance in England.

Walpole's little house on Strawberry Hill was soon filled with the curios and bric-a-brac he had picked up on his travels. In Italy particularly, he had gained a critical knowledge of classical sculpture and architecture, and by the time he was settled at Strawberry Hill, Walpole found his personal interests in art and architecture moving very decidedly towards mediaevalism; by 1750 he was declaring his intention of building a little Gothic Castle at Strawberry Hill.²

Walpole loved "to gaze on Gothic toys through Gothic glass,"³ and the villa at Strawberry Hill under his hand gradually swelled into a feudal castle as he added turrets, towers, galleries, and corridors, appropriately furnished with carved panels, illuminated windows, shields, lances, and all the panoply of chivalry. Walpole's literary interest supported his architectural interests, and his mind was soon stored with information accumulated by his researches into the antiquities of the middle ages. It is little wonder that his rest was disturbed by the dream related above, inspired as he was by his readings and the romantic cast of his Strawberry Hill residence.

Walpole's letter continues:

In the evening I sat down and began to write, without knowing in the

1

Quoted in Horace Walpole, A Memoir by Austin Dobson. (Oxford, 1927) p. 121.

2

Cf. ante., footnote #1.

3

The Lives of the Novelists by Sir Walter Scott (Everyman, 1910), p. 191. Scott is quoting a contemporary satirist.

least what I intended to say or relate. The work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it. Add, that I was very glad to think of anything rather than politics. In short, I was so engrossed with my tale, which I completed in less than two months, that one evening I wrote from the time I had drank my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hands and fingers were so weary, that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, You will laugh at my earnestness, but if I have amused you by retracing with any fidelity the manners of ancient days I am content,¹

"The Castle of Otranto" was first published in 1764 as a translation by one William Marshall from the Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, but the deception was not particularly successful, and Walpole revealed the author's true identity in the second edition. Let us take a closer look at this remarkable book. The plot is rather tedious and involved but our present purpose necessitates a rather lengthy outline.

As the story opens, Manfred, Prince of Otranto, is anxious to marry his young son Conrad to a Lady Isabella, daughter of the Marquis Vicenza. The tenants and subjects of the prince are firm in their belief that an ancient prophecy; "The Castle and the Lordship of Otranto shall pass from the present family whenever the real owner shall be grown too large to inhabit it."², is the reason for this early and hurried marriage. Before the ceremony, however, an astonishing event occurs: Conrad is dashed to pieces and almost buried under an enormous helmet topped with black feathers which suddenly descends in the courtyard. A young peasant standing nearby remarks that the gigantic helmet resembles that depicted on the statue of Alfonso the Good, one of their former

¹ Walpole's Letters loc. cit.

² "The Castle of Otranto" edited by Caroline Spurgeon. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930), p. 2.

princes. Manfred, enraged, orders him imprisoned in the helmet; and his rage increases when he learns the helmet from Alphonso's tomb is indeed missing. Manfred sends for Isabella, and declares that he desires another son to succeed him; and, as Hippolita (his present wife) cannot give him that son, he wishes to marry her (Isabella). The Lady Isabella shrinks from this proposal, and as Manfred pursues her, the plumes on the helmet outside wave back and forth tempestuously, accompanied by a hollow rustling sound. A portrait of his grandfather utters a deep sigh, heaves its breast, quits its panel, and descends on the floor with a grave and melancholy air.¹ The vision signals Manfred to follow, which he does until he is stopped by a locked door. Meanwhile, Isabella, in an attempt to conceal herself from Manfred, hurries towards the altar of the Church of St. Nicholas by way of a subterranean passage. She encounters a stranger who helps her locate a trap-door leading to a passageway to the Church. She enters, but before the stranger can follow, the trap-door falls shut, and Manfred appears, to find the stranger to be the youth supposedly imprisoned in the helmet. (The helmet, in falling, had broken into the passageway permitting him to escape). While Manfred and the youth stand arguing, two servants arrive to report a fearful incident; they have seen a giant in a chamber of the castle, a giant large enough to fit the enormous helmet in the courtyard.

To divert Manfred's ardour from Isabella, the priest of St. Nicholas, Father Jerome very unwisely encourages Manfred's jealous

¹
Ibid., P. 15.

suspicious of the young peasant, whom Manfred now orders to be executed. While acting as confessor, Father Jerome discovers the doomed youth is his long lost son Theodore. It is now revealed that before he took holy orders, Father Jerome had been a Sicilian noble, the Count of Falconara. Manfred offers him his son's life as a bribe for his approval of the new marriage -- and the plumes on the giant helmet again signify their disapproval. At this point a challenger arrives, The Knight of the Gigantic Saber, attended by a hundred men bearing an immense sword.

In the name of his lord, Frederic, Marquis of Vicenza, he demands the Lady Isabella, daughter of that prince, whom thou (Manfred) hast basely and traitorously got into thy power, by bribing her false guardians during his absence; and he requires thee to resign the principality of Otranto which thou hast usurped from the said Lord Frederic, the nearest of blood to the last rightful Lord, Alfonso the good.¹

In the interim, Matilda (Manfred's daughter) has released Theodore, who flees to a cavern outside of the castle where he encounters Isabella who has also escaped. They are discovered by a knight whom they believe to be a follower of Manfred, and it is not until Theodore has severely wounded him that his true identity is uncovered; he is The Knight of the Gigantic Saber, and also Isabella's father, the Marquis of Vicenza. The Marquis reveals how, in Palestine, he had encountered a dying hermit, in digging whose grave he had unearthed the gigantic sword; on the blade were engraved these lines:

Where'er the casque that suits this sword is found
 With perils is thy daughter compassed round;
 Alfonso's blood alone can save the maid
 And quiet a long restless prince's shade.²

1

Ibid., p. 72-73.

2

Ibid., p. 106.

The Marquis' wounds are not serious, however, and all return to the castle.

Meanwhile, a love triangle has arisen. Both damsels, Matilda and Isabella, are now in love with Theodore, but each is willing to surrender him to the other. Just as Isabella cedes¹ the beloved object to her friend, Hippolita arrives with the curious suggestion that Matilda should marry the Marquis Frederic. The two young ladies are appalled, and are forced to tell Hippolita of Manfred's plan to divorce her and marry Isabella. Hippolita leaves to pray for guidance. Following his wife to the Church, Manfred turns pale as he sees three drops of blood fall from the carved nose of Alfonso the Good. And he is further startled by the news that a gigantic hand in armour has been seen on the uppermost bannister of the great stairs. Frederic is the next to receive a visitant. He goes to Hippolita's room to speak with her, and he is suddenly confronted by a skeleton wrapped in a hermit's cowl, the ghost of the old man he had met in Palestine. This spectre warns him² "to forget Matilda."

Meanwhile, Manfred encounters Matilda and Theodore in the hallway whispering about their proposed marriage. He believes it to be Isabella and Theodore, and, in a jealous rage, stabs her to death. When he discovers his mistake Manfred's remorse knows no bounds, and he has to be

¹
Ibid., p. 117.

²
Ibid., p. 145.

restrained from suicide. Suddenly the gigantic form of Alfonso the Good
 arises from the cracking walls of the castle, the legend has been fulfilled.¹
 The real owner of Otranto has grown too large to inhabit the castle, and
 the ownership must now change hands. "Behold in Theodore the true heir of
 Alfonso!"² cries the gigantic figure, and such, indeed, is subsequently
 proven to be the case.

In the face of this proof of ownership, Manfred signs his abdication
 of the principality, and he and Hippolita take on the habit of religion
 in the neighboring convents. "At present, Theodore's grief over the loss
 of Matilda was too fresh to admit the thought of another love; and it
 was not until after frequent discourses with Isabella that he was per-
 suaded he could know no happiness but in the society of one with whom he
 could forever indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his
 soul."³

So ends the story of "The Castle of Otranto". To our sophisticat-
 ed minds there is little of the terrifying here, yet, on the thirtieth
 of December, 1764, Walpole received the following commentary from Gray:

I have received 'The Castle of Otranto', and return you my thanks
 for it. It engages our attention here (Cambridge), makes some of
 us cry a little; and all, in general, afraid to go to bed o'nights.⁴

An admirable account of how "Otranto" was composed, and how it was

¹
Cf. ante., p. 3.
²
 Walpole, op. cit., p. 155.
³
Ibid., pp. 158-9.
⁴
 Scott's Lives, op. cit., p. 193.

received by the public, is given by Horace Walpole himself in the following passage, quoted by Sir Walter Scott as being a translation, in part, of a letter by the author to his friend Madame Deffand:

So they have translated my 'Castle of Otranto', probably in ridicule of the author. So be it; -- however, I beg you will let their rail-lery pass in silence. Let the critics have their own way; they give me no uneasiness. I have not written the book for the present age, which will endure nothing but cold common sense. I confess to you my dear friend ... that this is the only one of my works with which I am myself pleased; I have given reins to my imagination till I became on fire with the visions and feelings which it excited. I have composed it in defiance of rules, of critics, and of philosophers; and it seems to me just so much better for that reason. I am even persuaded, that some time hereafter, when taste shall resume the place which philosophy now occupies, my poor 'Castle' will find admirers; we have actually a few among us already, for I am just publishing the third edition.¹

Fluently and lucidly written, 'The Castle of Otranto' set a fashion in literature, and itself enjoyed considerable success. However, it is doubtful if many readers agreed with Sir Walter Scott when he wrote in 1821, "The Castle of Otranto' is one of the standard works of our lighter literature."² Walpole had suffered the fate of most originators; his genius had been dwarfed by the genius of those who followed him.

Walpole's preface to the second edition is interesting. In it, besides apologising for deceiving the public in the first edition, he explains the grounds on which he composed the novel. He declares it was "an attempt to blend the two kinds of Romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability: in the latter nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success."³

¹
Ibid., p. 194.

²
Loc. cit.

³
"The Castle of Otranto". pp. lv-lvi.

Walpole has "dammed up the great resources of the fancy,"¹ and endeavored to adhere to common life. His plan, briefly, was this; to allow the powers of fancy to operate enough to create interesting situations, but to govern the actions of his characters by the rules of probability.

If such was Walpole's design, he failed to accomplish it. He desired to blend the two kinds of Romance, the ancient and the modern; both are present, but not blended. The setting is mediaeval, but the persons living in Otranto are eighteenth century. The heroines speak the same language as Clarissa Harlowe or Sophia Western, and exhibit the same emotions. Walpole was totally unable to create character, his figures are reduced to the simplest terms. The wicked, ambitious baron, the valiant youth, the chaste maidens; everywhere in their words we find traces of eighteenth century sentiment. For example, just after Matilda has spoken to the young peasant from her window, the following ensues:

'I am persuaded," said she to Bianca, 'that whatever be the cause of Isabella's flight, it had no unworthy motive. If this stranger was necessary to it, she must be satisfied of his fidelity and worth. I observed, did not you, Bianca, that his words were tinged with an uncommon infusion of piety. It was no ruffian's speech, his phrases were becoming a man of gentle birth.'²

The blending of Gothic scenery and supernatural events with the beaux sentiments of his own day was hardly the most successful feature of Walpole's novel.

"In the productions of romantic story," continues Walpole in the second preface, "an improbable event never fails to be attended by absurd

1
Ibid., p. lvi.

2
Ibid., pp. 48-9.

dialogue. The actors seem to lose their senses the moment the laws of nature have lost their tone.¹ In his attempt to govern the actions of his characters by the rules of probability, Walpole bent over backwards. His characters are too composed when confronted with mysterious events. A gigantic helmet has suddenly crashed down to earth in the courtyard of Otranto and killed Manfred's dearest child, yet his brain apparently begins to work along the insidious lines that are later revealed, for his first words are, "Take care of the Lady Isabella."² Again, in the castle a picture of his grandfather sighs, heaves its breast, and descends from its frame to the floor; "Do I dream?" asks Manfred, "or are the devils themselves in league against me?"³ Walpole declared that the great master of nature, Shakespeare, was the model he copied; but compare the above with Macbeth's horrified, "Thou canst not say I did it; never shake thy gory locks at me,"⁴ as he perceives the ghost of Banquo.⁵ Compare too, the reluctance of Horatio and Marcellus to allow Hamlet to follow the ghost of his father, with Manfred's ready compliance: "Lead on! I will follow thee to the gulf of perdition."⁶ These words, directed to a spectre, are either the words of a very brave man; or the words of a writer who is too

¹ Ibid., preface. plvi-lvii.

² Ibid., p. 5.

³ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴ Macbeth, iii, v.

⁵ True, Macbeth is seeing the ghost of a man he knows to be murdered, but none will disagree that the sight of a picture suddenly coming to life should evoke more surprise than - "Do I dream?"

⁶ "The Castle of Otranto", p. 16.

anxious to have his characters appear normal under any circumstances.

Walpole was undeniably proud of his portrayal of the domestics.

He mentions them particularly in both of his prefaces, pointing out that his rule was nature.

However grave, important, or even melancholy, the sensations of princes and heroes may be, they do not stamp the same affections on their domestics; ... The very impatience which a reader feels, while delayed by the coarse pleasantries of vulgar actors from arriving at the knowledge of the important catastrophe he expects, perhaps heightens, certainly proves that he has been artfully interested in the depending event Let me ask if the tragedies of 'Hamlet' and 'Julius Caesar' would not lose a considerable share of their spirit and wonderful beauties, if the humour of the grave diggers, the fooleries of Polonius, and the glumy jests of the Roman citizens, were omitted, or vested in heroics?¹

Walpole's reasoning here is sound enough, but what he did not realize was that comic relief is not necessary in his story. The action is not grand enough, and the relief is not particularly comical. Bianca, Matilda's personal maid, is the principal servant, and, while her long rambling explanations delay the story as Walpole desired, it can hardly be said that she offers comic relief.

No discussion of "The Castle of Otranto" would be complete without some reference to the opinions of Sir Walter Scott. Scott declares that Walpole's purpose was, "to draw such a picture of domestic life and manners during the feudal times as might actually have existed."² That Walpole failed in this has already been shown. However, Scott goes on:

It seems to have been Walpole's object to attain by the minute accuracy of a fable, sketched with singular attention to the costume of the period in which the scene was laid, that same association which might

¹ Ibid., preface, pp. lvii-lviii.

² Scott's Lives, p. 197.

prepare his reader's mind for the reception of prodigies congenial to the creed and feeling of the actors. His feudal tyrant, his distressed damsel, his resigned yet dignified Churchman, the castle itself, with its feudal arrangements of dungeons, trap-doors, crateries, and galleries, the incidents of the trial, the chivalrous procession, and the combat, in short, the scene, the performers and action form the accompaniments of his spectres and his miracles.¹

In other words, Sir Walter Scott was greatly impressed by Walpole's use of atmosphere to heighten the effect of his ghosts and spectres. The opinion of the present writer is that it is in this respect more than any other that one can see Walpole as an early and immature writer of the Gothic romance. It is not until one has read the works of Mrs. Anne Radcliffe (to be discussed shortly), that the full realisation bursts upon the reader of just how puny Walpole's attempts at atmosphere really are. It must be remembered that Sir Walter Scott is forced, by his great debt to Walpole as the creator of the genre which was to bring him fame, to act as a kind of apologist, for in truth Walpole creates almost no atmosphere at all. Mr. Henry A. Beers assures us that "Walpole's mediaevalism was very thin, and that even his description of the feudal cavalcade entering the castle with the great sword is, incorrect and poor in detail."²

3

Walpole's miraculous incidents are of great importance in the story, but they are surprising in that the reader does not expect them. There is no atmospheric forewarning of incredible things to come. Spectres

¹
Ibid., pp. 197-8.

²
A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century, by Henry A. Beers. (New York, Henry Holt and Co. 1910), p. 240.

³
The importance of these miraculous incidents will be discussed in a later chapter.

ghosts, and mysterious happenings suddenly appear, and just as suddenly are forgotten as the story moves forward. True, Walpole has his dungeons, galleries, secret passages, and trap-doors, but they are just dungeons, galleries, secret passages, and trap-doors. The author did not possess the magic use of words to make these things live in our imaginations. This is due entirely to his simple, unembellished style of writing, especially his scant use of descriptive words. "Oh! transport! Here is the trap-door!" says Isabella, "the door is raised, and beneath appeared some stone steps descending into a vault totally dark."¹ Surely this is a matter-of-fact way of describing an incident that could be rendered most exciting. Then, having placed Isabella safely in the totally dark passageway, Walpole leaves her to find her own way to the Church, returning only when she has arrived. What Mrs. Radcliffe would have done to such a journey will be seen shortly. However, although this reveals Walpole as an immature workman, it does not detract in any way from the important place that is rightfully his, for it was he who gave such future writers as Mrs. Radcliffe, M. G. Lewis, and even Sir Walter Scott, the instruments with which to work.

Gray's statement that "The Castle of Otranto" made all in general afraid to go to bed o' nights is difficult to account for. Even when reviewed from an eighteenth century viewpoint, it is extravagant. But it must be remembered that Gray, besides being a very good friend and ardent admirer of Walpole, was an extremely impressionable man; "a bit of an old

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Walpole, "Castle of Otranto", p. 22.

woman"¹ is a good description of him. What he would have suffered had he read, "The Mysteries of Udolpho" or "The Monk", is interesting to speculate.

Most critics seem to agree with H. A. Beers that, "the only thing tolerable about the book is its brevity and a certain rapidity in the action."² This rapidity of action is indeed the saving grace; it prevents tediousness, and allows the book to be read even today without a too painful effort. Yet one must not underestimate the importance of this first Gothic novel, we must realize above all that it was a bold and amazingly successful experiment in an absolutely untried medium. To the readers of the day it was a story of terror and wonderment which stirred their emotions in a way that Sterne and Richardson never had. Perhaps a few sensitive persons like Gray were even afraid to go to bed o' nights. Walpole had driven the furrows of the Gothic novel in England, and imitations followed thick and fast, the first one of any great importance being "The Old English Baron" by Clara Reeve.

¹

I am indebted to Mr. G. L. Brodersen for this admirable description of Gray.

²

Beers, op. cit., p. 241.

CHAPTER II

CLARA REEVE AND "THE OLD ENGLISH BARON"

The business of Romance is to excite the attention;
and direct it to some useful, or at least innocent,
end.¹

Of all the criticism directed at "The Castle of Otranto", perhaps the most profitable was that of Clara Reeve; profitable, because her criticism gave to English Literature a second Gothic novel; a novel quite worthy of a place beside the original creation of Horace Walpole.

Today, nothing is known of the life of Clara Reeve outside of the few facts Sir Walter Scott was able to obtain and record in 1827, four years after her death. She seems to have led a quiet and scholarly existence. "The Old English Baron", originally entitled "The Champion of Virtue, a Gothic Story", was Miss Reeve's second publishing venture, and its success encouraged her to produce numerous other writings, all of which are now completely forgotten. It is solely on account of "The Old English Baron" that her name survives at all.

"The story," declares Miss Reeve in her preface, "is the literary offspring of 'The Castle of Otranto', written upon the same plan, with a

1

"The Old English Baron, A Gothic Story" by Clara Reeve, (London: J. C. Nimmo and Bain, 1883), preface, p. 12.

2

In his Lives of the Novelists. Clara Reeve, pp. 204-205.

3

The First was an English Translation of Barclay's "Argenis" (Latin), published in 1772, under the title of "The Phoenix".

4

There were eight editions by 1800.

with a design to unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient Romance and the modern novel, at the same time ... it is distinguished by the appellation of a Gothic story, being a picture of Gothic times and manners.¹

From this, it is evident that Miss Reeve's objective was much the same as that of Horace Walpole, and as one soon discovers, her results were similarly much the same. "The Old English Baron" is a novel of the seventeenth century, rather than of the Gothic era. The principal characters are more like squires and peasants of the reign of Charles II, while the incidents described, with the possible exception of a mediaeval combat, could have occurred in almost any age. In this connection, we find Sir Walter Scott saying of Clara Reeve what he would not say of her predecessor:

He that would please the modern world, yet present the exact impression of a tale of the middle ages, will repeatedly find that he will be obliged in spite of his utmost exertions, to sacrifice the last to the first object, and eternally expose himself to the just censure of the rigid antiquary, because he must, to interest the readers of the present time, invest his characters with language and sentiments unknown to the period assigned to his story.²

Yet, of the two novels, "The Castle of Otranto" is decidedly the more mediaeval. Walpole's scant use of atmosphere has already been deprecated. With Clara Reeve, atmosphere is virtually non-existent.

The story opens in the presence of a worthy knight, Sir Philip Harclay, who, after thirty years of travel and warlike service on the

¹ Reeve. op. cit., p. 11.

² Scott, op. cit., p. 209.

Continent, has returned to England to lead a quiet and peaceful life. His first wish is to visit an old friend, Lord Lovel, tenant of the Castle Lovel in the west of England, but he is doomed to disappointment, as he is informed by the country folk that the former owner was killed in battle twenty-eight years before. The present tenant of the Castle is the Baron Fitz-Owen, brother-in-law of the heir of the Castle, one, Sir Walter, Lord Lovel, now resident in Northumberland.

Passing the night in the cottage of a friendly peasant, Sir Philip has a strange and incoherent dream, in which his old friend Lord Lovel leads him by the hand to witness preparations for a combat in lists, and then to behold a suit of armour stained with blood. As he journeys to the Castle the next morning, Sir Philip learns from his guide that the Baron is a very worthy gentleman, the father of two sons and a daughter, and the guardian and protector of a nephew, Richard Wenlock, and a fine youth of peasant blood, one, Edmund Twyford. Sir Philip encounters the four young men at play, and is greatly impressed by the appearance and bearing of young Twyford, so much so, that later, in conversation with the Baron, he asks to take Edmund into his own family. However, the youth feels too much indebted to Fitz-Owen to leave his service. He thanks Sir Philip for his generous offer, and accepts his promise of friendship and protection should he ever require it. Sir Philip then takes his leave.

(Here follows an interval of four years, as by the manuscript; and this omission seems intended by the writer. What follows is in a different hand, and

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the character is more modern.)

When the story resumes, it appears that the eldest son of Fitz-Owen, Robert, influenced by his two cousins, Richard Wenlock and John Markham, has joined them in their animosity towards Edmund. Only William, the younger Fitz-Owen, remains friendly. Young Wenlock's hatred for Edmund is confirmed and strengthened by jealousy, as he fancies the Lady Emma (Fitz-Owen's daughter) casts an eye of preference on Edmund instead of himself. The three young men manage to conceal their hatred from the Baron, and try many contrivances intended to bring shame and disgrace on Edmund; but all fail, and only bring increased honor to young Twyford.

While the Baron loves Edmund almost as a son, the incessant false reports of his faithlessness and vanity brought by the three trouble-makers soon produce a certain coolness between the master and the youth. The breaking point is soon reached. It so happens that one day the preceptor of the young men, Father Oswald, in response to a query from Edmund, relates a mysterious story connected with the east wing of the castle. The story is to the effect that this particular part of the castle is said to be haunted by the ghost of the late Lord Lovel. The ghost is supposed to have appeared to his widow and declared he had been murdered. Soon after, Lady Lovel died, and the brother of the deceased

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"The Old English Baron" p. 38. This is an interesting point, for although there is nothing to indicate it in the Nimmo and Bain text to hand, Mr. H. A. Beers declares, "Like Walpole, Clara Reeve, professed to be simply the editor of the story, which she said that she had transcribed or translated from a manuscript in the Old English language. (Beers, op. cit. p. 243.) This would indicate that the interval quoted above, is of Miss Reeve's design. Unfortunately, there is no other edition available for comparison. In any case, Nimmo and Bain would hardly be publishing from Miss Reeve's manuscript.

Lord, Sir Walter Lovel, became the new owner of Lovel Castle. Following many reports that the Castle was haunted, the new Lord Lovel sold the Castle to the present owner. Apparently Oswald's story was overheard, for a few days later, Edmund is surprised to find his enemies accusing him of prying into family affairs. However, when the Baron hears the true version of the story from Oswald, and again from Edmund, he imposes only a mild form of punishment; requesting Edmund to spend three nights in the apartment in question, to the purpose of discovering if it is really haunted.

During the first night Edmund has a strange dream. A warrior dressed in complete armour, and a beautiful young woman stand by his bed. The man asks, "Is this our child?" and the woman replies, "It is, and the hour approaches that he shall be known for such."¹ Later in the same dream Edmund visits a stately feast at which he presides and hears himself congratulated as a husband and a father, his friend William at his side.

On the second night, Edmund asks Father Oswald and Joseph Howel, an old servant, to help him search the apartment, but, before they begin, Joseph relates a startling story. It appears that soon after Lord Lovel's death, his brother Sir Walter, made advances to the grieving widow, who was also an expectant mother. She was heard to remark that she would rather die than give her hand to the murderer of her husband, and shortly after, it was reported that she had died. Joseph then declares that he believes Edmund to be the true heir to Lovel Castle; firstly, because of his remarkable resemblance to the former Lord Lovel; and secondly, because of the dislike his reputed father, Andrew Twyford, had for him. Suddenly,

¹
Reeve, op. cit., p. 66.

the three men are startled by a great clashing of armour in the room below. They descend and find, inside a closet, a fallen suit of blood stained armour, the armour of the late Lord Level. From underneath the loose floor boards of the closet three groans are heard, and Edmund declares he believes the owner of the armour to be buried there. However, he will not tear up the floor until properly authorised.

The following day, Oswald and Edmund visit Marjorie Twyford, Edmund's supposed mother. After some persuasion, she reveals that Edmund was really found on a footbridge near the Castle by her husband. The very next day, he found the body of a dead woman, undoubtedly the mother of the child. The locket they had taken from this poor woman's body was inscribed with the Level insignia. That same week, Lady Level was reported to be dead. Undoubtedly Edmund is the true heir of the Level estate!

In his endeavor to dispossess Sir Walter, the present Lord Level, Edmund resolves to appeal to his old friend Sir Philip Harolay. Before he leaves, he speaks with Emma in the garden, hinting guardedly that he may not be a mere peasant, and will perhaps return to ask for her hand. She, however, does not understand.

When Edmund is reported missing, Wenlock and Markham declare he is probably hiding in the apartment waiting to rob or murder them. The apartment is searched and found to be empty. The Baron then requires the two conspirators to spend three nights there also. On the first night, they are frightened by groans, and when an armoured figure appears and signals them to leave, they flee, terrified, to their uncle's chamber. When questioned by the Baron, Wenlock and Markham quarrel; each reveals the villainy of the other, and both are ordered to leave the Castle.

The following afternoon, William and Emma compare their views of Edmund's disappearance, and come to the conclusion that he is alive, and of noble birth. Edmund, meanwhile, has arrived at Sir Philip Harclay's castle. Sir Philip hears the story of Edmund's birth, and, overjoyed at finding him to be the son of ^{his} dearest friend, at once adopts him as his son and heir. Sir Philip also undertakes to meet the murderer in combat. Edmund protests, but finally gives in when Sir Philip explains that Sir Walter could refuse to fight with a mere peasant.

