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PAINTING LIFE IN EXTREMES

CHARLES MATURIN AND THE GOTHIC GENRE

by

Cathie Dunsford

A thesis presented to the
University of Auckland

for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

June, 1983
"If I possess any talent, it is that of darkening the gloomy, and of deepening the sad; of painting life in extremes, and representing those struggles of passion when the soul trembles on the verge of the unlawful and the unhallowed."

ABSTRACT

Charles Robert Maturin (1780-1824) produced a substantial body of writing that included six novels, three plays, and two collections of sermons. Despite the large audience he reached in his own time, and the interest he aroused in a number of later poets and novelists, Maturin's work has not received very much serious attention from critics. The present study attempts to take a fresh look at all Maturin's work, exploring it sympathetically from a variety of directions. Melmoth is included, but because it has dominated previous discussion of Maturin, I have chosen to concentrate on his neglected novels, Fatal Revenge, The Wild Irish Boy, The Milesian Chief, Women, or Pour et Contre, and The Albigenses.

Special attention is given here to Maturin's two volumes of sermons (a valuable but seldom used source of information about his religious philosophy) and, more generally, to the theme of religion, which links many of his novels. This aspect of Gothic literature deserves a closer study than it usually receives, particularly in the work of Maturin who was a minister of religion. My thesis proposes a new interpretation of Fatal Revenge based on the parallel that Maturin developed between the use of superstition by Orazio and its use by the Catholic church. In The Albigenses there is a similar parallel between the outlaws and the supposedly holy Crusaders. Maturin took the Catholic church so often as his subject, not simply because it provided a colourful, stereotyped background (as some have suggested), but because it was a context in which he could seriously investigate the psychological pressures that produced (and still produce) conformity, extremism, and sexual violence.

While his studies of oppressive societies may at times remind us of twentieth-century works such as 1984 or The Trial, Maturin's fiction is very much a part of its age. After a chapter that explores the history
of 'the Gothic', my thesis focuses on the particular context of Maturin's period, mapping it initially by examining the responses to his work that appeared in print during his lifetime. Those reviews and essays make visible the complex field of forces in which Maturin worked. The Gothic novel developed in an age of more than usual ferment - literary, religious, and political - including the first phase of what we would today describe as feminist rebellion. All this was accompanied, as we can see from the criticism, by a strong conservative reaction in defence of the threatened values. The present study emphasizes the ways in which Maturin's work shared the new energies associated with change, even though it also displayed signs of ambivalence. I consider the reasons for this ambivalence and argue that in many cases there is subtlety in what appears at first to be confusion. Maturin's fiction was a late addition to the Gothic tradition, but its particular kinds of complexity - such as its psychological depth - made it an important development of the genre and linked it with other innovative writing of the period.

Some admirers of Maturin have sought to play down the Gothic element in his work, which is understandable in view of the low esteem in which the genre has been held. The Gothic has often been seen, for example, as a confused rehearsal for Romanticism. While acknowledging the variety of Maturin's novels, I have sought to emphasise their continuing links with the Gothic genre and its special energies. During the past decade, new forms of Gothic criticism have appeared that treat the subject with greater seriousness. Today, interest in the Gothic genre seems to be springing to life again, and its relevance to our own time (which is also a period of complex social change and widespread ambivalence) has become clearer. I have attempted to contribute to this new type of criticism by pointing out the value of Maturin's studies of oppression and his ability to go beyond stereotypes in his treatment of women characters.
I have also suggested some links between Gothic literature and feminist science-fiction writing today. In general, the aim of this thesis has been to consider the most mature Gothic fiction (such as that of Maturin) not merely as fantasy but as an expanded vision of reality.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis, my child, is in her eighth year of growth, and I'm convinced will not stop developing just because she has chosen finally to 'come out' into the world. Her birth and development have mirrored my own rebirth, and for that I have many people to thank:

Aorewa McLeod, for the initial inspiration to delve into the Gothic genre and experience its delights; Dr Roger Horrocks for constant support and encouragement, and a Supervisory Wisdom which brought me back to the edge of the Precipice each time I was about to plunge into the Abyss, that I might see more clearly the perspective which drew me there in the first place; Dr Brian Boyd, for attempting to argue Reason in the light of Imagination and Fancy each time I took to Flight; Professor C.K. Stead, Sebastian Black, Alex Calder and Dr Michael Neill for the continual intellectual conflict which kept my wit sharp and my politics defined; Professor Don Smith, for pretending not to notice while I turned his Department Outside-In; Michael Giacon for his excellent wit in times of crisis; Drs Boire, Wright, Larsen and Lamb for their support; Paul Stone, University of Toronto, for his unforgettable loyalty and belief in my political vision; Dr Rod Edmond, University of Canterbury, Kent, for his seminar on Christina Rossetti, his advice and his deep care; Professor Rita Jacobs, Montclair University, for her stimulating inspiration and academic encouragement; staff and students of the Auckland University English Department who gave me necessary feedback when I presented variations on this thesis at Staff Seminars, and for keeping me employed as a tutor and lecturer since 1976; Mervyn Thompson, for his advice on drama; the English Department Women Students' Collective for their unfailing support; Professor Peter Godfrey and Margery Charlton for their faith in my ability.
Ellie Guthrie for her patient proofreading, challenging questions and support over the past three years; Cathie Hutchinson and Elva Leaming for their brilliant ability to get innumerable rare books into the country via the library interloan system; Clare Aspell for her care and energy on the final proofs; Denise Motu and Jane Adamson for their sense of humour and ability to put my thesis before departmental minutes; Beryl Stout for the massive effort of the final typed copy and her increasing interest in its content; Doreen, Noel, Kevin and Debbie Dunsford, for their emotional and financial support at all times; Sandi Hall, whose inspiration, insight and political vision have fired my imagination back to her Gothic heights constantly; Margo Oliver, Riemke Ensing and Dr Margaret McLaren, of the English Department Minority Group (Women staff members), for their belief in my work; Charmaine Pointney, Renee Taylor, Bernadette Doolan, Jenny Spring, Jo Crowley, Leah Poulter, Marianne Gardiner, Marie Neal, Miriam Saphira and Louise Rafkin, for their support and encouragement; Sandra Coney for her editing skill on my articles and her political insight; Donna Awhare, for making me think through the themes of oppression; Brigit Ikin, for her intellectual clarity; all the many women who make up the feminist movement in New Zealand who have invited me to lecture, provide resources and write articles, and without whose support I could never have integrated my scholastic work into an education system which is, at present, still largely alien to our political ideals, but in which it is essential that we succeed in order to progress beyond. I would particularly like to thank Adrienne Rich for her letter of support at a crucial stage of this work and her advice that we must all remain as "present to each other" as we possibly can, and especially in times of crisis.

I am indebted to the University Grants Committee for awarding me a Post-graduate Scholarship in 1976, which made possible the birth of this
thesis. I acknowledge also a generous Research Grant awarded to me in 1977 by the University Grants Committee to enable me to purchase microfilms and order copies of original Gothic texts, otherwise unavailable in New Zealand; and to make possible a research trip to Australian universities which have a fine collection of Gothic resources.

I am grateful to the English Department, University of California, Berkeley, who have appointed me 'honorary Research Scholar' for 1983-4, and by so doing have hastened a reluctant end to my first stage of Gothic explorations; and also the the New Zealand-United States of America Educational Foundation for awarding me a Fulbright Scholarship that I may accept this appointment.

Cathie Dunsford

University of Auckland,
June, 1983.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Any age is an age of change and conflict, yet in some periods the intensity of change seems particularly strong. An example is the period at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century. It was during this period that the forces of fantasy and rebellion, silenced during the so-called Age of Enlightenment or Reason, rose in a wave of unreasoned energy which gained momentum as it surged towards its shore: the buried or unconscious part of our mind and senses. Its expression in the form of the Gothic novel challenged traditional ideals of harmony, decorum and restraint (as reflected in contemporary literary criticism) in plot, character, structure and style, yet it outwardly conformed to a range of seemingly unreal stage trappings or devices which partially concealed its intended message in symbol and myth.

The ambiguity of the Gothic novel must be related to its own context. Its pattern gained in complexity as the genre flourished, and is nowhere more clearly seen than in the variations of Gothic writing produced by its last and most mature exponent, the Reverend Charles Robert Maturin. My motivation in this introductory chapter is to establish a sense of the general context from which Maturin's work emerged - a necessary preparation for recognising the depth and originality of his work. My aim is to place the writer in his 'field of forces', seeing the age in terms of its tensions and conflicts, which are so important to any novelist as a starting point. Inevitably, this opening chapter may seem very generalised, but my intention is to begin with an overview, to move from a wide-angle lens shot panning the complex scenery to focus in on increasingly fine detail.