The combat is won by Sir Philip, and Sir Walter is forced to confess his responsibility for the murder of Lord Lovel. At the same time, he declares Edmund to be the true heir. Word is sent to the Baron Fitz-Owen, who, on arrival, is soon convinced of the validity of Edmund's claim. He agrees to turn over the Lovel estate, and Sir Walter is required to quit the country.

When the party returns to Lovel Castle, every door in the place flies open. "These doors," declares Joseph, "open of their own account to receive their master? This is he indeed!"¹ Edmund then leads the way to the haunted closet, the floor boards are removed, and a trunk containing the skeleton of Lord Lovel is revealed.

The story is now brought swiftly to a close. Edmund is married to the Lady Emma, and Sir Philip Harclay spends the rest of his life with them at Lovel Castle. Baron Fitz-Owen retires to his old castle in Wales, and the other characters are accounted for in rather haphazard fashion. The book ends with the solemn statement that "this history of Edmund, Lord Lovel, furnish~~es~~ a striking lesson to posterity of the overruling hand of

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Ibid., p. 185.

Providence and the certainty of RETRIBUTION."¹

This then, is the story which Walpole described as "straito reduced to reason and probability,"² and such indeed, was Miss Reeve's intention, for she declared in her preface in reference to Walpole's novel:

The conduct of the story is artful and judicious; the characters are admirably drawn and supported; the diction polished and elegant; yet with all these brilliant advantages, it palls upon the mind; and the reason is obvious, the machinery is so violent that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite. Had the story been kept within the utmost verge of probability, the effect had been preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains the attention 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 credulity. A sword so large as to require a 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 ... 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 In the course of my observations upon this singular book; it seemed to me that it was possible to compose a work upon the same plan, wherein these defects might be avoided.³

This does not mean that Miss Reeve was resolved to eliminate the mysterious element altogether, for she herself declared that "a sufficient degree of the marvellous is required to excite attention."⁴ The result was a haunted chamber, unearthly midnight groans, a ghost in armour, doors that open by themselves, and a secret closet with its skeleton; all of which, declared Sir Walter Scott somewhat spitefully, "are ordinary fiction, of which popular superstition used to furnish a thousand instances, when nights were long, and a family, assembled round a Christmas log, had little better to do than listen to such tales."⁵

¹ Ibid., p. 216.

² Quoted by Beers op. cit., p. 249.

⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

³ Reeve, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

⁵ Scott, op. cit., pp. 207-208.

In reply to Miss Reeve's attack on Walpole's extravagant use of the mysterious, Scott declares, "if we are to try ghosts by the ordinary rules of humanity we bar them of their privileges entirely."¹ Yet, despite Scott's support for gigantic helmets, and walking pictures, the present writer feels that Miss Reeve was of inestimable service to the Gothic novel in general when she advocated her desire for the verge of probability. Not only did she prevent the mysterious from becoming fantastic, and pave the way for the accountable mysteries of Mrs. Radcliffe, she was also unconsciously stating the first rule of the modern detective novel --- probability. Today, the sophisticated reader not only demands that the plot be probable, it must also be possible.

In 1777, apparently the readers felt much the same, at any rate, they certainly did not mind the sudden lapse of the miraculous that occurred in "The Old English Baron," for against six editions of "Otranto" in twenty-three years, the Gothic story of Virtue Rewarded enjoyed eight editions, and by 1800, was leading Horace Walpole's work by ten editions; twenty-one, as opposed to eleven of "Otranto". Surely such figures speak for themselves. Nor can this popularity be accounted for in any other way; for while "The Old English Baron" is well enough written, Miss Reeve's easy sensible style has neither the power nor the beauty of Walpole's. The story itself is tame, and rather tedious, very much inclined to drag, despite the fact that Miss Reeve dispenses with the garrulous domestic. Nor are the characters particularly interesting. Miss Reeve was dealing almost exclusively with male characters, and like the majority of women novelists, she was incapable of drawing a spirited figure of a man. The

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Ibid., p. 206.

hero, Edmund, while brave enough, has his insipid side. The following words, delivered, amid tears, to the Baron Fitz-Owen, do him little credit.

To you, my honored lord, I owe everything, even this gentleman's (Harclay) good opinion; you distinguished me when nobody else did; and next to you, your sons are my best and dearest benefactors. My heart is unalterably attached to this house and family, and my utmost ambition is to spend my life in your service; but if you have perceived any great and grievous fault in me, that make you wish to put me out of your family, and if you have recommended me to this gentleman in order to be rid of me, in that case I will submit to your pleasure, as I would if you should sentence me to death.¹

Even allowing that this is an expression of gratitude to a benefactor, are these words typical of a young man who, a few pages later, is to rush bravely into a haunted room to seek out its ghost? "The Old English Baron" then, has its faults, but Miss Reeve's sensible use of the mysterious was certainly not one of them.

A final word and we have done. Even at this early date, by a not too great stretch of the imagination, we can see the first signs of the detective novel that is to come. Miss Reeve has to prove that Edmund is indeed the heir to the Lovel estate, and in the course of her story she places the evidence before us in such large quantities, and so minutely detailed, that not only are we convinced, but the Baron Fitz-Owen himself has no doubts on the matter. First, there is Sir Philip's dream, then Edmund's dream, followed by Joseph's story and his own belief in Edmund's identity. This is then substantiated by Marjorie Twyford. Finally, a confession is extracted from Sir Walter Lovel, and its validity proven by the discovery of the bones of the old Lord Lovel in the closet. So,

¹

Reeve, op. cit., p. 34-35.

piece by piece, Miss Reeve produces her evidence in behalf of Edmund's claim; and then at the end produces it all "En masse" to convince the Baron Fitz-Owen. Surely a clever piece of early English "detective" writing!

Speaking of the end of the book, one can say unreservedly that the last three pages are among the worst in the English language. The action of the whole book has occupied the space of a year at most, yet in these last pages Miss Reeve feels it necessary to account for the future lives of all her characters. Five sons and a daughter are born to Edmund and Emma. The daughter grows up and marries Sir Robert Fitz-Owen's son. The old Baron dies. Sir Walter Lovel goes to Greece, joins the army, and marries an officer's daughter. Sir Philip and Father Oswald die, and eventually, at "an old age in peace, honour, and happiness,"¹ Edmund, Lord Lovel himself, dies in the arms of his children. Surely the old time honored "and they lived happily ever after," were preferable to this hurried life history of two generations?

However, in conclusion, we can say that "The Old English Baron," despite its multiple faults, has a few commendable points, is still quite readable, and does form a convenient bridge over the interval between the two Castles of "Otranto" and "Udolpho".

¹
Ibid., p. 16.

CHAPTER III

MRS. RADCLIFFE AND "THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO"

"Man is so made that all his true delight arises from the contemplation of mystery."¹

With the novels of Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, the Gothic Romance suddenly² blossomed into maturity. She wrote, in all, six romances which are so much alike, a discussion of one may well be applied to any of the others. The most popular, and the one upon which her reputation rests, is "The Mysteries of Udolpho". Strictly speaking, the novel is not mediaeval, the time being set by the authoress as 1584; but the machinery is prevailingly Gothic, and, as in Walpole's novel, the real "hero" of the story is a haunted castle, the Castle di Udolpho in the Apennines.

Miss Ann Ward, until her marriage at the age of twenty-three, passed her life in a select company. Her relatives are described as being people of superior intellect, and at their houses Ann encountered³ "several persons of distinction for literature." Personally, she is described as being a beautiful young woman of aesthetic tastes:

To contemplate the glories of creation, but more particularly the grander features of their display, was one of her chief delights: to listen to fine music was another. She had also a gratification in listening to any good verbal sounds; and would desire to hear passages repeated from the Latin and Greek classics; requiring the most literal translations that could be given.⁴

1

Arthur Machen in Great Short Stories of Detection Mystery and Horror (Introduction) Edited by D. L. Sayers.

2

"The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne" 1789; "A Sicilian Romance" 1790; "The Romance of the Forest" 1791; "The Mysteries of Udolpho" 1794; "The Italian" 1797; "Gaston de Blondville" 1826.

3

Scott quoting contemporary biographer (n.n.) The Lives of the Novelists, p. 212.

4

Loc. cit.

In 1787, she married William Radcliffe, a law graduate of Oxford, who became the proprietor and editor of "The English Chronicle". The commonly accepted story is that Mrs. Radcliffe turned to creative literature to amuse herself during the long hours her husband was absent preparing his "Chronicle" for the presses. Some writers go so far as to attribute the wildness of her imagination and her romantic love of night to these long hours that are the lot of any editor's wife; but the verse captions heading the chapters of *Udolpho* indicate that Mrs. Radcliffe's romantic inclinations were largely fostered by her readings. Blair, Thomson, Warton, Gray, Collins, Mason, and Walpole are among those quoted.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to give a detailed account of the plot of "*Udolpho*" as has been done with the two preceding romances ~~due to~~^{because of} its length, and its extremely complicated structure involving innumerable incidents. It is possible, however, to indicate the general outline of the plot. The story centres around the lives of Emily St. Aubert and her aunt, Madam Cheron. The latter is responsible for all of Emily's troubles, as she marries a fortune hunter, the Signor Montoni, who soon emerges as the villain of the piece. Montoni tries in vain to force his wife to sign over her estates to him, and at the same time, encourages the Count Morano to make love to Emily, who rejects his suit, being herself in love with a young chevalier, Valancourt. The scene shifts to the Castle di Udolpho, a veritable hall of terrors, wherein Emily, virtually a prisoner, has innumerable terrifying experiences. She eventually escapes to her aunt's Castle Le Blanc, where she encounters another haunted suite of apartments before the Chevalier Valancourt

reappears, and, by his marriage to Emily, brings the romance to a suitable conclusion. However, from this short summary of the plot, it must not be supposed that the use of terrifying incidents is the main theme of "Udolpho," for Mrs. Radcliffe is as sparing in her use of the supernatural as Clara Reeve, depending more on her powers of description and suggestion to achieve the desired effect.

"Ann Radcliffe," declared Sir Walter Scott, "has the eye of a painter and the spirit of a poet."¹ Even today, none will deny that her powers of romantic description were exceptional. In her two earlier novels, Mrs. Radcliffe's descriptive powers had already raised her far above her contemporaries, and a fortunate visit to the Rhine country in 1793 lent added charm to her descriptions of Udolpho. The following, which reportedly charmed Sir Walter Scott and Leigh Hunt among many, may be taken as a typical example of Mrs. Radcliffe's descriptive style:

Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark gray stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper as the 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 were alone seen rising over the tops of the woods, beneath whose thick shade the carriages soon began to ascend The extent and darkness of these tall woods awakened terrific images in her mind and she almost expected to see banditti start up.²

¹ Ibid., p. 215.

²

"The Mysteries of Udolpho" A Romance by Ann Radcliffe (London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., n.d.), p. 109.

From the above passage, it is evident that a new and powerful element has entered English Gothic fiction, the element of atmosphere. No longer do supernatural happenings spring up from the pages of the book to excite laughter as they occasionally do in "The Castle of Otranto". Each one of Mrs. Radcliffe's mysteries is carefully prepared for. The reader, under the influence of her powers of vivid description, knows that something terrible is about to occur, and he trembles in expectancy until it finally does. The result is a novel of sustained suspense; a novel of far greater "hair-raising" possibilities than any written before.

Were it possible to eliminate the element of mystery and to visualise "Udolpho" as a harmless old feudal castle, we should have a typical Victorian love story. The beautiful, sensitive, heroine, with what Mr. Beers is pleased to call, "a kind of toughness that endures through all."¹ The dashing young hero, who, despite his beautiful phrases, is also a man of action. These two, the story of their blossoming love, the vicissitudes it encounters at the hands of the villain, and their eventual re-union under happier circumstances; this is the story of "Udolpho" divorced from its mystery. Fortunately, however, this is a Gothic novel of terror, and as such, the love story element is subordinated to the main business of thrilling the reader. For this purpose Mrs. Radcliffe is brilliantly equipped with all "the tools of the trade." She places her haunted castle in the midst of the wild Apennines far

¹
Beers, op. cit., p. 204.

from civilization, and within this aerie edifice she places her villain, the Signor Montoni.

Montoni is far removed from the ignorant, excitable, loud-mouthed villain presented by Walpole. Mrs. Radcliffe's picture of Montoni shows him to be a man of exceedingly shrewd parts, intelligent, domineering, and completely without scruples; truly "a lofty souled ¹ desperado."

The Signor Montoni had an air of conscious superiority, animated by spirit and strengthened by talents, to which every person seemed involuntarily to yield. The quickness of his perceptions was strikingly expressed on his countenance; yet that countenance could submit implicitly to occasion; and more than once in this day the triumph of art over nature might have been discovered in it. His visage was long, and rather narrow; yet he was called handsome; and it was, perhaps, the spirit and vigour of his soul, sparkling through his features that triumphed for him. Emily felt admiration, but not the admiration that leads to esteem; for it was mixed with a degree of fear she knew not exactly wherefore.²

Having created her castle and her villain, Mrs. Radcliffe then proceeds to put them both into operation against the heroine, Emily St. Aubert.

But, (as the authoress herself is wont to say) "we are getting ahead of ourselves." As already noted, Mrs. Radcliffe depends on atmosphere more than on any other element. Wisely enough, she does not immediately plunge the reader into a vale of horror, but paints first a picture of peace amid beautiful landscapes as she describes the journey of Emily, her aged father, and young Valancourt through the Apennines. So the first section of the book is a story of love and friendship that comes to a melancholy end with the death of Monsieur

¹

Scott, op. cit., p. 216.

²

Radcliffe, op. cit., p. 87.

St. Aubert and the departure of Valancourt. After many sad farewells to the surroundings of her childhood, Emily goes to take up the second part of her life with her widowed aunt, Madam Cheron. Here, for the first time, she encounters the Signor Montoni who is determined to marry the wealthy widow. With the subsequent marriage, the scene shifts to Montoni's residence in Venice, where Emily is plagued with the amorous attentions of Count Morano. At the same time, Montoni begins his attempts to force his wife to sign over all her property to him. Suddenly, for reasons known only to Montoni, the whole party leaves for his castle in the Apennines, and the scene is set for the tale of terror to unfold. So, by stages, Mrs. Radcliffe leads us into her Castle of Mystery, and by comparison with the peaceful scenes at the beginning of the story, the terrible scenes at Udolpho stand out even more strikingly.

We have already seen the effect the first sight of Udolpho produced on Emily, and as she enters, the prospect does not improve. Udolpho is dark and gloomy --- indeed, throughout the book the innumerable references to "single lights" continually remind us of the dark interior of this old castle --- nor is the chatter of her maid Annette particularly cheering to Emily as they proceed to her rooms:

'What a wild lonely place this is ma'am! I shall be quite frightened to live in it I can almost believe in giants again, and such like, for this is just like one of their castles; and some night or other, I suppose, I shall see fairies too, hopping about in that great old hall, ... but I am not so much afraid of fairies as of ghosts; and they say there are a plentiful many of them about the castle'¹

¹
Ibid., p. 111.

With such idle chatter, Annette inadvertently takes the wrong turning, and brings Emily face to face with what is to become the most terrifying mystery of Udolpho. They enter a room hung with pictures, one of which is covered with a black veil. Emily, with her usual curiosity, is anxious to raise this veil, but Annette is unwilling to hold the light while she does so. Emily resolves, however, to remove the veil at the first opportunity.

With consummate skill Mrs. Radcliffe fashions this veiled picture into one of the chief terrors of Udolpho, for the next day when Emily removed the veil, "perceiving that what it had concealed was no picture she dropped senseless to the floor." Many times during the story, Emily has occasion to recall this incident, and she cannot suppress a shudder; but, to the end of the book, the secret of what lay behind the black veil remains a tantalising mystery to the reader.

Before long, Annette, choosing, of course, a dark windy night, relates the story of the ghost of Udolpho to her young mistress. The story itself is quite simple. One night, many years before, a young lady, Signora Laurentini, with whom Montoni was desperately in love, went for a walk in the woods and never returned, nor could any trace of her be found. Several times since, however, her ghost has been seen either in the castle or in the surrounding woods. With this cheerful story to reflect upon, and the discovery of a secret door to her chamber, it is little wonder that Emily's rest was disturbed for several nights after her arrival.

¹

Ibid., p. 119.

Just as she is becoming used to her new home, the arrival of a group of armed men, among them Count Morano, and the great revelry and drinking which accompany their midnight councils, once more arouse Emily's fears; this time, fear of human visitors, perhaps more to be dreaded than ghosts. Suddenly, one night, Morano appears in her room via the secret door, and, as he pleads with Emily to return his love, Montoni enters. Violent words between the two are soon followed by swordplay, and the subsequent wounding of Morano. The effect of this violence on a young girl, especially as it takes place in her bedroom in the middle of the night, may well be imagined. Emily, says Mrs. Radcliffe, "was happy to pass the rest of the night in the company of Annette."¹

Meanwhile, Montoni has been endeavouring to force his wife to sign over her property to him, and, as a last resort, has imprisoned her in a cell in the top of the castle. Emily, fearing for her aunt's well-being, endeavours each night to gain some communication with her. Prowling around the darkened corridors at night, she encounters many terrifying things; footsteps in the hallways, knockings on the panelled walls, groans from behind locked doors, and groups of armed men, to mention but a few.

On top of these nightly adventures, Emily is haunted by the sound of sweet music which penetrates her room each night at the stroke of twelve. Eventually she discovers the sounds proceed from a dungeon directly below, and, by a rather vague process of reasoning, she decides that Valencourt must be imprisoned there. Accordingly, with the help of

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Ibid., p. 253.

Annette, and her lover Tudovico, Emily schemes for the release of the prisoner. This forces the three friends to do more midnight prowling, and, as before, Mrs. Radcliffe seizes the opportunity to introduce all the usual elements of terror, together with a few new ones of her own invention.

With the death of her aunt, who is literally murdered by Montoni, Emily and her friends bend all their efforts to escape from the castle. They release the prisoner, who turns out to be, not Valancourt, but a Monsieur Du Pont, and, in the midst of a pitched battle between robber bands that takes place in the Castle, they manage to escape, coming eventually to the Chateau Le Blanc. Here, as at Udolpho, ghosts prowl the scene and unearthly music is heard, but Emily's spirits are revived by the reappearance of Valancourt, after which the happy ending is not long delayed.

The above section has been a rather futile attempt to convey to the reader the essence of the mysteries of Udolpho. Futile, in the sense that no one but Mrs. Radcliffe can do justice to the scenes she describes or the mood she creates. From the first view of the Castle of Udolpho, the reader is caught up by the intensity of the story until he finds himself almost at one with the heroine, slight sounds, the wind in the trees or the cry of an animal, become strangely magnified, and take on a terrible significance until they are explained away by the authoress.

This brings us to the point that has occasioned more controversy over Mrs. Radcliffe's style than any other. In all her writings, her guiding principle was that all the marvellous occurrences in her narrative were to be accounted for, either as the story progressed, or at its conclusion. In general, critics are strong in their condemnation of this

practive.

It must be allowed, that this has not been done with uniform success, and that the author has been occasionally more successful in exciting interest and apprehension, than in giving either interest or dignity of explanation to the means she has made use of.¹

This is the opinion of Sir Walter Scott, and we cannot disagree with him.

It has not been possible here to go into a detailed description of the numerous mysteries of Udolpho, or the equally numerous explanations that Mrs. Radcliffe offers for them. In any case, such a procedure would undoubtedly spoil the pleasure of reading this remarkable book which no student of romantic literature should deny himself.² Suffice it to say that all of Mrs. Radcliffe's mysterious knockings and horrible groanings are given an explanation based on natural causes. Some of the mysteries are accounted for to our satisfaction; some are left unaccounted for; and still others are given explanations that encourage us to accept the mystery rather than its explanation.

In the pure ghost story we have the quintessence of mystery, because it is never explained. When an explanation is offered, as in "The Mysteries of Udolpho", all of the mystery disappears, and, perhaps worst of all, the pleasure of re-reading the book is, in part, destroyed. This alone would be enough for us to deprecate Mrs. Radcliffe's practice, but, to the present writer's mind, her greatest crime was, not her explanations, but the prosaic, matter-of-fact style she adopted at the end of her book

¹ Scott, op. cit., p. 231.

² We will offer no explanation here of what lay behind the black veil in the hope that some interested reader will be compelled to satiate his curiosity and thereby "discover" a mistress of romantic prose who languishes under a cloud these many years.

in order to account for the mysteries she had created. Mrs. Radcliffe could quite easily have accounted for the mysteries by means of her character's voices; instead, she chose to address the reader herself, thereby destroying a good deal of the charm of her story. We are progressing very well in the charming company of Emily and Valancourt, when suddenly a new and disturbing figure, two hundred years out of place, makes its appearance. Mrs. Ann Radcliffe does not belong in the company she herself created.

Yet, despite the fact that her novel suffers from the explanation of the mysterious events, Mrs. Radcliffe unwittingly was of great service to lighter literature in that her method is another very early example of detective writing. She has created these unsolved mysteries, and, according to her plan, she has to present an explanation, or, in modern terms, a solution. True, her solutions are not based on deductive reasoning, they are just as much a part of her imagination as her mysteries, but the general plan is here. It is not suggested that any future detective novelist adopted Mrs. Radcliffe's plan, enlarged upon it, and created the detective novel, but it is interesting to notice that even in 1774 a writer was occupied in explaining a mystery to the satisfaction of the reader.

We have now said just about all that is necessary to say, for the purpose of this thesis, about "The Mysteries of Udolpho". However, in the course of the research necessary for this chapter, the writer discovered the following criticism of "Udolpho" offered by Mr. George

Saintsbury. Despite Mr. Saintsbury's highly deserved reputation, it is not possible to bring this chapter to a close without refuting some of his remarks. Mr. Saintsbury declares:

There are two drawbacks in *Udolpho*; the extraordinary elaboration of means with futility of result, and the explained supernatural. To the reader this much ado about nothing process means disappointed irritation, boredom, and lack of interest. The further prevalence of the same much ado about nothing method, even in cases where there is nothing supernatural is perhaps equally tedious. It has been pointed out that pages on pages, even chapters on chapters of *Udolpho* are occupied by the account of Emily's wanderings, or being led about the castle for hours by one of Montoni's ruffians and being brought back to her room without anything really dreadful being done to her even in the way of threats. Once her aunt is, with some violence, removed from her company; but nobody injures her, locks the door, or interferes with her in any way. When she is in the hall, a wounded man is carried past; but again nobody even speaks to her. She wanders about the castle and sees a track of blood (which is not very remarkable considering the wounded man) and concludes her aunt has been murdered. She finds her maid in a room, and then she goes back to her own and very sensibly goes to bed There is no real suspense about this so-called novel of suspense. Jack is sure to have Jill, both Jack and Jill are sure to get out of their troubles, there is rather little wool for a very great cry.¹

Mr. Saintsbury, in this criticism of "*Udolpho*", is making the mistake of viewing it with a sophisticated eye its first readers did not possess. Mrs. Radcliffe's method was the method of suspense. Even today, the reader does not know what is going to happen next; certainly in 1774 the reader did not know that Jack was going to have Jill, or that Jack and Jill would get out of their troubles. Every time Emily ventures forth in the dead of night, the reader follows her breathlessly, hardly knowing whether he wishes anything to happen to her or not. When nothing does, he heaves a sigh of relief, the suspense has been enjoyable, but the ending is satisfactory. Emily is once more safely asleep. After all

¹

George Saintsbury in The Cambridge History of English Literature, vol. X, pp. 302-303.

Emily is our heroine, we do not want anything terrible to happen to her. Mr. Saintsbury is altogether too bloodthirsty, he seems to have forgotten that "The Mysteries of Udolpho" is, above all else, a Romance, and must, therefore, take good care of its heroine.

From even the small portions of "The Mysteries of Udolpho" we have been able to quote, it will be apparent that Ann Radcliffe was a novelist of no mean ability. The reception accorded her various novels by the reading public¹ more than proves this assertion. Nor was her ascendancy short lived, for, many years after she stopped writing, important men of letters were recording their debts to Mrs. Ann Radcliffe. Scott declared:

She has the most decided claim to take her place among the favored few who have been distinguished as the founders of a class or school. She led the way in a peculiar style of composition affecting powerfully the mind of the reader, which has since been attempted by many but in which no one has attained or approached the excellencies of the original inventor.²

Hazlitt said that he owed his love of moonlight nights, autumn leaves, and decaying ruins to Mrs. Radcliffe, while her influence on Byron and Chateaubriand is also apparent.³

So, for a brief moment in the history of the novel, Mrs. Radcliffe brought to the reading public beautiful description, thrilling incidents, and romantic love scenes, delivered in a sensitive, melifluous^{1/} prose. In her, the Gothic Romance at once found its true medium, and enjoyed its greatest triumph. But if Mrs. Radcliffe married strangeness and beauty, the efforts of the next great Gothic novelist, M. G. Lewis, affected a quick divorce.

¹ There were four editions in two years, two of them American; by 1832 there had been seventeen editions.

² Scott, op. cit., p. 224.

³ Schedoni in "The Italian" is one of the prototypes of the Byronic hero.

CHAPTER IV

M. G. LEWIS AND "THE MONK"

"Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas.
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque" (Hor.)

This Horatian quotation, appearing as it does on the title page of M. G. Lewis' "The Monk", is a masterpiece of understatement. True, dreams, magic terrors, witches, and ghosts do form a part of "The Monk", but they form a part of any Gothic Novel; and "The Monk" once read, is never to be confused with any other book. Lewis' monstrous masterpiece is neither a romance nor a novel of terror, it is a story of Horror pure and simple.

As is often the case, Lewis was in no wise the man his readers would suppose him to be. Instead of a dark, sadistic, glowering villain, Scott describes him as a cheerful, foppish, round-faced little man, a follower of fashion, and an assiduous tuft-hunter. "The least man I ever saw," declares Scott, "He was a child, and a spoiled child, but a child
1
of high imagination."

How, we may well wonder, could such a man, or rather boy, for "The Monk" was written at the tender age of nineteen, ever derive such a horror-struck story? Fortunately, there is much evidence of Lewis' sources, most of it supplied by the author himself. In a letter to his
1
mother in 1792, he described it as "a romance in the style of The Castle of Otranto". Two years later when he resumed the story he declared, again to his mother, "I was induced to go on with it by reading 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' which is, in my opinion, one of the most interesting books that has ever been published When you read it tell me whether you

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Quoted by Mr. Beers, op. cit., p. 409.

think there is any resemblance between the character given Montoni and my own. I confess that it struck me.¹

As the immediate source, the author himself points to the story of the hermit Barsisa which appeared in number 148 of "The Guardian" (1713). However, Lewis' interest in German terror novels by Tieck, Weber, Korner, Spiess, and other dealers in the horrific, undoubtedly contributed towards the creation of "The Monk". In fact, one might almost accuse Lewis of "creative plagiarism", so much of his story is stolen from other authors and from Gothic folklore.