The period from the publication of the first Gothic novel in 1764 to Maturin's last novel in 1824 is an age of political and cultural ferment. Revolution in France and America and social upheaval in other countries
questioned not only political structures but also religious and personal values. Inevitably, it was also a period of strong conservative reaction and defence of threatened values. In many cases, individuals were themselves torn between these extremes, with today's revolutionaries becoming tomorrow's staunch conservatives, and vice versa. The age could be epitomised by Madame de Staël's statement, "Violent rebellions are necessary to bring the human spirit to completely new purposes", and her subsequent retraction of this call, in the midst of revolution, when she realised that to use evil means to achieve good ends was not necessarily justified.\footnote{Such ambiguity, far from being a sign of weakness in a writer, or in the Gothic genre generally, tended to be a natural part of any sensitive account of the complexities of the period. Ambiguity and ambivalence will be important themes of the present study.}

Although the French Revolution, a central event of the period, turned sour eventually, provoking a wave of reaction, it had encouraged a belief in new possibilities, which could never again be completely extinguished. Maturin's attitude toward France was ambivalent as we shall see later when considering his sermons. While, on the one hand, he abhorred this country that he considered "depraved", on the other hand, he expressed his own rebellion against conservative power and traditional authority through his novels. This was particularly evident in his attack on Catholicism. While Catholic settings were interpreted by contemporary (and many later) reviewers of Gothic fiction as suitably exotic contexts in which to set terror fiction, the way they were portrayed also represented a reaction against the conservative value system that Catholicism still endorsed. As Bernard Reardon puts it in his study on nineteenth-century religious thought:
If, then, one does venture to epitomize the epoch in one phrase one might call it the Age of Progress. It is not surprising that religion itself should have both reflected and promoted the current forward-looking idealism. This at least is true of Protestantism, for Catholicism remained to all showing obdurately committed to the past. The former, more amorphous than its ancient rival, was less resistant to the pressure of change, and although a residuum of the old Protestant orthodoxy, on the European continent, in Britain and in America, survived the rigour of a growingly adverse intellectual climate, Protestantism generally, if in varying degree, felt the need of coming to terms in one way or another with an age in which science, technology and social revolution had together led to what was fast becoming a universal reassessment of inherited values.

This is, of course, a Protestant viewpoint, but one that is close to the climate of thought in which Maturin lived.

By opening itself to many aspects of the new age, Protestantism necessarily opened itself to more problems of complexity and ambiguity. As Reardon states:

Unless faith were to fall back on the stronghold of an absolute authority it must somehow endeavour to compromise with the new conditions. During the nineteenth century Catholicism, as we have said, chose the former alternative and matched it with an appropriate ecclesiastical policy. Protestantism, if with much misgiving, found the latter on the whole unavoidable.

Maturin, as a Protestant clergyman who criticised the Catholic faith and Catholic authority harshly in his sermons and novels, may be seen to embody some of the ambiguities of Protestant orthodoxy. Embracing a forward-looking liberalism which questioned inherited values, he refused to endorse absolute authority; yet he sought to maintain a compromise between the new attitudes linked with changing conditions and the attitudes of traditional Protestantism.

There was as much ferment in religion as in politics. The French Revolution appeared to some to symbolise the destruction of Christianity, yet to others it seemed, at least initially, an upsurge in true Christian values
against the corrupt values of the Catholic establishment. According to Renée Winegarten:

The years before, during, and after the French Revolution were characterised by intense spiritual upheaval. If rationalism governed one current in this period, the struggle to combat rationalism and materialistic philosophy governed another. Mysticism, often in heretical forms, served as a weapon in this battle.

In other words, Christian orthodoxy was under attack from both sides, with opinions pushing out towards extremes both of rationalism and mysticism. Such tensions will be clearly evident in Gothic fiction. Maturin may be seen as a representative figure, embodying many of the complexities of the transition to a more liberal religion.

Many people at the time questioned the wealth of the established church, contrasting it with the poverty of the church in the Middle Ages (the setting of some Gothic novels), or with the teachings and the way of life of Jesus. Such themes were to run through Maturin's sermons. He saw the Roman Catholic church as the most extreme instance of this contrast; and having explained his reasons for believing so, he concluded that "If the Roman Catholic religion (with its distinguishing doctrines) be true, the Bible must be false". Yet the Church of England was itself in no position to be complacent, as many writers of the period noted. Maturin encouraged his own congregation to question its complacency, as we shall see when examining his sermons.

It is ironic that while some contemporary reviewers berated Maturin and other Gothic novelists for their anti-Catholic views, this attack, as Maurice Lévy suggests, aided their cause: "Perhaps a more direct reason for the popularity of English Gothic fiction amongst French readers of the revolutionary period was its fierce anti-Catholicism." Lévy notes that the rise of English Gothicism coincided with an upsurge in anti-clerical literature in France and was fostered by its proponents. But the Gothic
novel should not be seen as reflecting religious conflicts only. It is typical of this period's ambivalence that its French translators were often highly-educated aristocrats - "persons of the highest social rank left resourceless by the Revolution or formerly influential members of political circles now fallen into disgrace or temporary neglect". 8

In literature as in politics this was a period characterised by various kinds of opening-out and by the corresponding conservative reactions. The word 'Romanticism' is of course the overall term that is usually applied to this cluster of changes. The connections between literary and political changes during the period are strong but very complex. Contemporary writers were well aware that the French Revolution was a radical experiment that would have cultural as well as political effects. When M.H. Abrams analysed "Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature", he described the sense of being involved in momentous changes which the advanced writers of the period shared:

In England and Germany, two great Protestant nations with a history of theological and political radicalism, the Biblical culture fostered collateral developments of response to what Shelley called 'the great events of the age', by which he meant above all the French Revolution, its unbounded promise and its failure, and the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary shock waves it had set up in that era of the turbulent emergence of the modern political, social, and industrial world. Philosophers such as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, imaginative writers from Blake and Wordsworth to Shelley and the young Carlyle in England, and Hölderlin and Novalis in Germany, as well as others who, like Schiller and Coleridge, were equally metaphysicians and bards, conceived of themselves as elected spokesmen for the Western tradition at a time of profound cultural crisis. 9

It is significant that Abrams singled out England and Germany since in these countries the new currents of thought were extensively explored first in Gothic and then more provocatively in Romantic literature.

It is always a complex matter to relate sophisticated forms of culture to specific political attitudes, but the complexity should not invalidate
the attempt. Certainly the reviewers of the period were quick to suggest such connections - for them it was a significant part of the experience of reading Gothic or Romantic literature. No doubt many other readers made similar connections, more or less consciously. A rich cross-pollination of literary, political and cultural ideas characterised the growth of the Gothic novel at the end of the eighteenth century. In The Popular Novel in England: 1770-1800, J.M.S. Tompkins remarks:

The last decade of the eighteenth century saw an increase of intellectual energy in the novel. This energy, though pouring itself into literary form, was extra-literary in origin. It did not express itself in depth of characterisation or significance of form, but, taking its source from the ethical, social and political views of the authors, streamed through the novel as through a well-worn channel of access to the public .... What has altered is the attitude of the writer to these incidents and characters. A passionate revision of moral values underlines these books; the writers proclaim a gospel, and proclaim it in the form most likely to reach a large audience, using prose fiction as the Franciscans used popular songs; ... They believed, and their belief could not fail to contribute something to the development and importance of the novel, which had always had preaching proclivities, but in which the intellectual life was now quickened by advocacy of a speculative and revolutionary system of morals.

Bearing in mind the fact that contemporary reviewers tended to see Gothic literature as an irreligious form of fiction that threatened to undermine moral values, it is interesting to notice Tompkin's choice of religious metaphor ('gospel' and 'Franciscans') to describe the Gothic writers' attitudes and methods.

Any summary of the literature of an entire period is necessarily superficial, but certain tendencies seem particularly strong and are very important, though not exclusive to, the Gothic genre. The first of these is a growing emphasis on individualism, accompanied by an emphasis on uniqueness and originality. Freidrich Schlegel, writing in 1798, argued that "the freedom of the poet shall suffer no law to be imposed on it".
Although Schlegel's words reflect the ideal rather than the reality of the situation, they may serve as an indication of the tone adopted by the demand for individual and creative freedom.

Associated with individualism was a growing emphasis on the depths of the mind that lay beyond reason, the area that is private and unique to the individual, and which some would today refer to as the subconscious. "If anything distinguishes the Romantic from all his predecessors and makes him the true initiator of modern aesthetics", remarks Jean-Paul, "it is precisely that he is always highly conscious of the bonds that link him with the dark realm inside himself. The Romantic poet, knowing that he is not the sole author of his work, having found out that all poetry is primarily a song risen from the abyss, tries deliberately and in complete lucidity to induce the mysterious voices to rise". It is interesting to note that the phrases used here - 'abyss', 'dark realm' and 'mysterious voices' - have a distinctly Gothic or dark Romantic flavour. As we shall see later, the 'dark realm' and 'abyss' can be related to that 'void' which both Virginia Woolf and Adrienne Rich claim as the matrix or womb-like creative part of the self.