The general theme of "The Monk" is the old (even at this date) story of the man who sells his soul to the devil. Briefly, the story is this: Ambrosio is the saintly superior of the Capuchins of Madrid, who, despite his holiness, falls to the temptations of a wanton girl, Matilda, who, disguised as a boy, has entered his monastery as a novice. Once he has tasted the fruits of degradation, Ambrosio becomes utterly depraved. He lusts after one of his penitents, Antonia Medina, and with the help of magic and murder he pursues the helpless girl, finally killing her to escape detection. However, his villainy is soon discovered; his reputation as a holy man is blasted; he is tortured by the Inquisition; and finally sentenced to death. In an attempt to escape from the Inquisition, Ambrosio sells his soul to the devil in return for his protection, but Satan hurls the monk to destruction in another form, flinging him from a cliff-top to fall on the jagged rocks below.

¹

Loc. cit.

In direct contrast to his illustrious contemporary, Mrs. Radcliffe, Lewis seems to have revelled in sheer horror. He looked on his gift for enthralling his readers by making their flesh creep as an unaccountable endowment of nature. Not for him is the delicate romantic touch or the explained supernatural. Lewis accumulates his horrors, and leaves them to do their worst upon sensitive minds. To do this, he uses and abuses all the familiar apparatus of Gothic romance. His story contains: Spanish grandees, beautiful heroines; banditti, garrulous domestics, monks, nuns, inquisitors, ghosts, demons, haunted chambers, ruined castles, murders, sleeping potions, secret doors, lust in all its hideous forms, and wild accounts of mediæval torture chambers. All these horrors are described by Lewis with a kind of frenzied realism that makes Walpole's descriptions of the gigantic warrior appear timid by comparison.

If Mrs. Radcliffe's ghosts and spectres were all make believe, the same cannot be said of Lewis's; his demons are the most blood curdling creations that have yet appeared in English literature. And, if the reader is strong willed enough not to believe in his ghosts, Lewis is prepared to horrify him by his daring, freak descriptions of human lusts, charnel-house horrors, loathsome crimes, and the depravity of human beings. Lewis' peculiar gift, as E. A. Baker has pointed out, is the negation of reticence, "he is most forcible and emphatic where other men are silent."¹ The following passage will give the reader some idea of the horrific episodes that appear on nearly every page of "The Monk."

Agnes, a young girl who has resisted all attempts of her superiors

1

E. A. Baker, Introduction to "The Monk" p. iii.

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to force her to become a nun, has been condemned to a slow and hideous death with her child. She is rescued from her dungeon and relates the following story:

Sometimes I felt the bloated toad, hideous and pampered with the poisonous vapours of the dungeon, dragging its loathsome length along my bosom. Sometimes the quick cold lizard roused me, leaving his slimy track on 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.¹

With many passages like this, Lewis sought to instill terror in the minds of his readers. He failed to realize the power of the instrument invented by Mrs. Radcliffe --- suggestion. Lewis was not the man to waste words creating atmosphere; he had no sense of the terror that stalks unseen; to him, a corpse or skeleton was as efficient a bogey as a ghost.

The main theme of "The Monk" is the hypocrisy of the leading character, Ambrosio, and the picture Lewis paints of this "man of holiness" is an impressive one, especially as he dwells upon the content of his sermon:

In language nervous, clear and simple, the monk expatiated on the beauties of religion. He explained some abstruse parts of the sacred writings in a style that carried with it universal conviction. His voice at once distinct and deep, was fraught with all the terrors of the tempest while he inveighed punishments reserved for them in a future state. Every hearer looked back upon his past offenses and trembled; the thunder seemed to roll whose bolt was destined to crush him, and the abyss of eternal destruction to open before his feet!²

This is the power of Ambrosio, a man who can by the mere force of his words cause people to live a good life, yet he himself is weak and vain. He is easily tempted by the wanton Matilda, and, while he spends his

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"The Monk" by M. G. Lewis (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1922) p. 256.

2

Ibid., pp. 10-11.

nights indulging in lust and even murder, he is capable each day of terrifying his auditors who tremble as they think of their own trifling crimes.

Within the framework supplied by the story of Ambrosio's schemes to fulfil his lust for Antonia, Lewis weaves a series of horrific incidents, barely related to the whole, but presented with the intention of further terrifying his readers. This is, perhaps, the chief characteristic of Lewis' peculiar style.

One of these interrelated stories is that of "The Bleeding Nun". The origin of this story is vague, but it seems to have first appeared in Continental literature around the middle of the eighteenth century. "The Bleeding Nun", according to the legend, is the ghost of a woman who was forced by her parents to become a nun, but who did not resist the impulses of her own warm and voluptuous character, and abandoned herself to all kinds of excesses. Finally she committed murder, and was herself murdered. Her ghost carries a bloody dagger fixed in its bosom. Lewis uses this story as a means of effecting the escape of a young woman (Agnes de Medina) from her uncle's castle where she is being held against her will. This castle was, a hundred years before, haunted by the Bleeding Nun, who made so much noise each night that no one could sleep. Finally, the Baron of the Castle obtained the services of a celebrated exorciser who forced the Bleeding Nun to allow the inhabitants to sleep. Five years later, the exorciser died, and the Nun reappeared. Now, however, she was well behaved, walking about in silence. On the fifth of May of every fifth year, this ghost appears, and on that night all the gates of the castle are left open.

The plan of escape is that Agnes, disguised as the ghost, will walk downstairs and out through the open gates where she will be met by her rescuer, Alphonso d'Alvarada. The plan, however, does not come off as Agnes is prevented from leaving. However, the real ghost does appear, and Alphonso takes it away in the carriage by mistake; later the carriage is wrecked, and the ghost disappears. Alphonso then becomes the haunted one. Each night at one o'clock, the Bleeding Nun appears in his chamber, recites a poem, kisses him, and disappears.

At this point Lewis introduces the second of his interrelated stories, the age old legend of "The Wandering Jew." In Lewis' version,¹ the Wandering Jew is known as "the Great Mogul".

'He was a man of majestic presence; his countenance was strongly marked and his eyes were large, black, and sparkling; yet there was something in his look which, the moment that I saw him, inspired me with a secret awe, not to say horror.'²

The Great Mogul declares that he can put an end to the visits of the Bleeding Nun, and eventually he does so, but not before he relates the story of his existence to Alphonso:

No one is adequate to comprehending the misery of my lot; Fate obliges me to be constantly in movement; I am not permitted to pass more than a fortnight in the same place. I have no friend in the world, and, from the restlessness of my destiny I can never acquire one. Fain would I lay down my miserable life, ... but death eludes me and flies from my embrace. In vain do I throw myself in the way of danger. I plunge into the ocean; the waves throw me back with abhorrence; I

¹ According to the legend, this Jew was condemned to wander the world forever because he had tormented Christ as He passed on His way to Golgotha. Vide Appendix A, p. 156.

² Alphonso, describing the Great Mogul. Lewis, op. cit., p. 132.

rush into fire; the flames recoil at my approach. The hungry tiger shudders at my approach and the alligator flies from a monster more horrible than itself. Such is the curse imposed on me. I am doomed to inspire all who look on me with terror and detestation.¹

These are but two of the many horrible scenes that Lewis works into his novel. There are others describing the horrors of the torture of the Inquisition, the ravings of lunatics, and the selling of souls to the devil, but all follow the same general plan; the piling of horror upon horror, each succeeding one more terrible than the last.

When "The Monk" was first published in 1795 it enjoyed a tremendous success. There were outcries² against its immorality, which Lewis seemed to revel in, and which, naturally enough, only served to increase its sales.³ Today, after reading "The Monk", one is forced to agree with Mr. Baker, who declares:

Only disappointment awaits anyone who has taken too seriously the praise bestowed by his contemporaries on Lewis' genius and supposed gifts of powerful and unearthly imagination and has been deceived by the story of his sudden leap into fame, and of his literary friendship with Byron and Shelley, into fancying "The Monk" in any way a great book.⁴

"The Monk" is not a great book, but neither is it as bad as most critics (probably without reading it) declare it to be. Technically, it is a very disorganised piece of work, a jumble of interrelated stories, yet out of this jumble there emerges a tale that is coherent and clear. Lewis had the ability to tie all his loose ends together

¹ Ibid., p. 133.

² There were seven editions in four years.

³ In 1798 Lewis brought out a so-called "expurgated" edition.

⁴ E. A. Baker in his Introduction to "The Monk", p. iv.

before they were lost completely. Many persons, again probably judging from extracts rather than from the whole book, have declared Lewis' style to be poor and insipid. Yet, where else in literature of minor rank is a description of Satan to be found that can compare with Lewis's?

A loud burst of thunder was heard, the prison shook to its very foundations, a blaze of lightening flashed through the cell, and in the next moment, borne upon sulphurous whirlwinds, Lucifer stood before him.¹ He appeared in all that ugliness which, since his fall from Heaven, had been his portion. His blasted limbs still bore the marks of the Almighty's Thunder. A swarthy darkness spread itself over his gigantic form: his hands and feet were armed with long talons. Fury glared in his eyes, which might have struck the bravest heart with terror. Over his huge shoulders waved two enormous sable wings; and his hair was supplied by living snakes which twined themselves around his brows with frightful hissings. In one hand he held a roll of parchment and in the other an iron pen. Still the lightening flashed around him and the thunder, with repeated bursts, seemed to announce the dissolution of Nature.²

Nor can one deny Lewis' powers of exciting horror. One of his melodrama's "The Captive" is reported to have thrown "a portion of the audience --- whose nerves were unable to withstand the dreadful truth of the language and the scene --- into hysterics, and the whole theatre into confusion and horror."³ The effect of "The Monk" on its readers could have been hardly less startling.

A man possessing such powers, however crudely applied, must have exercised tremendous influence, and it is due almost entirely to Lewis' influence on the literary men who followed him that his name is remembered today. Strange as it may seem, one of Lewis' protégés was the young

¹
i.e. Ambrosio.

²
Lewis, op. cit., p. 348. The resemblance to Milton's "Satan" will be noted.

³
Quoted by Beers, op. cit., p. 411.

Walter Scott, two of his most intimate friends and admirers were Byron and Shelley, and it was Lewis' direct influence that caused Mary Shelley to produce the subject of our next chapter, her sadly maltreated masterpiece, "Frankenstein".

Lewis's story of the Monk Ambrosio must be relegated to a lowly position in the history of English literature, yet Lewis himself was undoubtedly one of the stimuli that helped Byron and Shelley produce some of their greatest masterpieces. That in itself is no mean epitaph!

CHAPTER V

MRS. SHELLEY AND "FRANKENSTEIN"

1

"A thing such as even Dante could not have conceived."

Of all the novels of terror produced in the nineteenth century, Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus", 1818, is the most talked about, and at the same time one of the least known. Comparatively few people have ever read this tale of terror, yet everyone has heard the name "Frankenstein". This peculiar form of popularity has been the work of motion-pictures, and the desire of the theatre-going public, even today, that they be "scared out of their wits". So, everyone 'knows' "Frankenstein", but few are aware that its creator was Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, the wife of the poet; and not one in ten can tell you just who Frankenstein really is.

We have already seen how Horace Walpole's environment was largely responsible for the production of "The Castle of Otranto".³ The same is true of Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein". Both novels sprang from the dreams of their creators, dreams undoubtedly caused by the influence of their daily environment. The story of the Shelley's visit to Switzerland in 1816 where they became the neighbors of Lord Byron, is well known; but what is not so well known is that among the frequent visitors to the Shelley residence was Matthew Gregory Lewis. On one of his visits

1

"Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus" by Mary W. Shelley. (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons. Everyman: 1912.) p. 53.

2

The majority of people, it will be found, believe the monster's name to be Frankenstein. In reality it was Doctor Victor Frankenstein who created the nameless monster and gave his name to the story.

3

Cf. supra, p. 2.

Lewis brought with him some volumes of his favorite literature, German Ghost Stories, and in the dull rainy weather the Shelleys and Byron turned to these tales of terror by way of relaxation. One evening Byron suggested to the company (the Shelleys and Polidori) that each of them write a ghost story; the results of this competition were Polidori's "The Vampire" and Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein".

The author herself describes the evolution of her story:

I busied myself to think of a story --- a story to rival those which had excited us to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror --- one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart I thought and pondered vainly.¹

For many days Mrs. Shelley was unable to produce even the plot of a story; then, one night after listening to a conversation between Byron and her husband on the nature of the principle of life, and of the probability of it ever being discovered and communicated, Mary Shelley retired --- but not to sleep:

My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavor to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handwork, horror stricken. He would hope that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade; that this thing, which had received such imperfect animation, would subside into dead matter; and he might sleep in the belief that the silence of the grave would quench forever the transient existence of the hideous corpse which he had looked upon as the cradle of life. He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and

¹

Mary Shelley op. cit. Introduction, pp. ix-x.

looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes. I opened mine in terror On the morrow I announced that I had thought of a story. I began that day with the words, 'It was on a dreary night of November', making only a transcript of the grim terrors of my waking dream.¹

Mary Shelley began "Frankenstein" intending it to be merely a short tale, but, on receiving encouragement from her husband, she enlarged it to a good sized novel. Nor is Shelley's influence on "Frankenstein" to be overlooked; to him must go most of the credit for the fine tone of his wife's tale of terror. "Nothing but an absolute magnetising of her brain by Shelley's can account for her having risen so far above her usual self as in "Frankenstein".²

Mrs. Shelley begins her story in typical nineteenth century fashion, giving a series of letters written by a Richard Walton to his sister in England. Walton is an adventurer possessed with the idea of reaching the North Pole. During the long voyage northward, Walton feels the need for companionship, and, being a well-educated man himself, he desires the company of a man possessing a cultivated and capacious mind. Walton's desire is soon fulfilled, for he manages to rescue a stranger from an ice flow, a stranger who is extremely anxious to go further north, "to seek one who fled from me".³

Gradually Walton manages to elicit the stranger's life story, the story of Doctor Victor Frankenstein. The doctor tells of the many hours he spent in his laboratory wherein he conceived the idea of creating

¹ Ibid., Introduction, p. xi.

² Ibid., Introduction, p. vii. The editor is quoting Dr. Richard Garnett.

³ Ibid., p. 14.

human life. After numerous visits to charnel houses and graveyards, he assembled a body in the shape of a human being. This he infused with life. Frankenstein's monster, to his horror, is a hideous being which manages to escape before he can destroy it.

Despite its horrible appearance, the monster has an intense longing for companionship, but, finding that none will befriend it, the monster becomes disgusted with humanity, and returns from its wanderings to seek revenge upon Dr. Frankenstein as being the cause of all its woe. The monster murders Frankenstein's younger brother. The doctor himself suspects the guilt of the monster he created, but keeps his secret even though the child's nurse is accused of the murder and is hanged. Frankenstein, his mind tortured by the thoughts of what his science has done, sets out to track down his monster and, if possible, to kill it. Then, one night, the monster visits him in his room and relates the story of its futile attempts to find companionship, and asks Frankenstein to create a female monster in order that it may have a wife. Frankenstein agrees on the condition that the two creatures will leave Europe forever and take up residence in some uninhabited part of the world.

Meanwhile, Frankenstein has become engaged to his cousin Elizabeth, but in order to create the female monster he must leave his betrothed and journey to England. In the highlands of Scotland he begins his gruesome task, but cannot bring himself to give his new monster life. As he destroys his half finished work the monster appears, curses him, and

1

This part of Mrs. Shelley's story was the stimulus that occasioned Hollywood's 'epic thriller' "The Bride of Frankenstein".

1

declares, "I shall be with you on your wedding night". Before he can return to England, Frankenstein's travelling companion, Henry Clerval, is murdered by the monster, and the doctor is accused of the crime. After languishing in a squalid jail for three months, Frankenstein is proven innocent and released. He returns to Paris and is finally married. As predicted, the monster appears on the wedding night and murders the young bride. Half-crazed with rage and remorse, Frankenstein follows the monster through every country in Europe, occasionally catching a glimpse of it, but never coming close enough to put an end to its existence. He was still pursuing it when he was taken aboard Walton's ship.

So Doctor Victor Frankenstein ends his story. Walton, who has sent this story in manuscript form to his sister, writes in a final letter that he will not be able to reach the North Pole, and is going to return. Frankenstein, his letter concludes, soon succumbed to the rigors of Arctic weather. As his remains lay in a cabin the monster appeared once more, this time full of remorse. He declared to Walton that he was "polluted by crimes, and torn by the bitterest remorse", death was now his only rest. With these words, declares Walton, the monster sprang from the ship and was lost in the darkness.

3

Mrs. Shelley's story betrays her parentage. The monster, at creation, is possessed of the usual kindly instincts of the simple man.

¹
Mrs. Shelley, op. cit., p. 179.

²
Ibid., p. 242.

³
She was, of course, the daughter of William Godwin.

Repulsed by all who see him, he finally takes up residence in an old barn, from where he can observe the family life of an old farmer and his daughter. From his hiding place he watches love spring up between the young girl and her suitor, and also becomes fairly well educated by listening to the young people as they instruct each other. In this way he becomes acquainted with "Paradise Lost", Plutarch's "Lives", and "The Sorrows of Werter". From these works the monster derives a false conception of mankind. He becomes acquainted with the old farmer, who, being blind, welcomes his company. For a while the monster is happy, and begins to believe he will be accepted by the world, but he is soon disillusioned. The young lovers appear, are horrified by his ferocious countenance, and drive him from the house. "From that moment," declares the monster, "I declared everlasting war against the species and against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this unsupportable misery." So, the monster is in reality a hero-villain, the prey of romantic melancholy, a disillusioned humanitarian.

From beginning to end, Mrs. Shelley's novel is a powerful piece of work, especially when she allows the monster to relate his own story, describing his emotions as he encounters new things in the world he has come to hate. Throughout, the literary level is high and sustained; Mrs. Shelley was indeed inspired as she wrote. The following is a typical example of her style and, incidentally, typical of the monster's feelings as well:

When night came, I quitted my retreat, and wandered in the wood; and now, no longer restrained by the fear of discovery, I gave vent to my anguish in fearful howlings. I was like a wild beast that had broken the coils; destroying the objects that obstructed me, and

ranging through the wood with a staglike swiftness. O! what a miserable night I passed! the cold stars shone in mockery, and the bare trees waved their branches above me: now and then the sweet voice of a bird burst forth amidst the universal stillness. All, save I, were at rest or in enjoyment: I, like the arch-fiend, bore a hell within me; and, finding myself unsympathised with, wished to tear up the trees, spread havoc and destruction around me, and then to have sat down and enjoyed the ruin.¹

"Oh! if I could only contrive a story which would frighten my reader as I myself had been frightened that night!"² This was Mrs. Shelley's intention in "Frankenstein", and it cannot be denied that she achieved it. Her basic story, the creation of a monster, is in itself horrible enough to haunt even a strong mind; and, as she describes the ravages of the monster and the troubled mind of its creator, blaming himself for its crimes, yet unable to prevent them, her novel gains in intensity. The idea of the pursuit of the monster by Frankenstein she perhaps obtained from her father's "Caleb Williams"³ which is essentially a novel of pursuit and is perhaps the first novel of this kind.

"Frankenstein" is not a novel of the Gothic School, but a few of the essential gothic elements still remain, and, because of its close association with the name of 'Monk' Lewis, it is usually included in any discussion of Gothic literature. The supernatural, so prominent in all the novels studied so far, is entirely absent in "Frankenstein"; but the

¹
Loc. cit.

²
E. A. Baker (History of the English Novel v. 5, p. 218.) quotes this as coming from Mrs. Shelley's Introduction. The quotation does not appear in the Everyman edition.

³
published 1794.

descriptions of wild scenery and rocky crags, that proved so effective in the works of Mrs. Radcliffe, reappear, and are put to good use. The monster is forced to live, by day, in the deep, dark forests, or in the uninhabited mountains, and his various encounters with Frankenstein always occur in these out of the way places. The gigantic conception of the monster may also be regarded as a throwback to the Gothic, although, actually, Frankenstein made his monster an outsize in order to facilitate the assembling of the various organs.

"Frankenstein's" link with the present is also evident. Here is a novel based upon scientific theory. Even today, scientists are still striving to create life in inanimate objects; occasionally we hear of one who declares he has succeeded. Allowing Mrs. Shelley the possibility of vital creation, the rest of her novel is extremely plausible. With the possible exception of her description of the monster's education, there are no events that tax the imagination of the reader, a sure sign that terror literature is quickly becoming more modern.

Nor is it very difficult to link "Frankenstein" into the early 'detective story' cycle as we have endeavored to do with the other novels discussed so far. ¹ "Frankenstein", like "Caleb Williams" before it, is a powerful pursuit novel --- the ceaseless expenditure of energy on the part of the pursuer (or 'detective') until his object is achieved and the criminal apprehended. Doctor Frankenstein died before his mission was

¹

Nothing was said in this regard about "The Monk". The only possible connection is its violence and preponderance of crime.

accomplished, but his death finally brought about the destruction of the monster.

We are now slowly but surely moving out of the Gothic era. Only two more phases of the novel of terror remain to be considered; its last magnificent dying spasm in "Melmoth the Wanderer", and Miss Austen's well-known gothic satire, "Northanger Abbey". En Avant!

CHAPTER VI

C. R. MATURIN AND "MELMOTH THE WANDERER"

"Eyes they wish they had never seen"¹

Just as science, engineering, and invention progress year by year, drawing on the experience of preceding generations, and always building towards a more perfect creation, so did the English Gothic novel progress until it reached its perfection in 1820, with C. R. Maturin's "Melmoth the Wanderer". From its inception in 1764, the Gothic novel in England passed through many phases, some beneficial, some unfortunate; what was now needed was the presence of some capable "gothicist" who could draw together the lessons of those sixty odd years and produce the masterpiece of Gothic fiction. Curiously enough, the man who did this necessary piece of work was an Irish clergyman, the Reverend Charles Robert Maturin.

Today, little is known of Maturin. He seems to have been an odd person; a good preacher, yet somewhat of a fop, and rather more fond of society than usually becomes a man of the Church. Maturin himself seems to have recognised his curious position as a churchman and an author,² for, in his introduction to "Melmoth", he is at some pains to justify his occupation as a novelist.

I cannot again appear before the public in so unseemly a character as that of a writer of romances, without regretting the necessity that compels me to it. Did my profession furnish me with the means of subsistence I should hold myself culpable indeed in having recourse to any

1

"Melmoth the Wanderer A Tale" by the author of "Bertram" etc. (C. R. Maturin) 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co. 1820) vol. 1, p. 31.

2

Maturin wrote six novels and one play: "The Fatal Revenge" 1807; "The Wild Irish Boy" 1808; "The Milesian Chief" 1812; "Bertram" (a play) 1816; "Women or Four et Centre" 1818, "Melmoth the Wanderer" 1820; "The Albigenses" 1824.

other but --- am I allowed the choice?¹

Already within the confines of this thesis the phrase "creative
 plagiarism"² has appeared. It is interesting to note that no less an
 authority than Mr. E. A. Baker uses almost the same phrase regarding
 Maturin who, he says, "made plagiarism a fine art justified by results".³
 Just as M. G. Lewis incorporated the traditional gothic legends into
 "The Monk", so did Maturin draw heavily upon this very same source,
 dwelling particularly on the one legend of "The Wandering Jew".⁴

The author himself declares that the direct inspiration for
 "Melmoth" came from a passage in one of his own sermons, a passage which
 he takes "the liberty" of quoting:

At this moment is there one of us present, however we may have de-
 parted from the Lord, disobeyed his will, and disregarded his word ---
 is there one of us who would, at this moment, accept all that man
 could bestow, or earth afford, to resign the hope of his salvation?
 No there is not one --- not such a fool on earth, were the enemy of
 mankind to traverse it with the offer.⁵

We may accept it as true that it was this passage that started Maturin
 on his masterpiece, but it is interesting to speculate on just what was
 going on in his mind as he wrote that sermon. The Reverend Charles
 Maturin was exceedingly well read in the English romances of terror; he
 was also a churchman; perhaps he did not believe what Monk Lewis would

¹
 Maturin, op. cit., Introduction p. xi.

²
Supra, p. 40.

³
 E. A. Baker, The History of the English Novel vol. v., p. 220.

⁴
Vide supra, p. 44, footnote 1.

⁵
 Maturin, op. cit., Introduction pp. ix-x.

have him believe; that the monk Ambrosio, no matter how far departed from the Lord would ever have been such a fool as "to resign the hope of his salvation".¹

The story of "Melmoth the Wanderer" opens in the autumn of 1816, in the presence of one John Melmoth, a young student of Trinity College, who has been called to attend the deathbed of his uncle in County Wicklow, Ireland. On arriving, young Melmoth soon discovers that his uncle is dying of fright. He has been frightened by the appearance of an ancestor, Jno. Melmoth, whose picture, inscribed with the date, anno 1646, hangs in his wine closet. Young Melmoth catches a glimpse of this picture, and describes it as being the picture of a man "with remarkable eyes, the eyes such as one feels they wish they had never seen and feels they can never forget".² These eyes are the eyes of Melmoth the Wanderer. Suddenly the original of the picture appears at the doorway, eyes blazing, and old Melmoth, with a terrible shriek, dies in the arms of his nephew.

Following the instructions of his uncle's will, John Melmoth discovers an old manuscript relating the adventures of an Englishman, Stanton, who had encountered the Wanderer in 1676. During the course of their conversation Stanton asked the Wanderer where he would meet him again. The answer was disquieting:

'The hour shall be midday' said the stranger, with a horrid and unintelligible smile; 'and the place shall be the bare walls of a mad-house where you shall rise rattling in your chains, and rustling from

¹

This is not offered as a possible explanation of Maturin's sermon, indeed, it is hardly even a probable explanation, but it is interesting to note this difference between "The Monk" and "Melmoth The Wanderer".

²

Maturin, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 31.

your straw, to greet me, yet still you shall have the curse of sanity; and of memory. My voice shall ring in your ears till then, and the glance of these eyes shall be reflected from every object animate or inanimate, till you behold them again.'¹

Eventually Melmoth's prediction came to pass, and Stanton found himself, a sane man, confined to a mad-house. Maturin's description of this mad-house is a powerful piece of work as he takes page after page to describe the ravings of the various lunatics. Suddenly, one night the figure of the Wanderer appeared before Stanton, taunted him with the horrors of slowly dying in prison, and finally offered him a chance of escape --- on conditions. Here, however, the manuscript becomes illegible, and is resumed only when the proposed conditions have been rejected by Stanton with the utmost rage and horror:

'Begone, monster, demon! begone to your native place. Even this mansion of horror trembles to contain you; its walls sweat, and its floors quiver, while you tread them.'²

The rest of the manuscript is again illegible, but it is possible for young Melmoth to discover that Stanton was finally liberated, and spent the rest of his life in pursuit of the Wanderer, but he never encountered him again. The manuscript concludes in Stanton's words:

'I have sought him everywhere --- the desire of meeting him once more is become as a burning fire within me, --- it is the necessary condition of my existence. I have vainly sought him at last in Ireland, of which I find he is a native. Perhaps our final meeting will be in'³

¹
Ibid., vol. 1, p. 104.

²
Ibid., vol. 1, p. 119.

³
Ibid., vol. 1, p. 123.

So ends the first tale concerning Melmoth the Wanderer. There are five others, all of them along the same theme. Misfortune overtakes the central character, and he or she is reduced to a pitiful condition from which there is no apparent escape. Suddenly Melmoth appears, "I never desert my friends in misfortune" he declared to Stanton, "when they are plunged in the lowest abyss of human calamity they are sure to be visited by me."¹ To each he offers his "unmentionable" conditions, but each time he is refused, thereby proving Maturin's contention that "there is not such a fool on earth as would resign the hope of his salvation were the enemy of mankind to traverse it with the offer." One of these stories, "The Tale of the Indians", differs from the others in that it shows the Wanderer in love with his intended victim. The power of love is so strong that Melmoth cannot bring himself to propose his horrible conditions, the only time he fails to do so. Due to the fact that very few persons today have read "Melmoth the Wanderer", it would, perhaps, be well to outline this most attractive story which illustrates best the peculiar turn of Maturin's imagination; the romantic and horrific history of Immalee.

Immalee is a beautiful young girl, who, having been cast up on a desert island when very young, has grown up a child of nature. As Maturin describes the beauties of this wonderful island, its waving trees and multifarious flowers, he far exceeds anything that Mrs. Radcliffe ever did. Maturin's style of nature painting is different from hers, however; it is not possible to pick out a passage as being typical

¹

Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 104-105.

of his style; the effect is achieved from the whole rather than from any part. His descriptions of streams, the only playfellows Immalee has ever known, are fine ~~accurate~~ descriptions of the feelings of the simple savage in contact with God through Nature.

To this isle of enchantment comes a stranger, who tells Immalee many tales of the outside world until she falls in love with him and desires to be taken into civilization. In Spain, she discovers her real father and mother; and Immalee, the Indian girl, becomes Signerita Isidora de Aliaga. In her new home Isidora is visited nightly by the stranger who continually reminds her of her former happy life, declaring, "the¹ life of the happy is all hopes, that of the unfortunate all memory." Isidora is still very much in love with this stranger, and when he asks for proof of her love the innocent and high-souled maiden replies, "Demand any proof that woman ought to give --- more is not in human power --- less² would render the proof of no value."

'Would you then consent to unite your destiny with mine? Would you indeed be mine amid misery and sorrow? Would you follow me from land to sea, and from sea to land, a restless, homeless, devoted being, with the brand on your brow and the curse on your name? Would you indeed be mine?'

'I would, I will.'

'Then,' answered Melmoth, 'on this spot receive the proof of my eternal gratitude. On this spot I renounce your sight! I disannul your engagement. I fly from you forever.' and as he spoke he disappeared.³

¹
Ibid., vol. 111, pp. 278-9

²
Ibid., vol. 111, p. 242.

³
Loc. cit.

Isidora, used to her lover's peculiar ways, thinks little of this passionate outburst, and continues with the wedding preparations, which are still secret from her family. A few days later, a letter arrives from her father whom she has not yet seen; he declares he is bringing Don Gregorio Montilla, as a husband for her. On reading this Isidora collapses, and later, when her lover reappears, she declares to him that she will be a "bride of the grave"¹ before she will be a bride of the Montilla. Accordingly, they are married in a ruined monastery by an unseen monk.²

At this point another tale is interjected, "The Tale of Guzman's Family", but we will pass over it and return to Isidora's father, who, on the road to his castle, is overtaken by a stranger who warns him that there is an evil eye fixed upon his daughter.

'An eye whose fascination is more deadly than that fabled of the snake! There is an arm extended to seize her in whose grasp humanity withers! That arm even now relaxes for a moment, its fibres thrill with pity and horror; it releases the victim for a moment, it even beckons her father to her aid! Don Francisco do you understand me now? Has this tale interest or application for you? If it has, lose not a moment to save your daughter.'³

Meanwhile, Isidora has been trying to persuade the stranger, now her husband, to reveal himself as her mate and the father of the child that is seen to be born. This he will not do, nor will he listen to her pleas that he convert to Christianity; however, he does promise that when

¹
Ibid., vol. 111, p. 361.

²
It is later revealed that this monk was dead even as he "married" them, having been killed by the stranger because he would not consent to perform the marriage. Isidora remarks at the time that the monk's hand is "clammy cold". Ibid., vol. 111, p. 370.

³
Ibid., vol. 111, p. 356.

their baby is born it shall be a Christian. The next day Don Francisco arrives with Isidora's proposed bridegroom. The two lovers plan to escape that very evening during a masked ball, but Isidora's brother, Fernan, discovers the plan, and tries to prevent it. In the ensuing struggle Fernan is killed, and the stranger, who is Isidora's husband, stands revealed for the first time as MELMOTH THE WANDERER. He tries to get Isidora to accompany him, but she faints on the body of her brother. Melmoth himself is permitted to leave. "'Leave him to God,' was the universal exclamation, 'you could not leave him in worse hands. He will certainly be damned!'"¹

Eventually Isidora recovers, and her baby is born and baptised. Then she is imprisoned by the inquisition in the hope that Melmoth will visit her there and so be captured, but such is not the case. Both child and mother die, unattended, in the prison cell; Isidora's last words being "Paradise! Will he be there?"²

So ends the story of Innalee. We have gone to some length in outlining the plot, but the time has not been wasted, as this story illustrates the beauties as well as the horrors of Maturin's style. It will be seen that the creator of "Melmoth" is not of the school of Lewis, raw heads and bloody bones are not for him, yet he manages to outdo all other Gothic romanticists in the accumulation of blood-curdling and heart-rending effects. E. A. Baker has defined this aspect of Maturin's

¹ Ibid., vol. III, pp. 400-401.

² Ibid., vol. IV, p. 63.

work in an admirable sentence which, however, also needs further explanation itself:

By sheer psychological finesse he plays upon that ineradicable susceptibility to numbing suspense and awe at mysterious contacts with the other world which is the special object of the connoisseur of terror.¹

"Psychological suspense" are perhaps the two words most descriptive of Maturin's style. He has his scenes of horror of course; no good terror novel is without them. Asylums full of raving lunatics; persecution in the cells of the Inquisition; persons condemned to die in air-tight chambers; perilous escapes through underground tunnels; these and many more terrible episodes are contained in "Melmoth the Wanderer"; but what contributes most towards the feeling of the horrible that engrosses the reader is Maturin's mysterious method of progressing with his tale. The reader is never fully informed as to what is going on, mystery overclouds every tale. For example, we are not told who the stranger is that overtakes Isidora's father on the road and warns him against the evil eye. We suspect that it is the Wanderer himself. Nor are we ever informed as to just what the Wanderer's terrible proposition to those in trouble really is; he either whispers it so that none can hear, or the manuscript becomes illegible and we are prevented from knowing the exact phrasing of the proposition. Of course, we suspect that Melmoth is trying to force these poor unfortunates to sell their souls to the devil, but just why he is doing this is not revealed until the end of the book. Not until the novel is finished are we able to form any clear picture of Melmoth the Wanderer, and even then, we must

1

Baker, op. cit., p. 221.

form the picture ourselves.

Melmoth is, of course, Maturin's conception of the legend of "The Wandering Jew". "Maturin," says Mr. Baker, "took the Faust of tradition and of Goethe and cunningly blended him with the mocking spirit of Mephistopheles, and into the same synthesis went the fearful conception of the Wandering Jew." ¹ At no place in his long four volume work does Maturin attempt a full length portrait of the Wanderer. Such was not his design, for he would rather keep Melmoth as a mysterious being, incapable of description. However, at the very end, the Wanderer himself tells the story of his miraculous existence:

'I obtained from the enemy of souls a range of existence beyond the period allotted to mortality --- a power to pass over space without disturbance or delay, and visit remote regions with the swiftness of thought --- to encounter tempests without the hope of their blasting me, and penetrate into dungeons whose bolts were as flax and tow at my touch. This power was accorded to me that I might be enabled to tempt wretches in their fearful hour of extremity, with the promise of deliverance and immunity, on condition of their exchanging situations with me.

No one has ever exchanged destinies with Melmoth the Wanderer. I have traversed the world in the search, and no one to gain that world would lose his own soul. Not Stanton in his cell, nor Moncada in the prison of the Inquisition, nor Walberg who saw his children perishing with want, nor another.²

The Wanderer relates the above story to his young relative, John Melmoth, whom he comes to visit. Melmoth the Wanderer has now suddenly become very old, his eyes are no longer bright. He declares his end is near, and during the night he disappears. The next morning John follows his

¹

Ibid., pp. 220-221.

²

Maturin, op. cit., vol. IV, pp. 440-441. "Another" refers, of course, to Immalee.

footprints outside to the edge of a cliff overlooking the ocean.

There was a kind of track as if a person had dragged or been dragged his way through it --- a downtrodden track over which no footsteps but those impelled by force had ever passed. On a crag below --- a handkerchief, the one the Wanderer had worn about his neck --- that was the last trace of the Wanderer.¹

So, even his death remains a mystery.

There has been very little written about "Melmoth the Wanderer" in recent years, but almost every critic in passing remarks that 'a worse constructed book hardly exists,' referring, of course, to the veritable tangle of tales that makes up the story of the Wanderer. Yet are we justified in condemning Maturin for this lack of coherent construction? I think not. In the first place, his very plan of showing how people in their right minds would spurn the chance of selling their souls to the devil, no matter how desperate their situation, necessitated a series of stories, each different, but each with the same inevitable result. Maturin had two courses open to him: to set up each story as a separate chapter, the whole forming a novel only by reason of their being bound together; or to weave his various stories into a rather loose and fluid plot structure and run the risk of condemnation. This latter method was also of great use to the author in creating the effect he desired. By placing stories within stories he is able graphically to convey the impression that the Wanderer is above such mundane considerations as time and space. Actually Melmoth is never two places at the same time, but Maturin's plot structure often gives one that impression. Someone will be relating a tale wherein the Wanderer appears, a tale that is so long

¹

Ibid., vol. IV, pp. 452-453.

and involved that the reader almost forgets that it is only a story, when suddenly, the Wanderer with his blazing eyes is in the room facing the story teller. This method gives a psychological shock to the reader; he never knows when, or where, the Wanderer is going to appear, and he always does just when he is least expected.

It has occurred to the present writer that a rather good case could be built up for the contention that "Melmoth" is a gothic novel more by chance than by design. The reason for this contention is that Maturin in several places indulges in bitter satire against the Catholic Church in particular, and against the Irish people in general; and, in order to make his satire (in the case of the Church it is better described as 'invective') all the more forceful, he introduces many of the Gothic elements that appear in "Melmoth".

The book opens with a picture of an Irish household that far exceeds anything Syngé ever drew. Young Melmoth stands in the front yard of his uncle's house, "a house exhibiting signs of penury that have¹ been aggravated and sharpened into downright misery." John, discovering the knocker has rusted away from the door, has to pound on it with a stone; then, being attacked by a gigantic mastiff with "eyes that glow and fangs that grin,"² he is forced to open the door uninvited, and make his way to the kitchen. There he finds an old housekeeper and some followers, "(i.e. people who ate, drank, and lounged about in any kitchen that was open in the neighborhood on any occasion of grief or joy, all

¹
Ibid., vol. I, p. 7.

²
Ibid., vol. I, p. 8.

for 'his honor's sake,' and for the great 'respect' they bore the family).¹ Also present is the local doctor, an old woman "who prolonged her squalid existence by practising on the fears, the ignorance and the sufferings of beings as miserable as herself."²

Suddenly old Melmoth, upstairs, rings his signal bell and the whole company rushes to his room:

The housekeeper rushed into the room, followed by a number of women, (the Irish praeficae), all ready to prescribe for the dying or weep for the dead --- all clapping their hard hands, or wiping their dry eyes. These hags all surrounded the bed: to witness their loud, wild, or desperate grief, their cries of 'Oh! he's going, his honor's going, his honor's going,' one would have imagined their lives were bound up in his, like those of the wives in the story of Sinbad the Sailor, who were to be interred alive with their deceased husbands.³

On reading such passages as these, one is inclined to wonder whether Maturin is practising the satire of exaggeration, or merely giving a true picture of Irish life. One rather suspects the latter to be the case. At any rate it is obvious that Maturin is no apologist for his own people.

After reading "The Spaniard's Tale" in "Melmoth the Wanderer", one is not surprised to learn that Maturin was a Protestant clergyman, and a violent anti-Catholic, that much is obvious in the one tale. The story concerns Moncada, a Spanish youth, who, against his will, has been placed in a monastery. There, because of his reluctance to become a monk, he is persecuted and tortured by the inmates with the full co-operation of the Superior. All the furniture of his cell is removed, forcing him to sleep on the cold stone floor; he is denied entrance to

¹ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 9.

² Ibid., vol. 1, p. 10.

³ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 18.

entrance to the chapel; his brothers spit in his face as they pass; they paint the walls of his cell with hideous phosphorescent demons, and keep him awake by shouting in his ear. These, and many other subtle forms of torture are used in the hope of forcing him to become a monk. Finally, with the help of his brother, Moncada manages to escape, but he is recaptured and placed in the cells of the Inquisition. Here he is visited by the Wanderer who offers him freedom on one condition, "a condition which I am forbid to reveal, except in the act of confession."¹ It is, of course, refused. Later Moncada escapes once more; he takes a ship to Ireland, but during a storm the ship is wrecked on the Irish coast; young John Melmoth manages to rescue Moncada who tells him this story as he recuperates.

Maturin is unbelievably bitter when he speaks of the Catholics. According to the picture he paints, the Superior and the monastic brothers are nothing more nor less than impressment officers who will stop at nothing in order to gain recruits. They affect an outward show of piety and good works, but in the privacy of their monastery no practice is too vile. Maturin's opportunities for the production of gothic terror are manifold in this dreary monastery inhabited by sadistically inclined monks.

It is extremely difficult adequately to present to the reader a concise picture of the actual terror that Maturin's novel produces even today. The reason for this, as has been stated before, is because the terror is psychological, and is derived from the whole rather than from

¹
Ibid., vol. II, p. 105. These words are Moncada's.

any single part. Just what was the reaction of the reading public in 1820 has, unfortunately, not been recorded, but "Melmoth" was extremely popular,¹ and without a doubt there were many readers who, in the words of Gray,² could not "go to bed o' nights."

Maturin's influence on literary men was profound. His work fascinated the most fastidious judges. It was imitated by Victor Hugo in "Han d'Islande (1823), and continued by Balzac in one of the "Études philosophiques," "Melmoth réconcilié". Tributes were also forthcoming from such writers as Poe, Mélior, Baudelaire, Adam, Thackeray, Rossetti, Stevenson, and Oscar Wilde. So, the fame of "Melmoth the Wanderer" was more than considerable in the years immediately following its publication, yet today it is virtually unknown. However, the name of Maturin, a name that would have died with its possessor but for his one great creation, still lives. No work on the history of the early English novel is complete without some mention of the creator of Melmoth, for, as George Saintsbury declares, "Maturin stands or falls by the Wanderer with the piercing eyes and those who can comprehend the literature of power will say that whatever slips and staggering, he stands."³

Throughout this thesis so far, an attempt has been made to link each work studied into the detective story cycle. Sometimes the

¹ There were three (English) editions by the end of 1821; and one (French) translation.

² Vide supra, p. 7.

³ George Saintsbury in The Cambridge History of English Literature vol. X, p. 304.

connection has been obvious; sometimes it has been strained; but the intention has been merely to point out that elements of detective fiction were lying dormant in these early novels of terror. In this connection "Melmoth the Wanderer" presents a problem. No apology is necessary for its inclusion here as it is the natural climax to any discussion of Gothic literature, but neither can any elements of detective fiction be found in its pages. Yet, the influence of Maturin's "psychological terror" on Edgar Allan Poe is at once obvious, and is not Poe to become one of the fathers of the detective novel?

CHAPTER VII

TWO "GOTHIC" NOVELS

Perhaps the greatest compliment that could have been paid to the Gothic novelists was the fact that two of the leading writers of the early nineteenth century considered their work as being of sufficient importance to merit satire.

As a rule, satirists do not expend their wit upon insignificant objects. Considering then, the literary importance of the Gothic Novel in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is not surprising that Jane Austen produced her "Northanger Abbey",¹ and Thomas Love Peacock followed soon after with another satire entitled, "Nightmare Abbey".² Even if the reader were not acquainted with the works of these two authors, it would be possible to deduce their respective styles from these names alone. Miss Austen, with her usual subtle brand of satire, is content to call her place of mystery 'Northanger Abbey'; while Peacock, with his joyous love of the excess and the ludicrous, strikes terror to the heart of his reader with the heart-rending title, "Nightmare Abbey".

Miss Austen's satire was begun in 1798, probably soon after she had read "The Mysteries of Udolpho", for it is against that work in particular that her gentle irony is employed. It is not necessary here to go into a detailed description of the plot of "Northanger Abbey", but some attempt will be made to indicate the extent and direction of the satire employed. In the first place, Miss Austen's heroine, Catherine

¹ Written in 1798, but not published until 1818.

² Published in 1818.

Morland, is a peculiar romantic heroine, in that she is a perfectly plain girl, born of a perfectly respectable and perfectly healthy family.

Speaking of Mrs. Morland the authoress says:

She had three sons before Catherine was born; and, instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on --- lived to have six children more --- to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself. A family of ten children will always be called a fine family, where there are heads and arms and legs enough for the number; but the Morlands had little other right to the world, for they were in general very plain, and Catherine, for many years of her life, as plain as any.¹

Nor are Catherine Morland's talents in any way outstanding; she cannot play, sing, or compose poetry, nor has she any desire to do so. "What a strange unaccountable character!" says Miss Austen:

At present she did not know her own poverty, for she had no lover to pourtray in verse. She had reached the age of seventeen, without having seen one amiable youth who could call forth her sensibility; without having inspired one real passion, and without having excited even any admiration but what was very moderate and very transient.²

A fine romantic heroine to be sure!

During the course of the story, Catherine visits Northanger Abbey where, as is usual in such cases, she undergoes many terrifying experiences. From her observations, and from very suspicious actions on the part of the lord of the Castle, Catherine deduces that he has murdered his wife. She regards him as a regenerated Montoni, until she is informed that Mrs. Tilney died a natural death from a very unromantic disease --- bilious fever.

1

The Novels of Jane Austen. Winchester Edition. Volume IX. "Northanger Abbey," (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1911), p. 2.

2

Ibid., p. 6.

3

A General Tilney. His "suspicious actions" are long morning walks which "did not speak a mind at ease, or a conscience void of reproach." p. 245.

never.

Catherine's room is another source of excitement. She discovers an old cabinet in a darkened corner, and although the key is in the lock she finds that turning it does not bring about the desired result for the door remains firmly closed. Suddenly, after another turn of the key,¹ the door opens, and, in a bottom drawer, she finds a battered old manuscript. "Her heart fluttered, her knees trembled, and her cheeks grew pale. She seized with an unsteady hand the precious manuscript."² Then her candle goes out --- a violent gust of wind --- footsteps in the corridor ---

Catherine trembled from head to foot. Human nature could support no more. A cold sweat stood on her forehead, the manuscript fell from her hand, and groping her way to the bed, she jumped hastily in and sought some suspension of agony by creeping far underneath the clothes. To close her eyes in sleep that night she felt must be entirely out of the question.³

After a sleepless night, (she went to sleep at three o'clock), Catherine jumps out of bed and flies to the manuscript:

Her greedy eye glanced rapidly over a page. She started at its import. An inventory of linen, in coarse and modern characters seemed all that was before her! She held a washing bill in her hand!⁴

So Jane Austen "out-Radcliffes" Mrs. Radcliffe; the latter's mysteries were real enough despite their natural explanations; Miss Austen's

1

Later Catherine finds the closet was unlocked; the first turn of the key locked it and made the second turn necessary.

2

Austen, op. cit., p. 227.

3

Ibid., p. 228.

4

Ibid., p. 231.

mysteries are mysteries only in the mind of her misguided heroine.

To the present writer, "Northanger Abbey" is of prime importance as authentic evidence of the popularity and influence of the Gothic novel in England. Miss Austen has long been upheld as the great authority on "the middling classes of society,"¹ and there is no reason to doubt that her descriptions of feminine reaction to terror novels are anything but accurate.

'But my dearest Catherine what have you been doing with yourself all this morning? Have you gone on with Udolpho?'

'Yes I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil.'

'Are you indeed? How delightful! Oh! I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are you not wild to know?'

'Oh! yes, what can it be? But do not tell me: I would not be told upon any account. I know it must be a skeleton; I am sure it is Laurentina's skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it, I assure you'

'Dear creature ... when you have finished Udolpho, we will read the Italian together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you.'

'Have you indeed? How glad I am! What are they all?'

'I will read you their names directly; here they are in my pocket-book: Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine, and Horrid Mysteries. Those will last us some time.'

'Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid? Are you sure they are all horrid?'

'Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine, a Miss Andrews, a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read every one of them.'²

1

The phrase, I believe, is Sir Walter Scott's.

2

Austen, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39. Of the seven "horrid stories" mentioned, Miss Dorothy Scarborough (*The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, 1917) has managed to identify four of them. "Clermont is by Maria Regina Roche; Mysterious Warnings by Mrs. Parsons in London, 1796; Midnight Bell by Francis Latham; and Horrid Mysteries by Marquis Grosse, London, 1796." Scarborough *op. cit.*, p. 49.

A few pages further on we find that eminent gig-driver, Mr. John Thorpe, declaring:

'I never read novels! Novels are so full of nonsense and stuff! there has not been a tolerably decent one come out since "Tom Jones", except "The Monk". I read that t'other day; Mrs. Radcliffe's novels are amusing enough, they are worth reading; some fun and nature in them.'¹

This then, was the consensus of opinion at the end of the eighteenth century on the Gothic novel of terror; it was 'delightful', and 'amazingly horrid' to the ladies; and the only real type of literature for a man of action. Miss Austen is satirising the terror novel and its readers, yet obviously she herself was an interested and well read "gothicist".

Some writers go so far as to attribute the downfall of the Gothic reign of terror, in part, at least, to Miss Austen's "Northanger Abbey"; a glance at any reliable bibliography will explode this contention; for despite the fact that "Northanger" was published in 1818, horror novels were still extremely popular in the eighteen-sixties.

That Thomas Love Peacock was a satirist none will deny; but it is not always possible to detect just what is the object of his satire, for Peacock followed no rules, going only where his fancy led him. He was full of prejudices, and made his stories the vehicle for expressing them. In his writings Peacock violated all conventions, and set at defiance all rules, yet there are few more fascinating novelists. His humour is of

¹

Ibid., pp. 32-33.

the kind that must be felt and cannot be described, and his style has never been surpassed.

"Nightmare Abbey" was the first book in which Peacock's skill had full play. "Better and purer English has seldom, if ever, been written" declares Herbert Paul, "and the difficulty of quoting from it is that one would like to quote every word."¹ Like all of Peacock's novels, "Nightmare Abbey" is a compendium of prejudice. It is a satire on German tales of horror, the metaphysics of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe, and other set objects of the author's aversion.

"Nightmare Abbey", declares Peacock,
 is a venerable family mansion in a highly picturesque state of semi-dilapidation² pleasantly situated on a strip of dry land between the sea and the fens at the verge of the country of Lincoln, and has the honor of being the seat of Christopher Glowry Esquire. This gentleman was naturally of an atrabibarious temperament and much troubled with those phantoms of indigestion which are commonly called blue devils.³

So much for the Lord of the Castle; hardly an imposing figure the reader will agree!

The real point of interest in Nightmare Abbey is the son, Scythrop⁴ Glowry, a young man "troubled with the passion for reforming the world, who sleeps with "Horrid Mysteries" under his pillow, and dreams of venerable sleutheracks and ghostly confederates holding midnight conventions

¹ "Thomas Love Peacock", The Nineteenth Century Magazine, April, 1903, p. 164.

² The reader will recall that true Castles of Terror are always "ruined", never "dilapidated".

³ The only case of a "haunted" man carrying his ghosts around with him. "Nightmare Abbey", by T.L. Peacock. (Everyman Edition) p.197.

⁴ Scythrop is a caricature of Shelley which he is said to have enjoyed immensely.

in subterranean caves.¹ His favorite pastime, we are informed, is passing whole mornings in his study "immersed in gloomy reverie, stalking about the room in his nightcap, which he pulls over his eyes like a cowl and with his striped calico dressing gown folded around him like the mantle of a conspirator."² Scythrop feels that for the future benefit of mankind he must take all possible precautions for his own safety; accordingly, with the aid of a dumb carpenter he turns his tower room into a mediaeval castle with cells, recesses, sliding panels, and secret passages "that would have baffled the skill of the Parisian police."³

As becomes all heroes, Scythrop falls in love with his cousin, Miss Marionetta Celestina O'Carroll, whom he designates as "the companion of my studies, the partner of my thoughts, the auxiliary of my great designs for the emancipation of mankind."⁴ To consummate their great love, Scythrop proposes an old mediaeval right:

"Do as Rosalina does with Carlos, divine Marionetta. Let us each open a vein in the other's arm, mix our blood in a bowl and drink it as a sacrament of love. Then we shall see visions of transcendental illumination, and soar on the wings of ideas into the space of pure intelligence."⁵

¹ "Nightmare Abbey" by Thomas Love Peacock (Everyman: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1908) p. 191.

² Ibid., pp. 191-192.

³ A neat touch! A "dumb" carpenter could not reveal the secret of the sliding panels.

⁴ Peacock, op. cit., p. 193.

⁵ Ibid., p. 199.

⁶ Loc. cit.

"Marionetta," reports Peacock gleefully, "could not reply; she had not
 so strong a stomach as Rosalina."¹

Nor is Peacock able to resist a satirical thrust at the time honored legend of the Wandering Jew. His "Jew" is an Englishman, Mr. Toobad, "the Manichaeen Millenarian". Mr. Toobad, instead of wandering the world in search of victims, is content to drift from room to room echoing the twelfth chapter of Revelations:

'Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea for the devil is come among you, having great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.'²

Along with these remarkable qualities, "Nightmare Abbey" contains what is probably the shortest, and undoubtedly the best ghost story in any language. It is told by the Reverend Mr. Larynx:

'I once saw a ghost myself, in my study, which is the last place where anyone but a ghost would look for me. I had not been into it for three months, and was going to consult Tilletson, when, on opening the door, I saw a venerable figure in a flannel dressing gown sitting in my arm chair, and reading my Jeremy Taylor. It vanished in a moment, and so did I; and what it was or what it wanted I have never been able to ascertain.'³

This is a good note to end on. Throughout this section we have been dealing with ghosts; musical ghosts, bleeding ghosts, noisy ghosts, and quiet ghosts, but it took the amazing imagination of Thomas Love Peacock to give us a "flannel dressing gowned ghost".

This short chapter on "Northanger Abbey" and "Nightmare Abbey"

¹
Ibid., p. 200.

²
Ibid., p. 188.