Another way to discuss the eighteenth-century shift in consciousness is to see it, as Strich does, in terms of a conflict between two types of sensibility or possibilities of mind:

The culture which became that of all Europe in the eighteenth century was sceptically serene and critically lucid. Its representative mind was Voltaire. With this idea of clarity and form and control France believed herself to have become the heir of Antiquity. In fact it was only one aspect of Antiquity which was being maintained: the ancient Logos, the Apollonian principle of form, the masculine clarity of mind, and this now no longer had contact with the dark origins of life, the womb of nature's Dionysian strength.
Any attempt to sum up the complex cluster of changes in such dualistic terms is risky, and yet it should be remembered that within the period itself, writers who were committed to change tended to talk in terms of contraries. Blake asserted: "Without contraries is no progression". Notice Strich's use of the word 'dark', so characteristic of the Gothic; and it is interesting that among the various sets of contraries that he suggests here - for example, 'control'/loss of control', 'Apollonian'/Dionysian', 'serene'/troubled', and 'culture'/nature' he includes the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'. This set of associations is a controversial issue today in feminist literature. It has a long tradition in criticism which involves not only women writers but also men such as Robert Graves (The White Goddess), all the way back to certain Gothic and Romantic writers who set up male/female dichotomies. It is a complex issue and one which will naturally arise when I discuss Maturin's depiction of women characters in his novels and his attitude to women in his sermons.

Another central motif of the period is the alienated individual, a person isolated in rebellion, who often quits society to live in nature. For example, the Gothic hero-villain tended to live physically as well as spiritually in isolation from society. Frequently he became a wanderer, a man with a quest, though the exact goal of his quest was not always clear even to him. Sometimes the wanderer was a woman, as in the case of the errant Marie de Mortemar in Maturin's The Albigenses, or the character of Zaira in his Women, or, Pour et Contre, which provides a feminine variation on the rebel-hero theme.

The villain-hero or rebel-hero was in some ways a projection of the contemporary political rebel. Like the political rebel, the Gothic protagonist would often start out as an idealist but become transformed by the bitter experience of revolution. It is apparent that some contemporary critics recognised the rebel-hero as a threat, perceiving various links
between this fictional character and his real-life counterparts. Alternatively, they tried to distance him by associating him with creatures of fantasy who belonged only to superstitious ages. For example, the Edinburgh Magazine described Maturin's Melmoth as an "enemy of mankind" (a phrase which acknowledged the sense of threat that this character presented), but added: "Like the train of witches and necromancers who were formerly associated with him, he seems to belong only to the dark ages, and to have fled before the lights of science and philosophy, as birds of night before the sun". He was a ghost that only "some grave old people, and some innocent young people" could believe in. Later I shall be advancing the argument that distancing tactics of this kind when discussing the Gothic rebel-hero, sometimes suggest that contemporary reviewers recognised an element of threat but did not want to confront it directly. Their dismissal of the rebel-hero and the rebellion he stood for was far from dispassionate, reflecting a mixture of fear and fascination.

The tendencies I have outlined above are apparent in many areas of nineteenth-century literature, but in the eighteenth century they are most strongly present in the area of Gothic literature. The usual attitude of critics is that Gothic literature is a forerunner of Romanticism, and there is value in this way of looking at it; but there is also the danger that Gothic comes to be viewed exclusively as 'merely a forerunner', judged by Romantic criteria and thus seen as half-hearted Romanticism. It is crucial that Gothic literature should be acknowledged on its own terms, in addition to tracing any links it may have with Romanticism. My reasons for making this assertion have grown out of a study of the contemporary response to Gothic literature, seen in relation to the political, religious and cultural situations that to a large extent dictated that response. I see Maturin's work as part of an intense give-and-take, a complex shift in social sensibility.
The ambivalence of Gothic literature - the mixture of fascination and fear, the interest in rebellion combined with a fear of the consequences - has been judged harshly by its critics. Yet a case can be made for Gothic as a literature built out of ambivalence, in a lively dialogue with its period. Whether the writers intended consciously to express ambivalence, or whether it was an unconscious result of their attitudes to contemporary events and currents of thought and feeling, would be difficult to establish with any finality. But we can at least view each text as a unique meeting-ground of ambivalent forces, in some cases producing an inconclusive struggle, in other cases joining forces so that the result is a text of impressive richness and complexity.