³
Ibid., p. 275.

has been added here not because these books are of any great importance in the history of the detective novel; but because they were occasioned by the Gothic novel of terror, and because they show a change in the course of literature. At this time people are still reading horror stories with great interest; Sir Walter Scott is at the height of his career; yet here are two writers who are asking the reading public to read novels intelligently rather than emotionally. Miss Austen shows what is likely to happen to an imaginative young girl who is carried away by her readings in terror literature. Peacock's satire, ludicrous as it often is, required intellectual concentration on the part of the reader. Both novels are unconscious pleas for intellectual novels as opposed to emotional novels. That plea is soon to be answered by Poe, who gives to the world the science of deductive reasoning disguised in novel form.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

We have now reached a position in the history of the Gothic novel from which we can view it retrospectively, and perhaps determine a few of its leading characteristics.

In the first place, Gothic romances always deal with the upper middle classes, probably for the very simple reason that the upper classes constituted the largest portion of the reading public; or, perhaps
(commentary)
Charles Dickens's facetious *commentary* on ghosts contains more truth than fiction. "A ghost," he declares, "is one of the privileges of the upper classes, a genteel distinction to which the common people have no claim."¹

The setting of the Gothic novel is also standardized; the most important feature, introduced by Horace Walpole, being a ruined castle or its equivalent. Scenes are invariably laid in mediaeval buildings; a castle, a convent, a monastery, a chateau, or an inquisitional prison. In fact, of the six novels studied, Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein" was the only one that did not meet this requirement, and as we have already seen, her work was a slight departure from the usual gothic theme. Having built his mediaeval castle, the author's next act is to furnish it with antique, dust covered furniture, rotting tapestry, long dark passageways, treacherous stairways, and, if possible, a sizeable collection of secret passages. In this respect the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe and Charles Maturin far exceeded all others in the field.

These two authors also hold first place in a characteristic of Gothic fiction that is very closely associated with mediaeval architecture; namely, scenery, not for its own sake, but for the profound effect

it has on the characters in the novel. Nature always emphasises the feelings of the characters upon which it is at work; for example, in "The Mysteries of Udolpho", Emily reaches Udolpho just at twilight; she emerges from the dark forests to see the castle in the last dim rays of the setting sun, and all her fears of ghosts and terrible happenings are at once confirmed. Had she reached Udolpho in broad daylight, the effect would have been destroyed.

Closely connected with scenery, and a necessary part of any Gothic novel, is weather; preferably bad weather. There must be a wind to howl down the lonely corridors and snuff out the heroine's candle at the appropriate moment; there must be thunder and lightning to herald the approach of Satan or his minions. There is rarely a peaceful night in Gothic fiction. This use of nature and the elements did not originate with the Gothic novelists. It had been used previously by the greatest master of "gothic" fiction, William Shakespeare, in his "King Lear". The poet's picture of the tragic hero wandering the heath during a terrible storm with a much more terrible storm in his heart is the same towards which Mrs. Radcliffe and Maturin were striving as they tried to synchronize their descriptions of nature with the feelings of their characters.

The real hero of any Gothic novel is the ghost; in fact often the novel exists for no other purpose than the introduction of this highly important character. Ghosts come in highly assorted shapes and sizes as have already noted. In "The Castle of Otranto", we have a gigantic ghost who carelessly leaves his helmet lying around; and we must not forget the "fleshless jaws and empty sockets" of the skeleton wrapped in the hermit's

cowl which so startles Frederick; nor the amazing ghost that steps out of the picture frame. In "The Old English Baron" the ghosts are more normal, and of different sexes; one clad in full armour, the other attractively dressed in the fashion of the period. They, as will be remembered, appear at the foot of Edmund's bed to confirm his suspicions of his true identity. Mrs. Radcliffe in "The Mysteries of Udolpho", uses only imaginary ghosts, but they are exceptionally numerous, and, because they are intangible (even for ghosts), are perhaps more than usually terrifying. As noted however, they suffer because they are explained at the end of the book. Monk Lewis, in his hideous tale, features only one "bona fide" ghost; but it is beyond a doubt the most horrible and most effective ghost in literature. The Bleeding Nun, a ghost which is so tangible it can kiss the person it haunts, yet so transient that it defies time and space. There are no real ghosts in "Melmoth the Wanderer", although the monks persecute Moncada by impersonating ghosts, but in this novel no ghost is necessary on account of the presence of the Wanderer.

This brings us to the entertaining subject of The Wandering Jew; certainly he is no ghost, yet he seems to possess its astounding powers of transit, appearing and disappearing at will. There are many different versions of the origin of the legend of the Wandering Jew, a few of which will be dealt with in appendix A.

Along with the Wandering Jew, we have other figures, this time human ones, who inspire almost as much terror as do the ghosts. Montoni

1

Vide p. 156

in Mrs. Radcliffe's "Mysteries", Matilda in "The Monk", the old woman doctor in Melmoth, all may be suspected of being capable of intercourse with the devil. Satan himself is a frequent visitor to Gothic novels, usually appearing in the allegorical form of temptation, although he does appear in person in "The Monk" as we have seen.

The pure supernatural is also popular in Gothic fiction, as, for example, the waving of the plumes on the gigantic helmet in "Otranto", or the mysterious opening of the doors in "The Old English Baron" as the new and rightful owner approaches. Usually, as in these two cases, the supernatural effect is used to portend some good or evil that is to come. Mystery, as we have seen in the works of Mrs. Radcliffe and Maturin, also plays an important part; the reader is continually in doubt as to what is going to occur next.

There are, in Gothic fiction, only two types of characters, the good and the bad, the white and the black. The heroine is a pure minded girl given to swooning and weeping, yet her curiosity always involves her in terrifying circumstances. The hero is gracious, gentle, and mellifluous-tongued, yet capable of the utmost bravery when it is necessary. The villains all strive to outdo each other. They are threateningly rough, or subtly cruel; and if they are not Lords of Castles, or officials of the Inquisition, they are monks, or fiends in human form.

But enough of this generalization. This chapter is not intended as a compendium of the elements of Gothic literature, it is merely an attempt to point out the more salient features in any good horror story.

Throughout this first section, we have striven to locate latent

elements of the modern detective story concealed in these Gothic novels of terror, and our search has not been entirely unrewarded. We have noted the struggle against evil, the plea for justice, and the vindication of the good as opposed to the destruction of the bad. Both Ambrosio and Melmoth, the agents of evil, are destroyed in the end. Mrs. Radcliffe gave us the science (if it can so be called at this early date) of reasoning. She had created her mysteries, and had to provide reasonable means to account for them. Mrs. Shelley introduced Science as an important factor in the novel, and, as the years progressed, it was to become, in the detective novel, all important. Nor is her pursuit theme to be overlooked; as the chase, the attempts of the detective to apprehend the criminal, is the most exciting feature of modern fiction.

These, then, are a few of the latent detective elements that we have managed to uncover in Gothic fiction. None of them is particularly important as far as the modern detective novel is concerned, but no one would deny that the latter is a direct offspring of the former, and it is interesting to note that in the Gothic novel there is enough evidence to prove the relationship.

SECTION II

THE DETECTIVE STORY

THE DETECTIVE STORY

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago the detective story was regarded as being an extremely low form of literature; and even today, when the good detective novel is beginning to assume its correct position in the literary world, professedly literary persons can be heard dismissing the detective novelist as a half-educated, incompetent hack, who writes for the consumption of persons absolutely devoid of culture and literary taste. It is indeed strange that while love stories and romances have been awarded a creditable place in the world of literature, based on a consideration of the masterpieces of each type, the detective story has been relegated to a lowly position, based on a consideration of its many failures. While an inferior romance is regarded merely as a defective specimen of a respectable class, the detective story is apt to be condemned without trial as a disreputable type of literature. However, as already noted, this false attitude towards the detective story is gradually dying out, principally because detective story writing is becoming a fine art indulged in only by persons of extreme literary accomplishment, and also because we hear continually that world famous persons are enthusiastic readers of detective literature.

Today the detective novel is a five million dollar business, and is the most popular type of fiction in the world. The question, why do we read detective fiction? naturally comes to our minds. The first response to this question is, of course, we read detective fiction because it is escape literature. The good detective story transports the reader from his daily life --- the grind of office work --- and places him in an

attractive atmosphere of crime which is harmless because it is not real. In the book of crime the reader experiences the sensation of seeing his primitive self in action. Killing and stealing are robust acts which man has always delighted in, and through the medium of the detective story it is possible to indulge in this primitive pastime with no disastrous results to the reader or to society. Then too, we are all potential sleuths. Vigilant in our duties to society, we delight in the chase, and rejoice when we are able to aid in the apprehension of the evil-doer. So the reader is doubly involved; morally, he is the criminal satisfying his innermost desires, ethically and intellectually, he is the master-mind who tracks down the criminal to the benefit and well-being of Society. The person who wrote, "We read detective stories because underneath we are all as full of crime as Sing Sing," might have added 'and because we are morally obligated to the preservation of Society.'

For the type of reader described above --- the reader who loves to see his primitive self in action --- a detective story must be violent. There must be action, shootings, stabbings, corpses, and all the other outward manifestations of violence. That is one type of detective novel, and it has its ardent devotees; but there is another type which is usually on a much higher plane and generally appeals to persons of higher intellectual level. In this second type a corpse is the prime requisite; there must be a murder --- or a robbery --- preferably in the first few pages, then the detective enters and the story is underway. This type of detective literature is popular because it provides a stirring mental

1
reference unknown.

exercise with just enough of the background of life to distinguish it from a problem in mathematics. The reader enjoys the trial of wits with the author and, if he manages, after a struggle, to solve the mystery before the detective does, a glow of pride results and he plunges on to fresh conquests. If he fails, his reverence for the author is intensified, his appetite is whetted, and he longs to do battle again.

From this we can see that detective novels assume, in general, two forms; the emotional form, which is popular with persons of inferior intellect and is generally second class literature, and the intellectual form, in which some of the greatest minds in the world delight. This latter type is perhaps the most difficult form of fiction to master and a good novel of this type well deserves a place among the really great works of fiction.

The good detective story may also be regarded as an escape from literature as well as life. As a revolt from literature, it is a revolt from subjectivity to objectivity, from emotion to intellect. The reader of modern social novels soon becomes appalled by their intense realism, their continual appeal to the emotions, their characters, who are either controlled by destiny or are victims of their own misguided actions. We are all well aware of this form which most of our modern novels assume. After a novel of this type, it is a welcome relief to escape to a good detective novel which is utterly divorced from realism. In fact the charm of the pure detective novel lies in its utter unreality; no one actually believes a murder has been committed; we have no personal feelings for the corpse; it is just a necessary part of the story. We plunge into the pure

detective story with our intellect, not our emotions, we do not ask to be shocked, horrified, or appalled, all we ask is that the facts of the case be placed in our hands where we can manipulate them in scientific fashion. Nor are we bothered by the characters, for there are none. With the possible exception of the detective himself, the persons in the story are merely puppets, and we are delighted to see them dance as a firm hand pulls the strings. In short, the detective story, if well written, is an enthralling game played with skill and science in which the pieces possess no more real personality than do the rooks and pawns in a game of chess.

Underneath all these obvious reasons for the popularity of detective fiction lie a multitude of other reasons most of which are psychological. Usually we are not even aware that they are at work as we read. In the first place, the detective novel flourishes only where the reader's sympathies are on the side of law and order. Nor is it possible to have a detective novel until the public has an idea of what constitutes proof. 'A criminal is innocent until he is proven guilty', that is the underlying principle behind each detective novel. The detective story is essentially a democratic institution; it is produced on a large scale only in democracies; it dramatizes many of the social rights and privileges that democratic peoples enjoy. Direct corroboration of this claim for detective fiction comes from Nazi Germany where imported detective novels have been banned as being nothing but pure liberalism designed to stuff the heads of German readers with foreign ideas.

To the reader with a romantic turn of mind, the detective in the popular novel is the Robin Hood or the Sir Launcelot of 1943. Ellery

queen and Lord Peter Wimsey are cosmopolites; they draw no class distinctions, and accept a client as a client be he rich or poor, the one object is to help him out of his difficulty.

Finally, as noted before, the detective novel offers a safety valve to the reader. It permits him to murder a few undesirables, and then, repenting, to revenge his awful deed as the detective who, and perhaps this is the greatest attraction to many readers, is able, because of his superior knowledge, to laugh at the Police and flaunt their traditional slowness and ignorance in their very faces.

CHAPTER IX

EARLY "DETECTIVES"

"The history of the detective story begins with the publication
1
of 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue'," declares Brander Matthews, and one cannot but admit the validity of his statement. By reason of its title, this thesis is limited to a discussion of the detective element in English fiction, and being so restricted, this section, 'The Detective Story', should begin with a discussion of Poe's celebrated story. However, no study of "detectiveness" can legitimately overlook the early work of Voltaire and Vidocq.

The first outcropping of analytic deduction, upon which all criminal detection is based, was in a very short tale "The Sultan and his Three
2
Sons," written by the Chevalier De Mailly in 1719. However, a better known, and for that reason more important, work dealing with analytical deduction appeared in 1747, Voltaire's "Zadig". "Zadig" is an expression of Voltaire's religious philosophy, but, at the same time, it contains one of the earliest "detectives", Zadig himself, whose methods are similar to those of the immortal Sherlock Holmes. The finest horse in the king's stable has escaped from the jockey in the plains of Babylon. As they search for the valuable horse the huntsmen encounter Zadig and ask him if he has seen the king's horse passing by:

1
Brander Matthews, Inquiries and Opinions. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907) essay, Poe and the Detective Story, p. 115.

2
Mentioned by J. L. French in Great Detective Stories of the World (New York: The Dial Press 1929) p. 2.

"It is the king's fastest horse", replied Zadig, 'it is five feet high, has very small hoofs and a tail three and a half feet long; the studs on its bit are of twenty-three carat gold; and its shoes are of almost pure silver.'

'Which road did it take? where is it?' demanded the chief huntsman.

'I have not seen it,' replied Zadig, 'nor have I ever heard tell of it.'¹

Pressed for an explanation Zadig continues:

'Walking in the lanes of this wood, I noticed the marks of a horses' shoes; they were all at equal distances. Here, said I, is a horse that gallops excellently. The dust on the trees along the narrow path, which was only seven feet wide, had been brushed off to the right and to the left, three feet and a half from the middle of the path. This horse, said I, has a tail three and a half feet long, which, in swinging from side to side, has swept away this dust. I noticed under the trees, which formed an arbor five feet high, the leaves which had newly fallen from the branches; and I knew that the horse had touched them, and was, therefore, five feet high. As for its bit, it must be of twenty-three carat gold; for he had rubbed the studs against a stone which I knew to be a touchstone, and which I have tried. Finally, I judged from the marks which his shoes left on flints of another kind, that he was shod with almost pure silver.'²

From the above it is evident that Zadig possessed a fine analytical brain. He kept his eyes open as he walked, and was able to analyse the situation to his own satisfaction. Voltaire's style is so close to that of Conan Doyle that the latter must certainly have read "Zadig" before he began to write his tales of Sherlock Holmes. Surely Zadig's, "Grand Dieu! qu'on est à plaindre quand on se promène dans un bois où le cheval du roi ont passé!"³ is the French equivalent of Sherlock's, "Elementary my dear Watson!"

However, despite the unconscious efforts of Voltaire, detective

¹ "Zadig" Heath's Modern Language Series (New York: 1905) p. 12.

² Ibid., p. 14.

literature received no real stimulus until the memoirs of Monsieur Vidocq were published in 1828. This was the first notable work with a detective as the hero, and was without a doubt the original stimulus of all future detective novels, for, as E. A. Osborne points out:

It is not till definite organisations for the detection and suppression of crime appear, and romantic half truths of reminiscence and adventure are written about these detective organisations that the detective story proper is born.¹

Francois Eugene Vidocq (1775-1857), was a French criminal who made an extensive study of the methods of his fellow criminals, and then, in 1809, offered his services as a spy to the Paris Police. Eventually he became chief of the reorganized detective department of the Paris Police Force, with a body of ex-convicts under his direct command.² Later he disgraced himself, was expelled from the force, and died in poverty. After Vidocq's dismissal, a more respectable detective organization was formed and has continued down to the present day. "Memoires de Vidocq" were published in French and English in 1828 and 1829, and contain a full-blooded and largely fictional record of the adventures of the great Vidocq, first as a convict, then as a spy, and finally as the director of the Brigade de Sûreté.³ The "Memoires" were the work of several authors and translators and are thoroughly unreliable as an autobiography; but, as Mr. Valentine Williams points out:

1

E. A. Osborne, Collecting Detective Fiction. The Bookman, pp. 287-288, February 1932.

2

This gave rise to the popular fictional dictum, 'set a thief to catch a thief'.

3

J. T. French presents selections from the "Memoires", op. cit., pp. 13-62.

In them one may discern in embryo the modern detective novel through the agency of certain rudimentary experiments in deductive processes, for the elucidation of crime commingled with plenty of brisk action, suspense and thrills innumerable.¹

Turning to English literature, we have only one "pre-Poe" novel of any importance that is directly in the detective story line, William Godwin's "Caleb Williams", 1794. This is a story of pursuit as the author himself declared:

I bent myself to the conception of a series of adventures of flight and pursuit; the fugitive in perpetual apprehension of being overwhelmed with the worst calamities, and the pursuer, by his ingenuity and resources, keeping his victim in a state of the most fearful alarm.²

This story contains the essence of detective fiction. Caleb Williams is a young man who has aroused the animosity of his employer causing the latter to hire an ex-brigand, whose duty is to pursue Williams wherever he may go, and never allow him to have a moments peace. The brigand turns out to be an exceptionally clever "detective", as he is able to follow Williams all over England despite the numerous disguises he adopts and the many ways in which he tries to cover up his whereabouts. "Caleb Williams" is an extremely powerful story that is almost in the true Gothic tradition. In his novels as in his philosophy Godwin was years ahead of his time for "Caleb Williams" is exceptionally well written; the situations carefully and cleverly conceived; and the work of the "detective" little short of admirable.

1

V. Williams, Detective Fiction. The Bookman, pp. 521-524, July 1928.

2

Quoted by E. A. Baker, The History of the English Novel, vol. V, p. 245.

In America, the detective novel had also one early exponent before the great master Poe took control. He was Charles Brockden Brown whose¹ "Edgar Huntley" is little more than a name today.

From this short summary of early "detective" fiction it will be seen that there was, before 1840, no such thing as a detective novel. The essential elements of the species are present, of course, but as yet they form only a small part of a larger story that is usually not even remotely related to the apprehension of crime. Suddenly, as if from a clear sky, Monsieur Dupin stood before the literary world, and it could not deny him entrance.

¹ Brown was an ardent disciple of Godwin, accepting the latter's "Political Justice" as a sacred book. "Edgar Huntley" is very definitely closely related to "Caleb Williams".

CHAPTER X

EDGAR ALLEN POE AND LE CHEVALIER G. AUGUSTE DUPIN

"He boasted to me that most men, in respect to himself, wore windows in their bosoms."¹

Edgar Allen Poe's justly deserved fame as the father of the English ²
Detective Story rests upon four short stories; "The Murders in the Rue
Morgue", "The Mystery of Marie Roget", "The Gold Bug", and "The Purloined
³
Letter". Of these only the first two are true detective stories.

It is perhaps time that we stopped to consider just what constitutes a true detective story. Is it a problem in analytical deduction? Is it merely a story containing a character called a 'detective'? Is it, as Merriam-Webster's dictionary declares, "a story featuring detection of a crime?"

The first suggestion is easily disposed of; as we have seen, "Zadig" contains a problem which is solved by analytical deduction, yet no one would ever call it a detective story. The problem in deduction is an essential part of every detective novel, but it does not constitute the whole.

The second suggestion may also be put aside. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is definitely a true detective story, but Monsieur Dupin is not a detective. In point of fact, the word 'detective' does not appear

¹
"The Murders in the Rue Morgue."

²
By "English" is meant English language. Poe was, of course, an American.

³
Published in 1841, 1842, 1843, and 1844 respectively.

¹
 in print until 1843. By definition, a detective is "one who detects", consequently anyone can be a detective, it is not necessary that he (or she) be an authorised member of some police force. Nor should it be imagined that the presence of a detective in a novel ensures a "detective novel".

Our third definition from Webster's dictionary is more to the point, but hardly adequate, "a story featuring detection of a crime" or, more correctly, 'detection of a criminal', for crime itself is usually obvious. But crime is not necessary in a detective novel, several very fine detective stories have been written in which no crime has been committed.² This leaves us with the word 'detection', "a laying open of what was concealed or hidden". We are now close to a true definition. If a detective story is to lay open what is concealed or hidden, and also sustain the interest of the reader, the latter must be allowed to participate in the detection; in other words he must be given all the 'clues' and allowed to form his own deductions, later checking with those of the 'detective'. Our final definition of a true detective novel may then be --- a story which logically, step by step, lays open facts which have been concealed or hidden, and does so, concealing no clue from the eyes of the reader.

Poe's two so-called detective tales, "The Purloined Letter" and "The Gold Bug" fall short in that they present a solution of the problem before they reveal the clues whereby the solution was obtained. "The

¹
 According to the Oxford Dictionary.

²
 Notably Wilkie Collin's "Moonstone".

"Gold Bug", in particular, is a fine story, a masterpiece of mystery, and even of analysis, but it is not a true detective story for the simple reason that the evidence from which 'detective' Legrand makes his brilliant deduction is not revealed to the wondering reader until the solution has been disclosed. In "The Purloined Letter", Dupin dramatically produces a letter which the Prefect of the Parisian police has been trying to locate for months, and then explains to his astonished friend how he managed to obtain it.

Poe seems to have derived his detective story style from a synthesis of the works of Voltaire and Vidocq. The idea of a detective he undoubtedly obtained from the "Memoires"; in fact, his M. Dupin is very probably the celebrated Vidocq in one of his many disguises. The analytical deductive method he obtained from "Zadig", applying it, not satirically as Voltaire had done, but seriously, and using it as the mainspring of the story. Having borrowed his detective and his method, Poe then proceeded to invent a most ingenious personage. His detective was to have a companion, a companion of only average alertness, a prototype of the average reader. By this simple device, which is still used extensively, Poe doubled the effectiveness of his work --- by providing contrast. In comparison with the very normal perceptive faculties of his companion, the detective's perspicacity stands out as if in a white light, and he basks in the admiration that springs from the lips of his not-so-gifted companion. This companion, to whom Poe entrusts the narration of his story, acts as a kind of Greek chorus, hinting to the

¹
Poe does not give him a name.

readers what emotions they ought to feel.

As we have seen, Poe sought to interest the reader, not in the mystery itself as did the Gothic novelists, but in the method employed by the detective in the solution of the problem. As Brander Matthews so aptly puts it, "Attention is centered on the unraveling of the tangled skein rather than on the knot itself."¹ This was a direct reversal of form, but Poe sought to engage the reader's interest by making his story a kind of game whereby the reader matched wits with the master-mind. In short, Poe was writing a tale of wonder to which human interest had been added.

As "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" was Poe's first detective story, and by long odds the best known, it will be useful here to use it as a working example of his style and technique. After a few general remarks on analysis as it applies to draughts, chess, and whist, Poe introduces his detective in a Zedig-like scene wherein Dupin explains to his bewildered companion just how he has been able to trace his line of thought. Then, having given the reader some indication of the powers of reasoning possessed by this imperturbable Frenchman, Poe leads him to a newspaper item headed, "Extraordinary Murders", and outlining in great detail the story of a double murder, soon to be called 'the tragedy in the Rue Morgue'. The one valuable piece of evidence appears to be the fact that two voices, one shrill and one gruff, were heard amid the shrieks of the victims, by no less than six reliable witnesses. All of the six agree on the nationality of the gruff voice, it was undoubtedly

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Brander Matthews, Inquiries and Opinions. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907) essay, Poe and the Detective Story, p. 120.

that of a Frenchman; but regarding the shrill voice they differ considerably. Isidore Muset, gendarme, heard the shrill voice, declared it to be foreign, believed the language to be Spanish. Henri Duval, a neighbor, describes it as the voice of an Italian. It was certainly not French. Could have been a woman's voice. Is not acquainted with the Italian language. Odenheimer, Dutch "restaurateur", examined through an interpreter, is sure the shrill voice that of a Frenchman. W. Bird, English tailor, shrill voice certainly not that of an Englishman. Might have been voice of a German woman. Does not understand German. Alfonzo Garcia, Spanish undertaker, judges the shrill voice to be that of an Englishman. Does not understand English language but judges by the intonation. Alberto Montani (Italian) thinks it the voice of a Russian. Never conversed with a native of Russia. After finishing the lengthy newspaper article and passing a few slightly derogatory comments on the inefficient methods of the Parisian Police (this was popular even in the first detective story), Dupin and his trusty follower proceed to the scene of the crime. There, taking into account the diverse opinions as to the nationality of the owner of the shrill voice,¹ the remarkable agility of the murderer in entering the second story window, the extraordinary violence with which the two

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"In regard to the shrill voice, the peculiarity is that each likens it, not to the voice of an individual of any nation with whose language he is conversant -- but the converse Now, how strangely unusual must that voice have been in whose tones, even denizens of the five great divisions of Europe could recognise nothing familiar! ... These legitimate deductions are in themselves sufficient to engender a suspicion which should give direction to all farther progress in the investigation of the mystery." (Dupin) Foe's Tales of Mystery and Imagination. Evervaan's Library, 1921. pp. 395-396.

victims were attacked, and sundry other pieces of evidence, Dupin soon decides that the murderer was not human, but an animal, undoubtedly an Orang-Outang. Such subsequently proves to be the case. Dupin's account of how the murders were committed is substantiated by the owner of the gruff voice (whom Dupin cleverly apprehends), and so, with a well aimed sarcasm directed at Le Bon, the Prefect of Police, G. Auguste Dupin, the first detective, successfully closes the first case in English literature.

One of the most important features of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is something that today is so obvious we are apt to overlook it; Poe is dealing with the commonplace. By this we do not mean that murder is commonplace; but Poe's method makes it seem so. There is nothing of the supernatural here, and that in itself was a great advance. Simply and adroitly, Poe outlines the essentials of his story; he produces a corpse, two in fact; an astonishing array of contradictory evidence; and a detective with an open eye and a clear mind. He places the whole in a Parisian street happily named "Rue Morgue", and lets events take their course. The result is a short novel capable of arousing great interest in the reader.

Poe's method of dealing with his detective is masterly. He sets Dupin up as a master^{of}/ratiocination, who is undoubtedly superior to the police. He supplies him with an ardent disciple who is loud in his astonishment at Dupin's astuteness, but he is careful always to keep Dupin human. He never permits the narrator to become too full of admiration, there is just the shadow of a doubt that Dupin may be wrong, and he rarely allows the detective to exhibit his skill merely for its own sake. It is usually employed towards some useful end.