In calling the fantastic tale "la poétique de l'incertain", Irène Bessière has stressed the importance of its element of ambiguity. Her general view of 'the fantastic' has been usefully summed up by Dr Rosemary Jackson:

Anti-rational, it is the inverse side of reason's orthodoxy. It reveals reason and reality to be arbitrary, shifting constructs, and thereby scrutinises the category of the 'real'. Contradictions surface and are held antinomically in the fantastic text, as reason is made to confront all that it traditionally refuses to encounter. The structure of fantastic narrative is one founded on contradictions.

It is important to distinguish the 'anti-rational' from the 'irrational'. A particular set of values is implied in the choice of either term. To criticise Gothic literature as irrational is to defend the rational values against which the most thoughtful Gothic novelists were rebelling. And yet we can also recognise the pressure of historical circumstances: to be anti-rational, to be 'the inverse side' of the coin of reason, is still to be shaped by that existing structure. The strength of rationality in Enlightenment culture created a particular background which we are often aware of when we read Gothic literature. This implied dialogue between the
rational and the anti-rational provides a rich subtext, both to the literature and to the reviewers' responses. Gradually out of this dialectic emerge ideas of the non-rational or supra-rational that are highly original, less bound by the need to be anti-rational.

Gothic is a stylised genre; and being 'unrealistic' (or 'non-realistic', to avoid a loaded term), in any simple or literal sense, its links with external reality are not straight-forward. Yet however indirect they may be, such links clearly exist. Genre literature does reflect, or (more accurately) does register and respond to changing social conditions, albeit in stylised ways. We have seen this recently, for example, in the changes in Hollywood and television genres in the wake of the nineteen-sixties' social and political ferment, or in response to the widespread feminist activity of the nineteen-seventies. In fact, genre art can sometimes be even more sensitive than literal forms of realism when functioning as a cultural seismograph, alert to tremors of change. As in Gothic literature, feelings are able to find expression in genre art because when they are projected in this indirect or stylised way, they are not so likely to be suppressed, either by the censors or by the writers and readers (or script-writers and viewers) themselves. We are often ready to entertain possibilities in a daydream with less anxiety than when they are presented in the sometimes harsh light of reality. In this way, even an outwardly conservative writer or reader is willing to make contact with the sides of him/herself that are more anarchic.

Stylised genre writing is a particularly appropriate medium through which to project 'subconscious' feelings. Fears and fascinations which are 'irrational' (or should I say non-rational?) may require imagery of a dream-like type. Once it is accepted that 'inner reality' is just as 'real' as that which we accept as external reality, then the limits of 'realism' must be questioned. The surge of interest in Gothic writing which occurred at
the end of the eighteenth century did not reflect an escape from reality but, on the contrary, a move towards areas of reality previously ignored or given little validity. In terms of the most complex Gothic writing, this point is an important one. At the same time, by creating an atmosphere of 'un-reality' or 'other-reality', Gothic literature was in some respects casting a judgment on the preferred or existing reality, and on the ways in which people perceived it. This emphasised the power of the imagination as a potential agent for change. Of course, it depended upon the particular novel whether such serious implications were clear and consistent, or not.

While stylization may allow for greater openness, the effect of a genre work may still be so powerful that conservative readers recognise the danger and denounce the book. This is one explanation for what seems an excessive reaction to Gothic literature from its critics. Since this literature touched upon non-rational areas, critics were not always clear about exactly what it was that disturbed them. In 1764 when Horace Walpole wrote the first novel with the word 'gothic' as part of the subtitle, The Castle of Otranto, he concealed his identity on publication. He also wrote in the Preface that he believed that the book would free man's 'fancy' from its shackles.\textsuperscript{17} Literary critics treated it as a grotesque joke, yet a few felt the presence of something threatening and tried to raise serious objections to the novel.

The general sense of threat that reviewers associated with the Gothic genre seemed to intensify during and after the French Revolution in 1789. The Gothic genre had by now established itself firmly, despite such criticism, and it seems no coincidence that the most serious and complex Gothic novels with themes of social rebellion were written after the French Revolution. The Revolution produced results that disturbed many groups of society, progressive as well as conservative, and this disturbance was bound to be
reflected in the literature. It is a ponderable question whether William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* could have been written before the Revolution, reflecting as it does the bitter class struggles that characterised the rebellion. Certainly it seems significant that this much acclaimed Gothic novel was published in 1794, only a year after Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Political Justice*, since the latter document obviously arose out of questions raised by the French Revolution and its aftermath. From his political writing it is clear that Godwin intended *Caleb Williams* to be a literary reconstruction of the research he did for his *Enquiry*. Both works reveal a consciousness of the power of symbolism to express ideas that may be alien or suspect in terms of the dominant culture. Godwin is an interesting parallel to Maturin, since both writers transferred their occupational skills as political or religious theorists to the area of fiction. Often we can turn to their political or religious writings and read about situations that occur in a more fantastic or symbolic form in their Gothic novels.

Maturin and Godwin were but two writers who used Gothic fiction to express their concerns in a stylised and dramatic form that had the potential to reach a much wider audience than their political tracts or sermons, and often a very different audience. Would it be stretching the truth to suggest that Godwin's daughter, Mary Shelley, an avid follower of her father's political career, transformed many concerns of his *Enquiry* into fictional form in her two extraordinary Gothic novels, *Frankenstein* (1818) and *The Last Man* (1820)? Both these fictions explored possible alternatives to limitations imposed by a restrictive social order and neither simplified the complexity of the issues raised by suggesting easy answers. Like most serious Gothic novels, their effect was imaginatively to provoke many questions in the reader. The mood of these novels, in keeping with the shift in values from the father's to the daughter's time, went beyond the sense of
social injustice in Caleb's persecution, which led him to curse "the whole system of human existence", to an even larger sense of alienation, the response to a world without any system of order and seeming to lack any identifiable meaning.

The general direction in which the Gothic novel had moved - from Otranto to The Last Man and beyond - was towards a blurring or questioning of distinctions between fact and fiction, reality and unreality, objective and subjective. James Hogg's Confessions of a Justified Sinner\textsuperscript{21} provided a good example because of its juxtaposition of third-person 'objective' narration and first-person 'subjective' narration, implying that both are real. Such complexity - or ambiguity - in one novel after another seemed to be eroding gradually the clear-cut decisions preferred by institutions of law, politics and religion. An infinity of possibilities opened out, a dizzying vista, a Gothic abyss. Naturally there were negative responses, as Barton Lövi St Amant points out in his remarks on Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho:

Through her heroine Emily, Mrs Radcliffe helped to spread suddenly open the gorgeous fan of the Romantic consciousness and accomplish what Wordsworth called 'widening the sphere of human sensibility'. Emily's voyage through the Alps and Appenines toward Udolpho becomes, then, another metaphor for that quest which the Romantics themselves cultivated and so often internalized. This was a journey on which the Neo-Classical sensibility was unwilling to embark, as it kept strictly within the limits of a Reason which feared excesses of the imagination and an over-stimulation of the faculties of the soul.\textsuperscript{22}

Though this is a rather simplified analysis, St Amant captures an important point, that there was a certain sensibility which refused even the initial step, because it saw a complete journey implied in it. This was a conservative position that had a certain logic to it, like the Catholic refusal to make any compromises with new tendencies.

Fear of unlimited possibilities was reflected in the views not only of critics, but even of authors. Radcliffe, for example, had St Aubert die from the exhaustion of a journey that provided "perpetually changing" views
where all scenes appeared to "assume new forms, as the winding road brought them to the eye in different altitudes while the shifting vapours, now partially concealing their minuter beauties and now illuminating them with splendid tints, assisted in the illusions of the sight". This infinite vista can be compared with what Caleb refers to at the end of Caleb Williams as "the corrupt wilderness of human society". Mary Shelley included an epigraph from Paradise Lost in The Last Man:

Let no man seek
Henceforth to be foretold what shall befall
Him or his children.

Whether the context was scenery or human corruption or life generally, these novels created a heightened sense of uncertainty - either with alarm or with an exhilarating sense of novelty.

Any genre has recurring themes, images, and motifs. In the case of Gothic, the idea of darkness is, as I have already suggested, a favourite concern. This had associations with the subconscious mind, particularly its more obscure or dangerous areas. To quote Elizabeth MacAndrew in her study of the Gothic literary tradition:

Gothic fiction is a literature of nightmare. Among its conventions are found dream landscapes and figures of the subconscious imagination. Its fictional world gives form to amorphous fears and impulses common to all mankind, using an amalgam of materials, some from the author's own subconscious mind and some the stuff of myth, folklore, fairy tale and romance. It conjures up beings - mad monks, vampires, and demons - and settings - forbidding cliffs and glowering buildings, stormy seas and the dizzying abyss - that have literary significance and the properties of dream symbolism as well. Gothic fiction gives shape to concepts of the place of evil in the human mind.