However new or sensational this type of literature was, it could never have gained the popularity it did if the hand of Poe had not been there to guide it. Throughout the stories lies the evidence that behind them all is a master of the narrative art, a man who is in complete control of all the devices he uses. A student of mathematics, and a genius at logical construction, Poe probably found the writing of a detective story an easy task compared to the effort required for such weird masterpieces as "The Fall of the House of Usher" or "The Pit and the Pendulum". Brander Matthews quotes a letter from Poe to P. P. Cooke written in 1846, wherein he is rather disparaging in his remarks concerning the new detective stories, declaring:

They owe most of their popularity to being something in a new key. I do not mean to say they are not ingenious --- but people think them more ingenious than they are --- on account of their method and air of method. In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" for instance, where is the ingenuity of unraveling a web which you yourself (the author) have woven for the express purpose of unraveling? The reader is made to confound the ingenuity of the supposititious Dupin with that of the writer of the story.¹

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Matthews, op. cit., p. 132.

Poe is, of course, being too modest, for the author of a detective story has the immense problem of constructing a web that can be unraveled only by the detective, despite the fact that all the essential clues are presented to the reader. In other words, he must furnish the reader with all the clues to the cross-word puzzle, yet evolve some legitimate means of preventing him from placing them in the correct spaces; decidedly a task of no little difficulty.

Yet, we must not fall into the trap that some critics do of considering Poe's detective stories as perfect pieces. In reality, considered purely as detective stories, they have several serious faults, most of which have been ironed out by present day writers. In the first place, while Poe strove to interest his reader in Dupin's method instead of the mystery itself, he hardly succeeded. Think back for ^amoment, in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" what incident springs immediately to mind? Is it Dupin's close reasoning? probably not; in all probability, it is the picture of the enraged ape standing in the middle of the room tearing at the bodies of its two victims. From this we can see that Poe is not as far removed from the Gothic novelists as we had first imagined. Modern detective novelists are careful to secure their corpse quickly and easily so as not to disturb the reader and divert his attention from the methods of the detective.

Secondly, consider for a moment Dupin himself, and his not so celebrated companion who is not even awarded the common courtesy of a name, would we know him on the street? For that matter would we recognize Dupin? Conan Doyle is to show us just how weak Poe's endeavors to humanise his stories of analytical deduction really were.

Finally, Poe is too prolix. He introduces too many irrelevant factors into his stories; long discussions on card playing in "The Rue Morgue" for example, although we may excuse these as being necessary explanations of a new genre in literature. Poe's greatest weakness, the present writer finds, is one which many modern writers have also failed to counteract. His explanations of the detective's reasoning are often too long and too involved; in "The Gold Bug" in particular, he takes several pages to explain a cipher on which the solution turns. The author should attempt to interest the reader in the detective's method of reasoning, but he should not bore him by making it too long or too complicated, for after all, such explanations are almost always sheer narrative usually unbroken by incidents of any kind. Even such accomplished writers as the creators of Ellery Queen occasionally fall into this trap, usually, however, the necessary explanation is delivered by Ellery in a racy, semi-oratorical style, and is usually interspersed with questions, telephone calls, or the arrival of the admirable Sergeant Velie.

Yet, despite the minor faults noted above, Poe's detective stories provided a framework for all the detective fiction that was to follow; for, as W. H. Wright, better known as S. S. Van Dine, says, "One can no more ignore their basic form when writing a detective novel than one can ignore the form of Hayden when composing a symphony."²

The influence of Poe's "Tales of Mystery and Imagination", which

¹ Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee. "Ellery Queen" is their pseudonym and also their sleuth.

² W. H. Wright, The Detective Novel. Scribner's Magazine, pp. 532-539, November 1926.

contained the new detective stories, was, of course, profound; even today their sales compare favorably with those of many modern works. For some reason or other, probably because they were more interested in imitating Fenimore Cooper's Indian stories, or perhaps because there was no organized detective force in America until Allan Pinkerton's famous private agency was formed in 1850, American writers did not take up the new genus which Poe had created. The reverse was true in Europe however, for literary France of the Second Empire went 'wild' over the "Tales" which were translated in 1856, by Charles Baudelaire, the poet. "Histoires Etranges" inspired a poor literary hack named Emile Gaboriau, who was not entirely devoid of ability, to strive to produce a reasonable imitation of Poe's detective stories. Eventually he did produce "L'Affaire Lerouge", with the great detective Monsieur Lecoq as the leading figure. Four other stories followed rapidly; in fact, Gaboriau was writing from day to day for serial publication, many times with the copy-boy waiting in the hall. Considering the haste with which he threw them together, his stories are ingenious, indicative of the mathematical precision of the French mind.

Poe's influence was also felt in England, but here detective fiction was already beginning to unfold just before M. Dupin descended upon the world. In one respect, it is rather unfortunate that Poe produced the finished product in one fell swoop, for one of the great masters of the English novel, Charles Dickens, was already experimenting with detective fiction. It would have been interesting to see where his experiments would have led him if Poe had never written "The Murders in the Rue

Morgue." As it was, however, Poe was fated to exert a powerful influence on English detective fiction, and we shall have occasion to return to his theories as we investigate the detective story as it was moulded by the hands of Charles Dickens.

CHAPTER XI

CHARLES DICKENS AND INSPECTOR BUCKET

"My name's Inspector Bucket of the Detective, and I have a duty to perform."¹

It has been said that to any writer whose gift is genuinely analytical the temptation to write a detective novel is simply irresistible.² If this statement is true enough to be accepted as a rule, Charles Dickens was no exception to it, for several of his many works contain within their pages the elements of detective fiction, notably: "Barnaby Rudge", and "Bleak House", while his last novel, "The Mystery of Edwin Drood"³ was certainly intended to be a full-fledged novel of detection.

The first named novel, "Barnaby Rudge", is interesting chiefly because of what the inventor of the detective novel, Edgar Allan Poe, had to say about it. It is rather difficult to determine just what was Dicken's intention as he began the writing of "Barnaby Rudge". If we are to believe what he says in the preface, "No account of the Gordon Riots having been introduced into any work of fiction and the subject presenting very extraordinary and remarkable features, the author was led to project this tale."⁴ we must conclude that Dicken's first intention was not the creation of a mystery story. Yet, Poe's opinion, which can hardly be overlooked, is that Dickens began "Barnaby Rudge" as a story of mystery, the mystery of who murdered Reuben Haredale; then, continues Poe, Dickens, by his complete disregard for the rules of

¹ "Bleak House", by Charles Dickens. (Everyman Edition, 1930) p. 333.

² This statement is made by J. L. French in his foreword to Great Detective Stories of the World. (New York: The Dial Press, 1929).

³ "Barnaby Rudge", 1841; "Bleak House", 1852-3; "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," 1870.

⁴ "Barnaby Rudge", by Charles Dickens. (Everyman Edition, 1926) p. 1.

ratiocination, could not bring his tale to an interesting conclusion; therefore, at a certain place in the novel, he suddenly advances the action by five years in order that it may coincide with the date of the Gordon Riots, and thus relieve him from his predicament. Which are we to believe, the author or the critic? We may say that in 1842, when the criticism of "Barnaby Rudge" appeared, Poe was carried away by his new invention, the story of ratiocination, and saw attempts at imitation where none was intended; for certainly we cannot say that Dickens was trying to imitate Poe's "Rue Morgue", as "Barnaby Rudge" antedates it by several months. Poe's final conclusion is that "our author had not sufficiently considered or determined upon any particular plot when he began the story now under review." Is this the voice of jealousy? for despite anything Poe can say to the contrary, "Barnaby Rudge" contains many of the elements of the modern detective novel.

After plowing (no other word better describes the reading of "Dickens") through "Barnaby Rudge", even the most attentive reader is apt to wonder what it is all about, certainly the detective element is not obtrusive. Fortunately, in his very able criticism, Poe saw fit to straighten out the plot of the mystery story, and outline it free from all entanglements. Reuben Haredale is murdered by his steward Rudge, but the latter, in escaping, is seen by a fellow servant whom he is also forced to murder. Then Rudge gets the idea of transferring the burden of the crime to his latest victim. He exchanges clothes and

¹
Edgar Allan Poe, Representative Selections. American Writers Series
 (American Book Company, 1935) Section III, Criticism, "Barnaby Rudge"
 p. 334.

personal effects with the murdered man, and conceals the body in a pond (later, when it is recovered, the features are unrecognizable). Rudge reveals the crime to his wife who is horror-stricken; she renounces him, but promises to keep his secret. Twenty-two years pass, and the murderer, true to tradition, returns to the scene of his crime. Here he is recognized, and regarded as a ghost by all except the brother of the murdered man, Geoffrey Haredale, yet before he can apprehend Rudge as the murderer of his brother, Rudge becomes involved in the Gordon Riots and is hung. So, just as we reach the crux of the story, the point where the "detective" (in this case Geoffrey Haredale) should sit down and describe the crime, and how the criminal was apprehended, Dickens introduces the very suspicious Gordon Riots, and the criminal dies before his guilt can be proven. This is a meagre outline of the story given in its natural sequence, but in "Barnaby Rudge" itself, it is not so simple; Dicken's intention was to maintain the secret of the murder until it was discovered by Geoffrey Haredale, consequently, the details surrounding the change of clothes with the murdered servant are kept from the reader, and only revealed by Rudge in jail. "Every point is so arranged as to perplex the reader and what his desire for elucidation", says Poe,

and there can be no question that by such means many points are ended with the interest of mystery, but ... a vast many more points are at the same time deprived of all effect and become null, through the impossibility of comprehending them without the key. The author, who, cognizant of his plot, writes with this cognizance continually operating upon him, and thus writes to himself in spite of himself, does not, of course, feel that much of what is effective to his own

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Poe, Selections, op. cit., p. 330.

informed perception, must necessarily be lost upon his uninformed readers; and he himself is never in condition, as regards his own work, to bring the matter to test.¹

Having delivered himself in this wise, Poe goes on to describe what may be regarded as the prime rule of detective fiction:

The design of mystery being once determined upon by an author, it becomes imperative, first, that no undue or inartistical means be employed to conceal the secret of the plot; and secondly, that the secret be well kept.²

He then goes on to point out that while Dickens conceals the true facts of the second murder from the reader by permitting Solomon Daisy to say that, 'the body of poor Mr. Rudge, the steward, was found;' the author himself continually refers to Mrs. Rudge as 'the widow.' The first means of concealment is legitimate, being merely the personal opinion of one of the characters in the story; but the second breaks faith with the reader, being a declaration of the author which is deliberately misleading.

Poe goes on to comment upon the obvious necessity of keeping the secret:

If the mystery leak out, against the author's will, his purposes are immediately at odds and ends; for he proceeds upon the supposition that certain impressions do exist, which do not exist in the minds of his readers.⁵

1

Ibid., p. 331.

2

Loc. cit.

3

"Barnaby Rudge", op. cit. p. 17.

4

Ibid., pp. 342, 343, 345, etc.

5

Poe, Selections, op. cit., p. 332.

Poe himself, with his ingenious mind, was able to fathom the secret before he was one-third of the way through the novel.

At this point in his criticism, Poe returns to his original thesis; that Dickens intended "Barnaby Rudge" to be a mystery story, but he discovered, when it was too late, that "he had anticipated; and thus rendered valueless, his chief effect."¹ Dickens, having withheld the important particulars regarding the second murder, proceeded to whet the curiosity of the reader; but, says Poe, he fell into the error of exaggerating anticipation. He describes the deep and enduring gloom of Haredale, and the terrible countenance of Mrs. Rudge, "the shadow of some look to which an instant of intense and most unutterable horror² only could have given rise." Dickens great mistake was that the anticipation surpassed the reality, to use Poe's own words:

No matter how terrific be the circumstances which, in the denouement, shall appear to have occasioned the expression of countenance worn habitually by Mrs. Rudge, still they will not be able to satisfy the mind of the reader. He will surely be disappointed.³

Dickens realised this, declares Poe, consequently he advanced his narrative five years, and introduced the Gordon Riots to cover up his mistake. "He has a talent for all things," concludes Poe, "but no positive genius for adaptation, and still less for that metaphysical art⁴ in which the souls of all mysteries lie."

¹
Ibid., p. 337.

²
"Barnaby Rudge", op. cit., p. 52.

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Poe, Selections, op. cit., p. 337.

⁴
Ibid., p. 342.

This has been a somewhat lengthy discussion of Poe's commentary on "Barnaby Rudge", but it has not been in vain, for it shows first of all that Dickens, even before Poe, had some conception of the detective novel (i.e. a story featuring detection of crime), but was prevented by the idiosyncrasy of his intellect from achieving success; and, secondly, it shows Poe's profound grasp of the essential. His "Rue Morgue" was no ingenious accident, it was based on rigid principles, principles which, as we have already noted, are still in force today.

We have already seen how the formation of the Bureau de Sûreté¹ in Paris, and the "Memoires de Vidocq" were followed by the evolution of the detective novel in America. In England, a similar set of circumstances brought about a similar evolution. "Barnaby Rudge" contained no detectives as such, for the very simple reason that they had not yet been invented in England. The Bow Street Runners, organised in 1805, have often been cited as the first English detectives, but their work was apprehension rather than detection. It was not until 1842, that Sir James Graham appointed twelve police officers to work in plain clothes solely for the detection of crime; and, significantly enough, the credit of recognizing the importance of their work goes to Dickens. In four articles in "Household Words", from July, 1850 to June, 1851, he described the methods and some of the more brilliant apprehensions of this new body of detectives. It is significant that the year following his police articles, Dickens published the only one of his novels which contains a detective; "Bleak House", in which the

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Vide supra: p.95

celebrated Inspector Bucket makes his appearance.

If Poe created the first real detective story, Dickens created the first real detective; for alongside Inspector Bucket 'the detective', Monsieur Dupin resembles more than ever the unknown mathematical symbol X. In the hands of the master it was inevitable that Bucket should become a live, red-blooded character. By reason of his short story, Poe did not have space to make Dupin more than a symbol (even if he had been able); but "Bleak House", with its hundreds of pages, permitted Dickens to create a detective who is very much alive. Mr. Bucket eats, drinks, and sleeps; like all of Dickens characters he is incredibly human, and, like all true detectives, he possesses a decided idiosyncrasy, and --- a companion. Mr. Bucket's idiosyncrasy, like Sherlock Holmes love of the violin or use of "the needle", is the possession of a "fat forefinger":

When Mr. Bucket has a matter of pressing interest under his consideration the fat forefinger seems to rise to the dignity of a familiar demon. He puts it to his ears, and it whispers information; he puts it to his lips, and it enjoⁱⁿs him to secrecy; he rubs it over his nose, and it sharpens his scent; he shakes it before a guilty man, and it charms him to his destruction. The augurs of Detective Temple invariably predict that when Mr. Bucket and that finger are in such conference, a terrible avenger will be heard of before long.

Otherwise mildly studious in his observation of human nature, on the whole a benignant philosopher not disposed to be severe upon the follies of mankind, Mr. Bucket pervades a vast number of houses, and strolls about an infinity of streets: to outward appearance rather languishing for want of an object. He is in the friendliest condition towards his species, and will drink with most of them. He is free with his money, affable in his manners, innocent in his conversation --- but, through the placid stream of his life, there glides an under current of forefinger.¹

Edgar Allan Poe had given it as a first principle that a detective should have a companion. Inspector Bucket's companion and aide-de-campe,

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"Bleak House", op. cit., p. 678.

is, appropriately enough, Mrs. Bucket, "a lady of a natural detective genius, which, if it had been improved by professional exercise, might have done great things, but which has paused at the level of a clever amateur."¹ Mrs. Bucket, needless to say, is indispensable to her husband, gathering information for him, by reason of her sex, in a fashion he could not employ himself.

Mr. Bucket is supposed, in part, to be a portrait of one of Dickens' closest friends, Inspector Field, of the Metropolitan Police Force, with whom Dickens often explored the darkest streets of London. "What an admirable union of qualities meets in Inspector Bucket," declares J. L. French:

Coolness, sagacity, shrewd reasoning powers, unique detective genius, combines with a courtesy that could captivate a lord, and the courage of a whole squadron of tried veterans. It is entirely conceivable that these were the personal traits of the original. We have as a result on the whole a living picture of a very human and likable person, perhaps the most so in all detective literature.²

This, then, was Dickens' greatest contribution to detective literature; a detective who lives and breathes, and, above all, a detective who is not above his reader in anything save a certain natural shrewdness. His language is the language of the streets, his habits hardly polished, yet his brain and powers of reasoning are such as cause Mademoiselle Hortense (the criminal) to cry "'O' you Bucket, you are a Devil!"³

¹
Ibid., p. 679.

²
French, op. cit., Part II p. 2.

³
"Bleak House", op. cit., p. 703.

It is not our intention here to launch into a lengthy discussion of the plot of "Bleak House". Like all of Dickens' novels it is long and complicated; the detective story part being only one phase of the whole, albeit a most import phase. However, this time Dickens has not repeated the mistake he made in "Barnaby Rudge". The story of the loss of Lady Volumnia Dedlock's jewels, and the murder of Mr. Tulkinghorn is admirably conceived, and, despite the entanglements of other themes that is common to all of Dickens' novels, the procedure of Mr. Bucket is clear and reasonable, leading by a process of ratiocination to the apprehension of the criminal.

Perhaps Dickens himself realised how the brilliance of the detective story in "Bleak House" was rather dimmed by the story of Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce, and the exploits of Miss Ester Summerson, and the admirable Mr. Guppy; or, perhaps, as the rumour goes, he was jealous of the success of Wilkie Collins, and strove to rival the latter's detective stories with one of his own, this time free from non-essential material. At any rate, in 1870, shortly before his death, Dickens was busying himself with "The Mystery of Edwin Drood", a mystery which was destined never to be solved.

The story of Edwin Drood is the story of his disappearance; it was to have been published in twelve monthly installments of which only three were printed, and three more were found in manuscript form on the author's desk when he died, consequently, we have only one half of the story. Edwin Drood is a boyish chap, who, as a child, was engaged to

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his playmate Rosa Bud, "of course, called Rosebud"; however, as the two grow older, they soon find that they can never really love each other, so they agree to part and remain friends. Young Drood's uncle, John Jasper, a cathedral choir-master with a secret penchant for opium, is, to all appearances, fond of his young nephew whom he treats with ostentatious affection. On Christmas Eve of 18--, Jasper invites Edwin to his house to meet a young man with whom he, Edwin, has quarrelled, and, if possible, to come to some kind of reconciliation. We are not permitted to be present at the meeting of Neville Landless and Edwin Drood; but on the following morning the latter cannot be found. He has disappeared without leaving a trace. Shortly afterwards, a mysterious white-haired gentleman arrives in Cloisterham, a certain Dick Datchery, who is making a few discreet inquiries about the mysterious disappearance of young Drood when the manuscript comes to an end. The mystery of what became of Edwin Drood is, then, one of the great unsolved puzzles of literature.

The puzzle of Edwin Drood will never be solved, but this has not prevented innumerable writers and critics from attempting to produce a satisfactory solution. From the year of Dickens death, down almost to the present time, continuations and solutions of "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" have been appearing in journals devoted to English Literature. At least two essays have been written based on the idea of putting Sherlock Holmes on the case. Two great mock-trials have also been held

1
"The Mystery of Edwin Drood", by Charles Dickens. (Everyman Edition, 1926.) p. 24.

in which John Jasper was tried for murder. One, in London, was in the hands of authors with G. K. Chesterton as the judge and George Bernard Shaw as the foreman of the jury. The other trial was conducted in Philadelphia by lawyers, business men, and scholars. The two great questions in each case have always been, what happened to Edwin Drood, and who was Dick Datchery.

There are several theories that have been advanced, some with basis in fact, others rather vague, as to what happened to Edwin Drood. Two of Dickens alternative titles seem suggestive: "The Flight of Edwin Drood" and "Edwin Drood in Hiding". These two, particularly the latter, seem to suggest that Edwin was not murdered, but managed to escape from his uncle and remain in hiding; in this respect some persons believe Datchery to be Drood in disguise. However, despite the contradictory evidence of these alternative titles, Dickens himself is reported to have said that Edwin Drood was murdered by his uncle John Jasper. His friend and biographer, John Forster, declared that Dickens told him of a new story he was going to write wherein a young man was to be murdered by his uncle.¹ In response to this, many critics declare that Dickens probably changed his mind and decided that Drood would not be murdered after all. However, later evidence submitted by Luke Fildes, Dickens illustrator, seems to confirm the first. In a letter to the London Times for November 3, 1905, Fildes declared he had asked Dickens to explain a portion of his manuscript in order that he could proceed with

¹ The Life of Charles Dickens, by John Forster. London: Chapman and Hall Limited, 1911) vol. II, p. 407.

the illustrations.

I instanced (he writes) the printer's rough proof where he (Dickens) particularly described John Jasper as wearing a neckcloth of such dimensions as to go twice around his neck. I called his attention to the fact that I had already sketched Jasper as wearing a little black tie. After a short pause, Dickens replied, 'I must have the double tie. It is necessary for Jasper strangles Edwin Drood with it.'¹

The problem of who was Dick Datchery is even more engrossing. Datchery has been identified with almost every character in the book except those in whose company he actually appears; but it seems fairly evident that Dickens intended him as the prime detecting agency.

On the whole, the conclusion drawn by G. E. Jeans on the question of "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" is, perhaps, the most sound. Mr. Jeans declares:

In whatever direction of evidence we turn --- Dickens own proved statements, his supposed indications given at second hand, the indications in the book itself after the minutest search of opposing critics, the analogy of the great writer's earlier works, and the 'feeling' impressed upon his closest students, and even the title drawing, done under his own direction --- all alike lead us to some place where the tracks are absolutely lost, and opinions remain just as divided as on the first impression. ... No satisfactory solution has ever been propounded, and, I submit, it never can be.²

3

Howard Duffield's research on the subject of Edwin Drood has brought to light several interesting facts which are included here as

1

This is quoted by Howard Duffield in The Puzzle of Edwin Drood, John Jasper, Strangler. The Bookman, February, 1911. p. 534.

2

The Mystery of Edwin Drood and its Interpreters by G. E. Jeans. The Living Age, November 14, 1914. p. 444.

3

Op. cit.

evidence of how Dickens was influenced by world events. During the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, one of the outstanding problems of English rule in India was the effort made to suppress the activities of the Pharisigars, popularly known as "Thugs", whose victims were invariably strangled. The attention of the British Government was first drawn to the activities of the "Thugs" by the frequent reports of mysterious disappearances in India. Nothing was ever known of a strangler's victim except that he was gone. Mr. Duffield's contention is that Dickens' repeated words, "No trace of Edwin Drood revisited the light of the sun,"¹ is a direct reference to the activities of the Pharisigers.

There is an Oriental flavor to "The Mystery of Edwin Drood"; twice, in the company of John Jasper, we visit an opium den to partake of the sleep-producing drug. "To anyone familiar with the habits and history of the East, the discovery that in a novel saturated with Orientalism the chief character was to figure as a strangler, is² electrifying" declares Mr. Duffield.

There can be no doubt that Dickens was well aware of the activities and methods of the "Thugs", the air was continually saturated with the subject during his lifetime, many articles and novels having been written on the art of "Thuggee". In 1847, Dickens had visited Eugene Sue in Paris, at the moment when his novel "Le Juif Errant" was at the height of its success; one of the highlights of that book is a

¹ "The Mystery of Edwin Drood", op. cit., p. 163.

² Duffield, op. cit., p. 586.

detailed account of "Thuggee". "Finally," says Mr. Duffield, bringing his argument to a conclusion,

In 1857, writing of an epidemic of garroting which had broken out in London, Dickens himself refers to the curios in the British Museum which illustrate the art of strangulation as practised by the Thugs.¹

Today, Charles Dickens is not recognized as a writer of detective novels, yet, as we have endeavored to show, he had the powers of creating a detective literature of a sort; and he certainly did create a detective who, in personality and temperament, is a vast improvement on Dupin, and is, indeed, hardly rivalled by Sherlock Holmes.

We have already mentioned Wilkie Collins in connection with Dickens, and the possibility that the latter wrote "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" by way of competing with his friend's successful detective novel, "The Moonstone", a novel which, significantly perhaps, was also closely connected with Oriental cults. The following chapter will deal with the novels of that prolific genius Wilkie Collins.

¹
Loc. cit.

CHAPTER XII

WILKIE COLLINS AND SERGEANT CUFF

'Do you feel an uncomfortable heat at the pit of your stomach, sir? and a nasty thumping at the top of your head? I call it the detective-fever; and I first caught it in the company of Sergeant Cuff.'¹

In 1855, just four years after Dickens had written his articles on the new police force for "Household Words", a young man joined the staff of that magazine, who was destined to become the greatest English detective novelist prior to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This young man was William Wilkie Collins, the author of, among some thirty other novels, the celebrated "Moonstone".

Because of Collins amazing fecundity, it is necessary to select only a chosen few of his many novels for discussion. Perhaps the best known are, "The Woman in White" (1860), "No Name" (1862), "Armadale" (1866), and "The Moonstone" (1868).

Collins had written seven novels, each of which enjoyed an indifferent success, before 1860, but it was not until he produced "The Woman in White", that he gained general recognition as a novelist of power. In characterization, incident, and development of plot, it showed great skill and mastery. "The Woman in White" is:

The story of what a Woman's patience can endure, and what a Man's resolution can achieve.

If the machinery of the Law could be depended on to fathom every case of suspicion, to conduct every process of inquiry, with moderate assistance only from the lubricating influences of oil of gold, the events which fill these pages might have claimed their share of the public attention in a Court of Justice The story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness --- with the same object, in both cases, to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect; and to trace the course of one complete

1

"The Moonstone" by Wilkie Collins, with an introduction by T. S. Eliot. (The World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 1928.) p. 337.

series of events, by making the persons who have been most closely connected with them at each successive stage, relate their own experience, word for word.¹

Such is Wilkie Collins' opening pledge of faith to the reader.

He will present all the material in his possession, and present it from the most appropriate angle, permitting the reader to draw his own conclusions just as if he were a member of a panel of jurors.

As with all of Collins' novels, it is impossible to attempt a comprehensive outline of the plot of "The Woman in White". The story is related in seventeen parts by eleven different persons, and concerns, mainly, the mysterious adventures of Anne Catherick, the Woman in White. Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick were "twins", that is to say, their resemblance was so pronounced as to cause people to think them sisters. Gradually, as they grew older, the two friends drifted apart; Laura marrying Sir Percival Glyde, Anne apparently disappearing from the face of the earth. Sir Percival Glyde, as soon appears, has a terrible secret which he has managed to preserve for many years from all save Anne Catherick. Consequently, he is determined, at all costs, to assure himself that she will remain silent. With this end in view, he has her placed in an asylum, from which she manages to escape, and return to the neighborhood as the Woman in White. Sir Percival then attempts to replace her in the asylum, and requests the assistance of his friend Count Fosco. Their task is complicated by the remarkable resemblance of Anne and Laura however, and several amazing mistakes

¹

"The Woman in White" by Wilkie Collins (The World's Classics, 1926.) pp. 1-2.

are made. The detective, if "The Woman in White" can be said to have one, is Walter Hartright, 'the Man with resolution', who tells the principal part of the story, and finally uncovers the Baronet's secret. It is a great tribute to the genius of Wilkie Collins that, while the reviewer thus stumbles and starts, as he endeavors to outline the plot, to the reader the story is at all times crystal clear.

"The Woman in White" presents to the reader a series of amazing characters; the most notable one being the celebrated Count Fosco, "the suave and pitiless Pickwickian prince of rascality Count Fosco," as Walter de la Mare calls him. The memory of the insidious Count lingers long after the plot of "The Woman in White" is forgotten. The reference to Dickens is well taken for, although Fosco is hardly a Dickens-type villain, there is a character in "The Woman in White", Frederick Fairlie, Esq., who could easily have been drawn by Dickens himself.

Marian Halcombe (Lady Glyde's closest friend) gives us a description of Fosco that is as good as any. "He looks" she says, "like a man who could tame anything." She goes on to describe him in detail; his immense bulk, his brilliant flashing eyes, his command of the English language, his love of animals, his excellent manners, and concludes:

¹
The Eighteen Sixties, Essays by Fellows of the Royal Society of Literature. (Cambridge, At the University Press. 1932) The Early Novels of Wilkie Collins, pp. 51-101. This reference, p. 79.

²
 "The Woman in White", op. cit., p. 214.

³
 Count Fosco is, of course, an Italian.

I certainly never saw a man in all my experience whom I should be so sorry to have for an enemy. Is this because I like him or because I am afraid of him. Chi Sa? as Count Fosco might say in his own language. Who knows?¹

Beyond a doubt, Count Fosco is one of the most powerful villains in all literature; beside his magnificent evil, Mrs. Radcliffe's Montoni is as naught.

In Collins' treatment of Frederick Fairlie, Esq., one can almost certainly suspect the direct influence of Charles Dickens. Indeed, throughout all of Collins' novels there runs a decided Dickensian strain which is highly indicative of the close friendship of these two men.² Fairlie is a hypochondriac who suffers intense headaches at the slightest sound, and is oppressed by the belief that he was born to be tormented.³ "It is the grand misfortune of my life that nobody will let me alone", he begins his amazing contribution to the narrative. Needless to say, the eccentricities of Mr. Fairlie offer Collins the opportunity for some very fine humour, and he does not waste the chance. The comments and thoughts of Frederick Fairlie, Esq. enliven the whole of "The Woman in White". At one point, he declares:

People in the lower class of life never know when or how to go out of a room. They invariably require to be helped out by their betters. I thought it high time to help the Young Person out (a servant girl who came to deliver a note). I did it with two judicious words: 'Good Morning!' Something, outside or inside this singular girl, suddenly creaked. Louis (his valet), who was looking at her (which I was not), says she creaked when she curtsied. Curious: Was it

¹ "The Woman in White", op. cit., p. 221.

² Collins met Dickens in 1850. Collins was only twenty-six, and Dickens in his fortieth year, but they soon became, and remained to the end, the closest of friends.

³ "The Woman in White", op. cit., p. 338.

her shoes, her stays, or her bones? Louis thinks it was her stays. Most extraordinary!¹

If "The Women in White" established Wilkie Collins as a writer of some ability, "No Name" and "Armadale" only helped to further his position in the field of literature. The former is even more complicated than "The Women in White", if that can be believed possible. It is, by the author's own admission, the story of the struggles of a human creature under the opposing influences of Good and Evil.

It has been my aim (says Collins in his Preface) to make the character of 'Magdalen', which personifies this struggle, a pathetic character even in its perversity and its error; and I have tried hard to attain this result by the least obtrusive and the least artificial of all means --- by a resolute adherence throughout to the truth as it is in Nature.²

By no stretch of the imagination can "No Name" be called a detective story, for the only secret in the whole book is revealed in the first hundred pages. "From that point," continues Collins,

all the main events of the story are purposely foreshadowed, before they take place --- my present design being to arouse the reader's interest in following the train of circumstances by which these foreseen events are brought about. My one object is to enlarge the range of my studies in the art of writing fiction, and to vary the form in which I make my appeal to the reader as attractively as I can.³

"Armadale", in the present writer's opinion, is Wilkie Collins' most powerful novel. It concerns itself with a theme which Ibsen, in particular, made popular; 'the sins of the father are visited upon the son'. The plot takes into account the lives of two young men who become

1

Ibid., p. 345.

2

"No Name" by Wilkie Collins, (Library Edition, London: Chatto and Windus, 1928), Preface.

3

Loc. cit.

close friends. One is cursed by the memory of a murder his father had committed; in fact, the latter had murdered the father of the second young man. The story is further complicated by the fact that both young men are named "Allan Armadale". The guiding force in the whole novel is a dream; while the story itself contains, cases of mistaken identity, fraud, fights, and even murder. From this rapid survey of the elements of the novel, it can be seen that the plot as such can never be described adequately, nor, to the knowledge of the writer, has it ever been attempted.

1

From the above rather aimless discussion of Wilkie Collins' early novels, it will be evident that a man possessed of his talent for logical presentation of extremely complicated plots should inevitably try his hand at the new and interesting genre of literature that was becoming so popular in England and France --- the detective story. Collins' talents were not wasted in the detective fiction line, for his novel, "The Moonstone", has been declared "the best of the English detective novels" and "the best all round detective story ever written," by two critics whose opinions must be respected; nor has Wilkie Collins' novel of crime and detection suffered by comparison with modern detective novels,

2

1

'Aimless', because no full scale appreciation of any of Collins' novels can ever be done within the compass of an essay. An ambitious critic could write a book on any one of these novels, but, in the end, the reader would be better advised to read the original work.

2

T. S. Eliot and J. B. Priestley respectively. Eliot's opinion is from his Preface to "The Moonstone" (Worlds Classics ed.) p. XII. Priestley's opinion was recorded in the London "Evening Standard" for January 8, 1922.

for today there is a "revival" movement in full swing. In January of 1943, The Readers Club of America recommended "The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins" to its thousands of members.

"The Moonstone" begins in India, in the year 1799, when a yellow diamond was stolen from the handle of a dagger belonging to the Sultan of Seringapatam, by an English army officer, John Herncastle, during the sack of that town. There was a curious and deadly legend connected with that yellow diamond which Herncastle wrenched from the dagger handle, yet he did not hesitate. The yellow diamond was The Moonstone, a stone which originally adorned the forehead of the four-handed Indian god who typifies the Moon. In the eleventh century, when the holy city of Somnath, which was the resting place of the Moon god, was overrun by the Mohammedans, three Brahmins transported the idol to a safe place, where they erected a shrine. That night, Vishnu the Preserver appeared to the three Brahmins in a dream, and commanded that the Moonstone be watched over night and day by three priests in turn --- to the end of the generations of men. The deity then predicted certain disaster to any presumptuous mortal who dared lay hands on the sacred gem, and to all his house and name who received it after him.

Until the eighteenth century, the Moonstone suffered no harm; yet the vigil of the successors of the original Brahmins never ceased. During the first years of that century, however, the sacred shrine was sacked, and the Moonstone seized by an officer of rank in the army of Aurungzebe, Emperor of the Moguls.

Powerless to recover their lost treasure by open force, the three

guardian priests followed and watched it in disguise. The generations succeeded each other; the warrior who had committed the sacrilege perished miserably; the Moonstone passed (carrying its curse with it) from one lawless Mohammedan hand to another; and still the three guardian priests keep their watch, waiting the day when the will of Vishnu the Preserver should restore to them their sacred gem.

Finally, the diamond fell into the hands of Tippeco, Sultan of Seringapatam, who caused it to be placed, as an ornament, in the handle of his dagger. It was from this dagger that John Herncastle wrenched the Moonstone, being, at the time, fully aware of its weird history.

Having laid his groundwork in this fashion, Collins brings his story up to the year 1848, when Miss Rachel Verinder inherits the Moonstone from her uncle, Colonel John Herncastle, late of the siege of Seringapatam. The diamond is to be delivered by Miss Rachel's cousin, Mr. Franklin Blake. Even before the Moonstone is delivered, three Indian "jugglers" appear in the neighborhood, and, on the arrival of Mr. Blake, attempt to regain possession of the sacred jewel. The latter is able, however, to outwit the Indians, and delivers the Moonstone to its new owner. Miss Verinder places it in an Indian cabinet in her room, and the next morning it is missing. Several days later, Sergeant Cuff of the London Police Force is called in, and the story is well under way.

"The Moonstone" is a remarkable book because of four persons in it: Mr. Gabriel Betteredge, Miss Drusilla Clack, Rosanna Spearman, and, of course, Sergeant Cuff. The part played by each will be dealt with in turn.

We have already noted Collins' habit of telling his story by narratives supposedly written by persons closely associated with the action he describes. In "The Moonstone", he obtained the services of two of the most amusing and capable narrators in English literature, Gabriel Betteredge and Drusilla Clack. There are narratives submitted by other persons, among them Franklin Blake, and Cuff himself, but the writings of Betteredge and Miss Clack are the most amusing and the most significant.

Gabriel Betteredge is another "Pickwickian" character; his position in the story is that of house-steward to Lady Verinder, and, as such, he is present at all the exciting occurrences in the household and is, therefore, a very reliable witness. Mr. Betteredge has one marked peculiarity; a love of Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe", that is out of all proportion to the importance of that tale of adventure. In short, it is his "Koran", from its pages he can predict what has happened, and what is going to happen, but let him tell the story in his own words:

I am not superstitious; I have read a heap of books in my time; I am a scholar in my own way. Though turned seventy, I possess an active memory, and legs to correspond. You are not to take it, if you please, as the saying of an ignorant man, when I express my opinion that such a book as "Robinson Crusoe" never was written, and never will be written again. I have tried that book for years --- generally in combination with a pipe of tobacco --- and I have found it my friend in need in all the necessities of this mortal life. When my spirits are bad --- "Robinson Crusoe". When I want advice --- "Robinson Crusoe". In past times when my wife plagued me; in present times when I have had a drop too much --- "Robinson Crusoe". I have worn out six stout "Robinson Crusoes" with hard work in my service. On my lady's last birthday she gave me a seventh. I took a drop too much on the strength of it; and "Robinson Crusoe" put me right again. Price four shillings and sixpence, bound in blue with a picture into the bargain.¹

1

"The Moonstone", op. cit., p. 9.

Such is the gentleman to whom the narration of a large part of the story is entrusted; the reader can readily see it will be enjoyable reading. Mr. Betteredge carries the narrative for several hundred pages, over the section entitled, "The Loss of the Diamond". Then, in the section, "The Discovery of the Truth", Miss Drusilla Clack makes her appearance to further charm the reader, and cause him to wonder at Collins' ability to change his style to suit the personality of his narrator.

Miss Clack has two marked peculiarities. In the first place, she is probably the only person in the world who does not like Gabriel Betteredge, "a heathen old man long, too long, tolerated in my aunt's family"¹, is her opinion; and she is, secondly, extremely religious, a lover of order and regularity. These qualities in themselves are to be admired and envied in any normal person, but Miss Clack is far from normal, as the reader will agree when he encounters her habit of distributing tracts where she believes they will do the most good. A young servant-girl answers the door to Miss Clack's knock, and receives for her trouble a tract "addressed to young women on the sinfulness of dress, 'A Word With You On Your Cap-Ribbons'."² Another of her favorite tracts, distributed on the slightest provocation, is an anonymous work, (believed to be by "precious Miss Bellows"), entitled, "The Serpent at Home." The purpose of this book is to show us how the Evil One lies in wait "in all the most apparently innocent actions in our daily lives."

¹
Ibid., p. 216.

²
Loc. cit.

The chapters best adapted to female perusal, Miss Clack informs us, are, "Satan in the Hair Brush"; "Satan behind the Looking Glass"; "Satan under the Tea Table"; "Satan out of the Window"; and "Satan among the Sofa Cushions".¹ Miss Clack's evidence, studied as it is with her own opinions and prejudices, is, perhaps, not as trustworthy as Betteredge's, but what it lacks in that respect, it more than compensates for in its singularly amusing character.

It is now time to leave the humorous side of "The Moonstone", and turn our attention to Rosanna Spearman, a servant girl who very nearly becomes the tragic heroine of The Moonstone. Rosanna, a maidservant in the employ of Lady Verinder, is very upset over the loss of the diamond; and her curious conduct leads suspicion directly to her. Somewhere within the household, there is a paint stained nightgown; the owner is undoubtedly the thief, having brushed against a newly painted door as he or she took the diamond from the closet. Rosanna is suspected of knowing the whereabouts of this nightgown, and, indeed, she has hidden it, although it is not her own. Meanwhile, troubled over the loss of the Moonstone and her suspected guilt, and disillusioned in her passion for Franklin Blake, Rosanna commits suicide in the Shivering Sands --- a body of quicksand which had always fascinated her. So, Rosanna is the tragic heroine; tragic because of her loyalty to the thief, which allows her to shoulder all the suspicion of the theft, and because of her impossible love of Mr. Blake, which leads her to suicide; heroine, because she does leave a clue which, with the assistance of Sergeant

¹

Ibid., pp. 249-250.

Cuff, does bring about an adequate solution to the tortuous problem.

But it is now time to turn to Sergeant Cuff himself; "the perfect
¹
 detective" declares T. S. Eliot. He is introduced to the reader by
 Gabriel Betteredge:

A grizzled, elderly man, so miserably lean that he looked as if he had not got an ounce of flesh on his bones in any part of him. He was dressed all in decent black, with a white cravat around his neck. His face was as sharp as a hatchet, and the skin of it was as yellow and dry and withered as an autumn leaf. His eyes, of a steely light grey, had a very disconcerting trick, when they encountered your eyes, of looking as if they expected something more from you than you were aware of yourself. His walk was soft; his voice was melancholy; his long lanky fingers were hooked like claws. He might have been a parson, or an undertaker, or anything else you like, except what he really was. A more complete opposite to Superintendent Seegrave than Sergeant Cuff, and a less comforting officer to look at for a family in distress, I defy you to discover, search where you may.

Like Mr. Bucket before him, Cuff has one peculiarity, a predilection for roses; in fact, he proves, "to be quite a mine of learning on
²
 the truspery subject of rose-gardens," as Mr. Betteredge remarks in disgust. Sergeant Cuff's explanation of his love of roses is typical of the
 man;

'If you will look about you, you will see that the nature of a man's tastes is, most times, as opposite as possible to the nature of a man's business. Show me any two things more opposite one from the
³
 other than a rose and a thief; and I'll correct my tastes accordingly.'

Roses and thieves, then, are Sergeant Cuff's main interests; and, as Mr. Betteredge soon discovers, his interest in the latter certainly equals

¹
Ibid., Introduction, p. xii.

²
Ibid., p. 107.

³
Ibid., p. 108.

that in the former. Gradually, as Cuff proceeds with the case, unearthing an important clue in the smeared paint on Miss Verinder's door, Betteredge becomes more humble in his criticism, until he is following the Sergeant about like a dog, having, as he describes it, "caught the detective fever."¹

Gradually Cuff pieces his case together, and he makes the startling revelation that "Nobody has stolen the Diamond." However, when he comes to the final conclusion that Rachel Verinder has stolen her own diamond,² probably for the insurance that would accrue, Sergeant Cuff makes his first, and only mistake, thereby showing that, after all, he is only human. Months later, Cuff is called back on the case, this time out of retirement. He discovers the nightgown with the paint on it had been hidden by Rosanna Spearman before her death, and, on recovering it, finds it belongs to Franklin Blake. However, Cuff's original premise, that the diamond was never stolen, is still partially true, for he proves conclusively that Mr. Blake took the diamond while asleep, with the intention of placing it in a safe place; however, unwittingly he placed it in the hands of his cousin, Godfrey Ablewhite, who, being in dire financial straits, believed he could sell it. Before he can dispose of it, the three Indian jugglers reappear, smother him to death, and secure the diamond. The book closes with a letter from India telling of the reappearance of the Moonstone in the forehead of the Moon god ---

¹
Ebid., p. 135.

²
Because she alone, in the whole household, would not permit her nightgowns to be inspected for paint marks.

and so the history of the Moonstone completed its circle.

T. S. Eliot declares in his Introduction to "The Moonstone" that it is the first, the longest, and the best of the modern English detective novels.¹ While we may dispute the assertion that it was "the first", certainly at the time Eliot was writing, it was the "longest" detective novel. At any time, "best", is a dangerous word; however, we are safe in saying that "The Moonstone" is an excellent novel of detection; it contains everything that is good and effective in detective fiction, and Sergeant Cuff's methods are indeed modern. Perhaps, after all, he is the perfect detective, because his premises invariably lead him to his conclusion --- a conclusion which proves to be false because one of his premises is false. Later, when he is in possession of all the clues, his deductions lead him to the correct answer. As Eliot remarks, "Sergeant Cuff is a real and attractive personality, and he is brilliant without being infallible."²

Wilkie Collins was primarily a mystery novelist rather than a pure detective novelist, and even "The Moonstone" contains too many side issues to completely satisfy the purist. Yet Collins could not bring himself to turn out a story which, in fact, would be little more than a mathematical problem in words. "I have always held the old fashioned opinion that the primary object of a work of fiction should be to tell a story,"³ this was his guiding principle at all times, consequently "The

¹ "The Moonstone", op. cit., Introduction p. v.

² Ibid., p. xii.

³ "The Women in White", op. cit., Introduction, p. vii.

"Moonstone", instead of being a pure detective story concerned only with crime and its detection, emerges as one of the finest novels of the nineteenth century. Its characters, its situations, its style, all are admirable, and all are bound up in the first named.

The only narrative which can hope to lay a strong hold on the the attention of readers, is a narrative which interests them about men and women --- for the perfectly obvious fact that they are men and women themselves.¹

Collins was primarily concerned about his characters, once he had decided upon them and their peculiarities, the story began to take shape, and, as his characters themselves usually tell the story, his style was already decided upon.

Walter de la Mare outlines what he declares was Collins' "famous formula" for the practising novelist, "Make 'em laugh, Make 'em cry and Make 'em wait."² Many of our modern novelists would do well to adopt these three rules.

Wilkie Collins is difficult to deal with as a detective novelist, because he is primarily a Novelist. His interest in his characters leads him into convoluted plots, and rather long character studies, both of which are not entirely in place in a detective novel. As we move on to the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, we encounter, perhaps, the perfect form of the pure detective novel; and we encounter, certainly, the greatest detective the world has ever known.

¹
Loc. cit.

²

De la Mare, op. cit., p. 90.

CHAPTER XIII

DOCTOR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE AND MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES

A cabman who once took me to a hotel in Paris gazed at me fixedly and said, 'Dr. Doyle, I perceive that you have recently been in Constantinople and Buda, and I perceive some indication that you were not far from Milan.'

'Excellent!' I cried, 'Five francs for the secret.'

'Elementary my dear sir, I looked at the labels on your trunk.'¹

In the year 1882, a young doctor, twenty-three years of age, took up a practice in Southsea, a suburb of the southern seacoast city of Portsmouth; and, in 1885, he married. Doctor Arthur Conan Doyle soon found that the income from his rather meagre practice was not enough to support a wife, so, in order to augment his professional income, he turned to literature, and began submitting short stories to various magazines.

In his youth, Doyle had been impressed by the precision of Gabriou's plots, and, as with many youngsters in those days, C. Auguste Dupin had been a boyhood hero. With this literary background, it was natural that his creative mind should soon turn to detective fiction. Gradually, Doyle conceived the idea of a series of detective stories with a connecting link in the person of a brilliant detective who would appear in each one. Now it so happened, that one of Doyle's teachers at the University of Edinburgh had been a Doctor Joseph Bell, a man possessed of amazing powers of analytical deduction.

He would sit in his receiving room and diagnose the people as they came in before they even opened their mouths. He would tell them their symptoms, and even give them details of their past life; and

¹

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Memories and Adventures. Quoted in The Reader's Digest, August, 1932.

hardly ever would he make a mistake.¹

From this description of Doctor Bell, we can already see the dim outline of Sherlock Holmes;² but it is not until we read Doyle's description of his old master's personal appearance, that we realise just how closely the two were related.

Bell was a very remarkable man in body and mind. He was thin, wiry, dark, with a high nose, acute face, penetrating gray eyes, angular shoulders, and a jerky way of walking. His voice was high and discordant.³

Is this not Sherlock Holmes in the flesh?

His new idea fermenting in his brain, Doyle began to write, and in a few weeks "A Study in Scarlet" was ready to be published. For many months, the manuscript went the rounds of the publishing houses until the disheartened author accepted twenty-five pounds "outright",⁴ less by far, than the price of a single copy in the auction rooms today.

"A Study in Scarlet" attracted little or no attention, and Doyle was determined to think no more of the "consulting detective" he had

1

Doyle, op. cit., quoted by Vincent Starrett in Enter Mr. Sherlock Holmes, The Atlantic Monthly. July, 1932 p. 82.

2

Sherlock Holmes was, in the first instance, 'Sheringford Holmes', surnamed for the American poet Oliver Wendell Holmes, whom Doyle greatly admired. Doyle later chose 'Sherlock' because he had once made thirty runs (cricket) off a bowler of that name, and was therefore sentimentally attached to it. (Doyle, in a newspaper interview. Quoted by Vincent Starrett, op. cit.)

3

Doyle, Memories and Adventures. Quoted by Valentine Williams. The Detective in Fiction, The Fortnightly Review. September 15, 1930, p. 65.

4

"A Study in Scarlet" was first published in Beeton's Christmas Annual, 1887.

created. Then, two years later, "Lippincott's Magazine", an American publication, made him a substantial offer for another Holmes story. Doyle was encouraged once more, and brought Sherlock Holmes back to life. The result of this resurrection was "The Sign of Four",¹ and immediate fame for Sherlock Holmes, Doctor Watson, and Conan Doyle.

In 1891, Doyle began a series of twenty-four tales for "Strand Magazine", which were collected into two volumes, "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes", and "The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes", the first named being published in England and America in 1892, the second, in 1894. By the end of the second series of twelve tales, Doyle apparently had become rather tired of his hero-sleuth; at any rate, in "The Final Problem",² Sherlock Holmes, locked in the arms of his arch-enemy Professor Moriarty, fell over a cliff in the Swiss Alps to meet death in the raging torrent below.

After the publication of "The Final Problem", the cries and letters of the enraged public soon convinced Conan Doyle that he would have to continue the Sherlock Holmes stories. However, it was not until 1902 that "The Hound of the Baskervilles", a detective novel in a Gothic setting, made its appearance, described as a posthumous memoir. The next year brought the news the world had been waiting for; Sherlock Holmes was not dead! A new series of tales, this time for "Colliers" began to appear, and were published in book form in 1905 as "The Return

¹
Lippincott's, February, 1890.

²
Published, 1894.

of Sherlock Holmes". Three more adventures of the great detective followed; "The Valley of Fear", 1915, "His Last Bow", 1917, and "The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes", 1927. These last works were eminently successful, but critics are inclined to agree with the old Cornish boatman who is reported to have said to Doyle, "I think sir, when Holmes fell over that cliff he may not have killed himself, but he was never quite the same man afterwards."¹

Today, almost everyone has heard of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson, but few persons are acquainted with the name of Stamford, although Stamford is, perhaps, the most important name in the history of the detective novel. At once the cry goes up from the reader, who is Stamford? What did he ever do? The answer is known only to rabid enthusiasts, and to such people the following scene is greater than any Shakespeare or Ibsen ever drew.

'Doctor Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes,' said Stamford, introducing us. 'How are you?' he said cordially, gripping my hand with a strength for which I should hardly have given him credit, 'You have been in Afghanistan I perceive.'²

Stamford's greatest, and indeed, only action in his short five page existence was the bringing together of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson; for if these two had never met, the world would have never heard of the

¹

Quoted by Howard Haycraft, Murder for Pleasure, (New York: D. Appleton, Century Company, 1941) p. 51.

²

"A Study in Scarlet" by Conan Doyle, The Complete Sherlock Holmes, (New York: Garden City Publishing Company, Incorporated) p. 6.

adventures of the famous consulting detective. From this introduction, as everyone knows, there sprang up an acquaintance that was to last for years. Watson and Holmes took up lodgings at 221-B Baker Street, and, after a short time, the former almost abandoned his meagre practice to accompany Holmes on his numerous exploits, and to write of their adventures together.

It is hardly necessary to describe Sherlock Holmes, for even today he is a familiar figure; his slippers by the fire, his pipe in the coalscuttle, his violin, his hypodermic syringe, his powerful magnifying glass, and his deer-stalking cap, all are familiar objects. Even when we have witnessed the deductive powers of such mental giants as Father Brown and Ellery Queen, we must still acknowledge Sherlock Holmes to be the great master of analytical deduction.

'From a drop of water (wrote Holmes in an article entitled 'The Book of Life'), a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other. So all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known whenever we are shown a single link of it. Like all other arts, the Science of Deduction and Analysis is one which can only be acquired by long and patient study.... Let the inquirer begin by mastering elementary problems. Let him, on meeting a fellow mortal, learn at a glance to distinguish the history of the man, and the trade or profession to which he belongs. By a man's finger-nails, by his boots, by his trouser-knees, by the callosities of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt-cuffs, by each of these things a man's calling is plainly revealed. That all united should

1

There is some reason to believe that the figure of Doctor Watson was partially autobiographical. Doyle's admiration for Joseph Bell at least equalled that of Watson for Holmes; and both doctors sadly neglected their practices in favor of the great detective.

fail to enlighten the competent inquirer in any case is almost inconceivable.¹

This, then, is Sherlock Holmes' theory of deductive analysis, and even that sceptical person Doctor Watson is forced to admit that Holmes is a master of his own theory. Who else could pick up a strange watch, examine it, and observe, quite correctly, that it belonged to the present owner's elder brother who had inherited it from his father. The brother was a man of untidy habits; left with good prospects, he threw away his chances, lived in poverty with short intervals of prosperity, and finally took to drink and died?² Yet, this is not magic, for, as Holmes is wont to observe rather smugly, the facts are evident to anyone with his eyes open. There is equal truth in Watson's "Amazing!", and Holmes' "Elementary!" To the average person with a rather dull sense of perception, the fact that a man walking down the street opposite is obviously a retired sergeant of the Marines is indeed amazing. To Holmes, who has noticed the anchor tattooed on his wrist, his military walk, and impressive appearance,³ it is elementary.

Sherlock Holmes is also able to supplement his natural powers of perception with a field of knowledge that, in itself, is rather peculiar, yet is ideal for his profession as a consulting detective. His knowledge of drugs is complete, of chemistry, profound, of anatomy, accurate. He can tell at a glance different soils, and where they are

¹ "A Study in Scarlet", op. cit., p. 13.

² This incident occurs in "The Sign of Four", op. cit., p. 95.

³ Vide "A Study in Scarlet", op. cit., p. 15.

to be found. He knows every detail of every horror perpetrated in nineteenth century England, and has a good general knowledge of British Law. Furthermore, because his work is often dangerous, he is an expert boxer, singlestick player, and swordsman. In his early training, Holmes made it a rule that he would acquire no knowledge which did not bear directly on his profession. At one time, Watson expresses surprise that Holmes is ignorant of the Copernican theory of the Solar System. The reply is typical: "What the deuce is it to me? You say we go around the sun. If we went round the moon it would not make a penny-¹worth of difference to me or my work."

In action, all of Holmes amazing faculties come to the fore, he prowls the scene of the crime, measuring distances, examining indistinct marks with his magnifying glass, and scooping up cigar ash or dust into an envelope for future examination. Then, with the baffled, and often exasperated Watson at his heels, he returns to Baker Street, plunges into the laboratory, emerging hours later to saw away at his old violin, and think --- perhaps all night. In the morning, the crime is either solved or very near to solution. Such is Sherlock Holmes, beside him, as he himself remarks, Dupin is "a very inferior fellow" and Lecoq, "a² miserable bungler."

Despite his really remarkable powers of analytical deduction, Helmes occasionally has to rely on outside sources for aid. On

¹
Ibid., p. 10.

²
Ibid., pp. 14-15.

particularly baffling cases, an injection of cocaine stimulates his brain to increased activity. Often, he refers to his very copious files, which are indexed and cross-referenced in a manner that completely baffles the humble Doctor Watson. Occasionally, Holmes visits his brother Mycroft who possesses an even more acute intellect than the great Sherlock. Mycroft's only handicap in the detection of crime is that he is not interested in it, and dislikes rapid movement. However, he is willing to oblige his younger and more energetic brother when the need arises. Very often, Holmes employs the services of "the Baker Street Irregulars", a small group of urchins under the able leadership of a little street-arab named Wiggins. The "Irregulars" are able to gather much valuable information for their generous employer, for, as¹ Holmes declares to Watson, "they go everywhere and hear everything." Holmes, himself, when on the trail of a criminal is unusually active, so much so that the Doctor, with his wounded leg, has often a great deal of difficulty in keeping up with him. Nor is Holmes above the use of disguise; often a ragged old beggar, or a swaggering sailor man comes to call on Sherlock Holmes, as the latter is out, the good Doctor Watson asks the visitor to wait. Minutes later, the well known voice of Holmes will inquire, "Well Watson aren't you going to offer me a cigar?"

If Holmes is occasionally too brilliant to be entirely credible, Doctor Watson is unshakably plausible, solid British flesh and bone.

¹
Ibid., p. 35.

"Good old Watson," cries Holmes in his last recorded words, "You are the one fixed point in a changing world."¹ In the creation of Doctor Watson, Conan Doyle was merely following the tradition set by Poe, but Doctor Watson is by far the greatest detective's companion that has ever been created. Every reader unconsciously slips into the faithful doctor's skin and worships the great criminologist through the eyes of his humble, slow-thinking companion. Doyle did not realize just how important Doctor Watson was until he allowed him to get married;² then he moved from Baker Street, and saw Holmes only occasionally. Despite this inconvenience, Conan Doyle contrived to bring the two together nine times before he decided that Holmes was to die. The trouble of accounting for Mrs. Watson, and why she allowed her husband to run around the country with his detective friend, was apparently too much for Doyle. Watson could not be married to two people at once; consequently, in "The Adventure of the Empty House", wherein Holmes makes a triumphant return, Watson makes a passing reference to his recent "sad bereavement,"³ removes to Baker Street, and takes up life anew with Sherlock Holmes.

The true greatness of these two characters, Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson, is strikingly illustrated if we are able to cast aside our admiration for the moment, and subject the Sherlock Holmes stories to a purely technical analysis. Little can be said for Doyle's plots, as all of the longer stories deal with the time worn revenge motif. "A

¹ "His Last Bow", op. cit., p. 1155.

² Shortly before "The Adventure of the Crooked Man".

³ vide "The Adventure of the Empty House", op. cit., p. 566.

"Study in Scarlet" even violates the most sacred tenet of the detective novel, as the criminal is revealed to be a person who has not, properly speaking, appeared in the story prior to the denouement. In addition, throughout the various tales, Holmes often solves the crime by the use of evidence that has not been presented to the reader. He is continually noting minute points such as dust, cigar ash, or minute scratches, which are not disclosed to the reader, yet Holmes employs them in the analytical deduction which gives him the correct solution. His profound and highly specialised knowledge tells him what we do not know; that the dust comes from the East side, the cigar is an expensive one bought only by men of means, and the scratch obviously could only have been made by the heel cleat on a man's shoe. This method undoubtedly adds to the prestige of the super-sleuth, but it is grossly unfair to the reader. What modern writer could commit such heinous crimes and survive? The fact that Sherlock Holmes does survive bears mute evidence of Doyle's amazing powers of story telling.

If the above is true, if the reader is not given a fair chance to compete with the detective, why do we put up with Sherlock Holmes? There are several reasons, the principal one being, perhaps, that from the first we are aware that Sherlock Holmes is a genius in his own field, and that it would be presumptuous on our part to attempt to solve a crime on which he is directing his powerful intellect. Besides, we have other things to occupy our minds, for a Sherlock Holmes story is full of excitement, the style is quick and racy, there is always something happening; if Holmes and Watson are not dashing off in a hansom

cab, "the Baker Street Irregulars" are invading the sacred portals of 221-B. We follow Holmes about in the same spirit that Watson does, we do not know exactly what it is all about, but we do know that Holmes, delightful fellow, has something up his sleeve, and we are not going to be absent when it is revealed. Howard Haycraft describes the great attraction of the Sherlock Holmes stories in the following words:

It is the small boy in all of us, sitting before an open fire, a-wriggle with pleasure. It is the 'snug-peril' of fin de siècle Baker Street, with hansom cabs rumbling distantly on wet cobblestones, and Moriarty and his minions lurking in the fog. It is the warmth behind drawn curtains, and the reek of strong tobacco. It is the inevitable bell, the summons to duty and high adventure. It is the detective on all fours, nose to the ground, tracing a criminal's spoor with small animal sounds of happiness. It is the triumphal return to Baker Street. It is Holmes' beginning the explanation over one of Mrs. Hudson's late suppers. It is Watson's wide-eyed and penultimate, 'Marvelous!' It is Sherlock's final and superb 'Elementary!'¹

Mr. Haycraft might have added, 'it is Conan Doyle's sheer genius for telling stories.'

Without a doubt, Sherlock Holmes is the most popular character in English Fiction. More books and articles have been written about him and his companion, Doctor Watson, than any other characters in fiction. Indeed, for many years there was considerable doubt as to whether Holmes was a fictional character or not. Postal authorities often reported countless letters addressed in good faith to "Mr. Sherlock Holmes, 221-B Baker Street," while, even today, travellers consistently ask to be shown "where Sherlock Holmes lived." Mr. Haycraft tells an amusing story of a French general in the First World War who asked Conan Doyle

¹

Haycraft, op. cit., p. 56.

(then a government observer and propagandist) what rank Sherlock Holmes held in the British army. Sir Arthur reportedly murmured something about Holmes being 'too old for active service.'¹ The announcement² that Holmes was retiring to the country to raise bees, brought an overwhelming number of letters from would-be housekeepers, and amateur and professional apiarists, all eager to help their hero along in his new venture.

Even those who know that Holmes was merely a creature in the mind of Conan Doyle, like to believe that he did exist. Debates have raged for years over the likely location of 221-B. Mr. Haycraft reports that an assorted group of Holmes enthusiasts, headed by Christopher Morley, and calling themselves "the Baker Street Irregulars", meet at irregular intervals in New York to indulge in what their leader calls³ "221-B Culture". This club is only one of several.

Naturally enough, there have been numerous theories advanced about the after-life of Sherlock Holmes and his companion. Rex Stout

¹
Ibid., p. 58.

²
As he did at the conclusion of the investigation known as "The Valley of Fear". With the approach of the first World War he came out of retirement and placed his great abilities at the disposal of the British Government. Vide Preface to "His Last Bow", op. cit., p. 1021.

³
Mr. Haycraft mentions the existence of at least two more "Sherlockian" Societies; "The Sherlock Holmes Society of London", and "The Speckled Band" Society of Boston. Haycraft, op. cit., p. 59, (footnote).

delivered an ingenious paper at one meeting of "the Baker Street Irregulars" which proved conclusively that Holmes was really a romantic at heart, a point that has long been disputed. Mr. Stout declares that Watson was a woman, and, moreover, the wife of Sherlock Holmes. He points out that throughout the various stories Watson has left many indications of her true sex, and also a cryptogram concealed in the titles, which shows her name to be Irene Adler. Mr. Stout declares, in conclusion, that he intends to give further study to the matter of the married life of Mr. and Mrs. Sherlock Holmes. Lord Peter Winsey was born near the turn of the century, and to Mr. Stout that seems very suggestive. ¹ He can only await his next report.

² Professor Moriarty, the only person, with one exception, ever to outwit the brilliant sleuth, has also come in for his share of after-life. Doctor Felix Morley has the unique and plausible theory that Moriarty also survived the fall from the cliff, and is, today, the German ³ dictator Adolph Hitler. Another writer, whose name is not on record, ⁴ has published an article which substantiates Morley's view that Moriarty is not dead. This time, the contention is that Holmes really did die, but the insidious professor, a genius at disguise, took his place, deceived Watson, and is today living in Sussex with the name Sherlock

¹ This paper of Mr. Stout's may be found in The Pocket Mystery Reader, (New York: Pocket Books Incorporated 1942) under the title Watson Was a Woman, pp. 220-228.

² The exception is Irene Adler who appears in "A Scandal in Bohemia".

³ Quoted in The End of Sherlock Holmes, Article. The Living Age. August 15, 1927, p. 356.

⁴ No reference available.

Holmes securely fastened to his gate-post. This impersonation would, of course, account for the inferior brand of deduction that is so evident in the later stories. Unfortunately, there are no more adventures of Sherlock Holmes, but the writings of these Sherlockian enthusiasts, in part, compensate for the absence of the master story teller.

The popularity of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson in England and the United States is almost legendary. Complete editions of Sherlock Holmes stories are still being printed. Holmes is adequately portrayed on the screen by Mr. Basil Rathbone, with Mr. Nigel Bruce as a very convincing Doctor Watson. Almost any night on our radios we may tune in Holmes' "Elementary my dear Watson". Sherlock Holmes is still very popular in England, America, and France, but for a full realisation of the hold which the name of Sherlock Holmes took upon the imagination of the world, it is necessary to turn to Spain, the Spanish-American colonies, and Russia. Barcelona was the birth place of the Iberian Sherlock Holmes. Here, scores of hack-writers busied themselves turning out new Holmes stories, even while the creator was still alive. These "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes", bound in small paper covered volumes, were printed by the millions, and sent overseas to Cuba and Central and South America. These Spanish "Doyles" displayed more imagination in their titles than the English originator. "Blackwell, the Pirate of the Thames", "The Seller of Corpses", "Jack the Ripper", and "The Bloody Hammer", were a few of the most popular works. Russia, as well as Spain, had its adapted Sherlock Holmes. One year before the first Great War, the empire of the Czar saw the publication of more than one thousand

'Sherlock Holmes' novels.

Arthur Conan Doyle lived and wrote at the end of a great age of English literature. Dickens, Collins, George Eliot, Thackeray, and Trollope, were still alive when he was born, and Robert Louis Stevenson, himself a dabbler in detective stories, was a distinguished contemporary. Conan Doyle was not a great writer; he may be regarded as a plain squire who is entitled to sit at the same table with princes. No one would class him with Shakespeare, Scott, or Dickens, but his true place is beside them; for, although he created no great literature, he did create a character who may take his place beside Falstaff, Dandie Dinmont, and Mr. Micawber.

The adventures of Sherlock Holmes succeed because of their simplicity. Conan Doyle's greatest triumph was Doctor Watson; he is not great himself, but is the cause of greatness in another. Had Sherlock Holmes been allowed to conduct his investigations unaccompanied by the faithful doctor, we should never have believed in him, for, indeed, he is too good to be true. Watson, however, is entirely plausible, we do not doubt his presence at 221-B Baker Street, and if he declares Sherlock Holmes was also present, we are ready to believe him.

It has been accurately stated by many critics that if there had been no Auguste Dupin, there would have been no Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle himself was well aware of the debt he owed to Edgar Allan Poe.

With characteristic frankness he wrote:

If every man who receives a check for a story which owes its springs to Poe, were to pay tithe to a monument for the master, he would have a pyramid as big as that of Cheops.¹

¹ Quoted by Valentine Williams, The Detective in Fiction, The Fortnightly Review, September 15, 1930.

The same debt of gratitude is due Conan Doyle from our present writers of detective fiction. Had there been no Sherlock Holmes or Doctor Watson there may well have been no Peter Wimsey or Father Brown.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

The first section of this thesis dealt with the Gothic novel, and attempted to show that it was the precursor of the detective novel, a fact which many authors glibly state, but rarely try to prove.

In the section just concluded, we have attempted to trace the evolution of the early detective novel from its inception in the hands of Edgar Allan Poe, to its perfection in the hands of Arthur Conan Doyle. Certainly these two names are the most important ones in the history of detective fiction. Poe, it was, who first conceived the idea of ratiocination, and applied it to the solution of a crime. Dupin was the world's first detective; and, while his various shortcomings have been noted, he must stand next to the immortal Sherlock as a master of the science of analytical deduction. Of Poe one could say much, but it is to Arthur Conan Doyle that the credit for popularising the detective novel must go. Within a few years after his creation, Holmes' "Elementary my dear Watson", had become a household expression in many parts of the world. The great interest that the various adventures of this super-sleuth aroused in the reading public in the early years of the twentieth century did much to pave the way for our present day detective novelists.

But one must be careful not to overlook the important contributions of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. Too often, their accomplishments in the field of detective literature are dwarfed by the merits of Poe and Doyle, yet the role played by Dickens and Collins was an important one. Not only did they create detectives who were

essentially human, an important contribution in itself, they, more than any other writers, helped to make the detective novel respectable. When such writers of established merit as Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins turned their hands to the production of detective literature, the literary world was forced to recognise the importance of the detective in fiction.

The title of this thesis is "The Road to Baker Street"; we have now travelled that road to its very end. Nothing has been said about the merits or demerits of our modern detective novels. That field has been adequately covered by many writers, among them Caroline Wells,¹ and Howard Haycraft.² However, it is not possible to leave this thesis without presenting a few notes on the technique of the modern detective novel, these will appear in Appendix B, and may be regarded as a survey of the most common elements in modern detective fiction.

The detective novel is with us to stay. It is, at present, our most popular form of fiction. This thesis has been written in the hope that it will furnish a fairly adequate historical background to the present literature of detection.

¹ The Technique of the Mystery Story, by Caroline Wells. (Springfield: Home Correspondence School, 1929.) Unobtainable in Winnipeg.

² Murder for Pleasure, by Howard Haycraft. (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1941.) Winnipeg Public Library.

APPENDIX A

The legend of the Wandering Jew is one of the most popular themes in world literature. Within the context of this thesis we have made reference to the legend in at least three different places, in connection with three different authors; the intention now is to give a short summary of the legend of The Wandering Jew, and also some indication of the popularity it has enjoyed in the literature of many lands.

The Wandering Jew, according to tradition, was a Jew who mocked or mistreated Jesus Christ, while He was on His way to Golgotha, and was condemned, therefore, to a life of wandering on earth until Judgment Day. There are two distinct versions of the story which appear in English Literature. One relates that the Wenderer is a certain Certapholus, a servant in Pilate's palace, who struck Jesus a brutal blow as He was led forth to death, and to whom He said, "Thou shalt wander till I come!" The other is of German origin, and concerns a shoemaker of Jerusalem, Ahasuerus, who mocked the Savior as He passed to Golgotha. Bowed under the weight of the cross, Christ leaned for a moment to rest against the door of the little shop, but Ahasuerus said scornfully, "Go faster Jew!" With one look of deep reproach, Christ answered, "I go, but tarry thou till I come!"

It is impossible to ascertain the actual origin of the legend with any degree of certainty, as it appears in the literature and folklore of almost all civilized countries. Miss Dorothy Scarborough¹ reports that there is an Arabian legend of a person by the name of

¹

The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction , p. 175.

Samiri, who wanders forever crying, 'Touch me not!' There is a Buddhist account of a man cursed for working miracles to whom Buddha is supposed to have said, "Thou shalt not attain Nirvana while my religion lasts." Similarly, the legend appears in the folk-lore of China, India, the Scandinavian countries, and England, where plovers are thought to be the souls of those that crucified Christ, condemned to fly forever over the world, uttering their plaintive cry.

In English literature, the legend of the Wandering Jew first appeared in the Chronicles of Roger of Wendover, who reported the legend as being told at the monastery of St. Albans by an Armenian bishop in 1228, but to hearers who were already familiar with it. According to the Chronicles, the Armenian bishop, then visiting England, was asked by the monks at St. Albans about Joseph of Arimathea, who had spoken to Jesus, and was said to be still alive. This bishop claimed to have seen him in Armenia under the name of Certhaphilus, and declared he had confessed that he had taunted Jesus on His way to the cross.

The next evidence we have of The Wandering Jew in literature is dated 1602, when a pamphlet, allegedly printed at Leyden, related that Paulus von Kizen (d. 1598), bishop of Schleswig, had met, in Hamburg, in 1542, a Jew named Ahasuerus, who declared he was "eternal", and was the same one who had been punished by Jesus. This pamphlet seems to have been the popularising agent of the legend, for it met with ready acceptance. Eight editions appeared in that year (1602), and the fortieth before 1700. Dutch, Flemish, and French editions also met with great success. In England, the pamphlet was certainly known before 1625.

The popularity of the pamphlet soon led to reports of the appearance of The Wanderer everywhere. He was reported to have appeared in Prague in 1602; Lubeck in 1603; Bavaria in 1604; Brussels, 1640; Paris, 1644; Stamford, 1658; and Astrkhan in 1672. In the eighteenth century, he was seen at Munich in 1721; Brussels in 1774; Newcastle in 1790; and in London between 1818 and 1830.¹ The last appearance recorded was near Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1868, when The Wanderer is said to have made himself known to a Mormon named O'Grady.

With this diffusion of the theme into the literature and legend of so many countries, any attempt at discovering the original source would be doomed to failure, yet, the theories of E. E. Kellett and Doctor Joseph Jacobs² are not without some authority. These gentlemen see good reason to believe that the original source of the legend of The Wandering Jew was Matthew XVI, 28: "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." These words were quoted in the pamphlet of 1602, which fact seems to lend strength to the contention of Kellett and Jacobs. They further point out that a legend was also based on John XXI, 20 ('Lord which is he that betrayeth thee?') "These legends, and the utterance of Matthew were 'contaminated' with the legend of Joseph of Arimathea, and the Holy Grail, and took the form given in Wendover."

1

The date of Peacock's "Nightmare Abbey". Cf. supra p. 80.

2

The Wandering Jew, Article by E. E. Kellett and Doctor Joseph Jacobs in The Encyclopedia Britannica Volume XIII, pp. 51-52.

Miss Dorothy Scarborough lists at least twenty-one authors who have used the theme of The Wandering Jew in English literature, and declares that in these works the Wandering Jew "has been depicted psychologically, as a suffering human being; mythologically, to illustrate the growth and change in life; religiously, to preach certain tenets and beliefs; and symbolically, to show forth the soul of man ... to the Christian, he stands for the evidence of Christ's power of divinity; while to the Jew, he is a symbol of that unhappy race that wanders ever, with no home in any land."¹

It is easy to understand how the legend would attract the attention of the romanticists. In English literature, perhaps the best known versions of the legend occur in M. G. Lewis' "The Monk", and R. C. Maturin's "Melmoth the Wanderer", both already noted. Also familiar to most readers is Shelley's use of the theme in "Queen Mab", 1812, and in "Hellas", 1821. Few, however, are aware of Wordsworth's "Song for The Wandering Jew", 1800, and Shelley's "The Wandering Jew's Soliloquy" (published, 1887). But perhaps the best description of the uses to which the theme of The Wandering Jew has been put in English literature is contained in a fragment of Shelley's, first published by Mrs. Shelley in 1839.

He wanders like a day-appearing dream,
Through the dim wildernesses of the mind;
Through desert, woods and tracts, which seem
Like ocean, homeless, boundless, unconfined.

1

Scarborough, op. cit., p. 180.

APPENDIX B

THE TECHNIQUE OF THE MODERN DETECTIVE NOVEL

Today, when detective novels are extremely plentiful, good detective fiction is scarce. Ellery Queen, Dorothy Sayers, S. S. Van Dine, G. K. Chesterton, Agatha Christie, Ngaio Marsh, and Dashiell Hammett, are, perhaps, the leading writers; yet these seven names are but a mere handful when compared with the thousands of writers who are grinding out second-rate detective fiction for public consumption. The reason for this paucity of good detective novels in comparison with the number produced is because the detective story which fully develops its distinctive qualities, embodying fine diction, fine characterisation, interesting situations, and an adequate solution to the problem, is, perhaps, the rarest, and most difficult form of fiction. The reason for this should be at once obvious, as a good detective novelist must possess first of all, a good imagination, and secondly, a power of ratiocination. The one demanding creative power, the other demanding powers of fine reasoning and logical analysis, are rarely met with in a single person.

We have already noted that the satisfaction the good detective novel gives to the reader is an intellectual satisfaction, but this does not mean that it should sacrifice diction, style, humour, and the other essentials of any type of good fiction, to the general intention of solving the problem. The good detective novel should be well written if it is to appeal to the reader of higher intellect. For the same reason, it should not be sensational. Too many writers believe they

must stud their novels with murder and crime to gain the approval of the reader. To the purist --- the intelligent reader of detective fiction --- this is repulsive; all he desires is a corpse, and the easier the manner in which it is presented the better. Generally speaking, humour and romance are frowned upon in detective fiction, but it is possible, as Ellery Queen and Dorothy Sayers have shown, to introduce both of these elements with little derogatory effect.

Generally speaking, the modern detective story of merit follows the same structural pattern that was created by Edgar Allan Poe in 1841; the problem, the evidence, the solution, and the explanation to the reader. We shall deal with each in turn.

The problem is usually concerned with crime; not only because it is an attractive subject, but also because it permits of an investigation. Naturally, the greater the crime, the greater the interest; murder, therefore, is the most popular, and, indeed, the most suitable form of crime. The criminal is fighting against the detective for the highest of all stakes --- his life. Furthermore, murder usually leaves something tangible --- a corpse --- for the detective to work with; robbery is not a popular topic for detective stories because the evidence it leaves is usually negative, that is, the absence of something.

The presentation of the evidence is the most important part of the detective novel. This section bulks the largest, because it tells the story, and presents to the reader the clues from which the final deduction is to be made. In this section, it is the duty of the author to be scrupulously honest with the reader; he must present all of the

clues, and none of them may be false. However, the author is entirely justified in presenting the clues out of sequence, the rearrangement is the problem of the reader; he may also employ humour to distract the attention of the reader from an important disclosure; but any introduction of irrelevant material is frowned upon as being in poor taste, and the sign of an amateur draftsman.

The solution, or discovery of the criminal, is the climax of the story, once the detective has named the criminal the inquiry is at an end, and it is forbidden, hereafter, to introduce any new evidence.

The final phase is the explanation to the reader. He may be unable to follow the detective's line of reasoning from the clues presented to him, and it is the author's duty to convince the reader that the sleuth has arrived at the only logical solution. This is perhaps the most difficult task facing the detective novelist. By the nature of the thing, he is forced to have his detective launch into a long narration of the clues, and his reasoning from them, and there is a very great danger of boring the reader. Here, the capable writer is able to fall back on his powers of literary composition to help him over this difficult spot; here, writers of lesser ability fail miserably, and the novel ends in a disastrous anti-climax.

It is not to be thought that these four sections form a hard and fast framework upon which the detective novel must be hung; for, as a matter of fact, the rearrangement of these sections by a capable author only adds to the general interest and improvement of the genre. Occasionally, the story progresses at some length before the corpse is

introduced, although this practise is sometimes overdone. More often, the last two sections are interchanged, the detective discourses on his methods of reasoning, leading directly to the revelation, 'And so, the murderer is' Here there is no danger of anti-climax. Every detective story is a challenge to the reader, yet to the present writer's knowledge, only one author has presented a direct challenge. In one of his many detective novels, "Ellery Queen", after outlining the story, and presenting the evidence, inserts two pages, with room for marginal notes, on which he presents all the clues 'en masse', and then challenges the reader to deduce the correct solution. Such devices as this not only display the ingenuity of the writer, but also add to the general interest of the detective novel as a whole.

In the selection of a detective, the author must be extremely judicious. First of all, the sleuth must be human; he must be a Sergeant Cuff, or Inspector Bucket rather than an Auguste Dupin. He must be clever, yet not so clever that he appals the reader. In the past few years we have been presented with almost every conceivable type of detective; tall ones, short ones, fat ones, thin ones, private investigators, hobbyists, and even detectives who are attached to the regular police force. The new writer should endeavor to create a new type --- the female sleuth has been attempted, but not successfully as yet --- then, having conceived his detective, he should stay with him. It is only in a series of stories that the writer can ever hope to interest the reading public in his sleuth; the experience of Conan Doyle is ample evidence of the truth of this statement.

The criminal also presents a problem. He must, of course, be clever, but not clever enough to baffle the detective. Of late, with so many excellent sleuths around, crime in detective fiction has become extremely complicated, and also, often extremely incongruous. It is a challenge to the author's ingenuity that he must make his criminal commit a crime in a manner that is baffling enough to occasion a lengthy investigation, yet not so complicated that the reader will not believe in its possibility. After all, "the perfect crime" was committed in Grand Central Station, with five thousand people looking on. The murderer drew out a revolver, shot his victim, and walked away. He was never apprehended. The principle tenet of the detective novel is, then, plausibility; the facts of the case must be plausible if the reader is to believe in them. This is not as simple as it sounds, for the intelligent reader is apt to be highly sceptical, and incredible plots meet with little sympathy. Nor can the writer advance the argument that extraordinary situations and staggering coincidences are common in real life, for, as Valentine Williams remarks, "Truth is stranger than fiction, but fiction simply cannot afford to be as improbable as real life."¹

Having decided upon a detective, a criminal, and a plot, the harrassed author's work is not yet done. He must write a moving story. He has to weave a tale that is interesting in itself. He has many clues

¹

On Crime Fiction by Valentine Williams. What is a Book? Chapter IX, p. 182.

to present, and little space to do it in, so his story must move at an accelerated tempo, yet, must not resolve itself into a dull list of events and occurrences. The writers today who possess all these essential qualities are indeed few in number.

From this short survey of the technique of the modern detective novel, it will be seen that it is by no means an easy task to produce a "best-seller", and, even, then, fame is transient. Few persons ever re-read a detective novel, for the thrill of the chase disappears with the revelation of the criminal. However, the market for a good detective novel is a large one, and is always open. The reader knows that there he may find relaxation, or intellectual stimulation; best of all, perhaps, he knows that the story will neither shock or disgust him as a modern psychological novel, picked at random, is likely to do. The demand for good detective fiction will always be great because so many of us have become accustomed to our "twenty-cents' worth of murder"¹ before we go to bed.

¹

The phrase is Stephen Leacock's. Vide. The Pocket Mystery Reader, "Twenty Cents Worth of Murder", pp. 215-219.

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