Points to emphasise here are the sense of medley ('amalgam of materials') and the emphasis on extreme settings. Both may be condemned by the formalist critic yet can be justified as the best available method of 'giving shape' or 'form' to the particular concerns of the genre. A central concern is - in Margot Northey's words - "the self, with its submerged levels of
psychic and spiritual experiences". Such imagery is likely to be grotesque, in the various senses of the term developed by Northey:

The grotesque emphasises incongruity, disorder, and deformity, and arises from the juxtaposition or clash of the ideal with the real, the psychic with the physical, or the concrete with the symbolic.  

Wolfgang Kayser, talking about the grotesque in art and literature, remarks: "When applied to landscapes, the word indicated a lack of order as well as a sombre and ominous mood".  

A narrative motif that is particularly common, that invites the description 'archetypal', is the clash between Father and Son, representing the inflexible force of law and order and the impulse to rebellion. This conflict sends the son into exile, where he undertakes a symbolic quest. The question in the reader's mind is where the quest will end. In many cases, it results in the death of the father. Parricide becomes quite a common event in Gothic literature. In Maturin's first novel, the entire theme of the journey is built around the crime of parricide, and Maturin describes in heightened, almost poetic language, the scene where the two sons' knives meet in their father's body. The quest may also lead to the discovery of an alternative living space, or in some kind of reconciliation between Father and Son.

The clash between generations, or the rebellion against inherited values, has many precedents, but it acquires a special resonance in Gothic fiction because of contemporary associations with various forms of rebellion. Also characteristic of the Gothic presentation of this theme is a mood of ambivalence. The rebel figure is not simply hero or villain but a complex combination. Leslie Fiedler has captured this ambivalence, and its implications, very vividly in this remark:
The guilt which underlies the gothic and motivates its plots is the guilt of the revolutionary haunted by the (paternal) past which he has been striving to destroy; and the fear that possesses the gothic and motivates its tone is the fear that in destroying the old ego-ideals of the church and state, the West has opened a way for the inruption of darkness; for insanity and the disintegration of the self. Through the pages of the gothic romance, the soul of Europe flees its own darker impulses.

Fiedler's quotation connects with many of the terms used in previous quotations - for example, darkness, the 'paternal' authority, and the sense of forces under the surface ('underlies'). Fiedler sees a direct connection between the stylised genre of literature and its political context ('ego ideals of the church and state'). Perhaps he oversimplifies the connection, yet it can be argued that in exploring this particular area of literature, which is an unusually strange and dark landscape, it is necessary at times to make bold moves and intuitive connections of that kind.

The experience that Fiedler describes leads in its most extreme form to the disintegration of self in the face of an absurd existence. The most complex Gothic novels tend to end in ambiguous darkness. We are not told, for instance, what will happen to Frankenstein's monster as we see him receding into the distance on an iceberg at the end of the book. In such an extreme wilderness of frozen life, it is unlikely that he will survive. Yet we are deliberately left without absolute knowledge of his destiny, so that a few possibilities still lurk in the shadows, able to haunt us. It is implied in the tone and imagery that whatever ensues will be some form of disintegration, but in a world where life is created out of death, there is always room for ambiguous doubt. Similarly Melmoth, The Wanderer, with its deliberately ambiguous structure of fragmented stories, leaves the reader longing for some kind of resolution at the end of each tale but unable to capture it. Hogg's Confessions of a Justified Sinner also remains open-ended. While earlier Gothic writers seemed to yearn for a return to some form of moral order at the end of the novel, the later writers avoided a clear-cut
resolution, or supplied a contrived return to order which aroused the sensitive reader's suspicions and induced him/her to question that order. The success of this literature lay in its refusal to compromise to a formal, classical notion of reason, instead accepting the ambiguities implicit in any true questioning of the established order, and remaining open to change and therefore vulnerable to criticism.

The tensions described by Fiedler were certainly relevant to the Reverend Charles Robert Maturin, who was (as I hope to show) as complex as the genre in which he wrote. As a minister of religion, he gave and published sermons that seem, at least on the surface, highly orthodox; as a novelist and playwright, he created bizarre works that were frequently condemned by reviewers as immoral or dangerously unorthodox. At the same time, these works held considerable fascination for their contemporary audiences. Initially, it would be easy to condemn Maturin as a person unaware of his own contradictions; but through a closer look, I hope to display him as a genuinely complex writer, alert to subtle intuitions, creating novels that successfully embodied many of the complex energies of his age.

Criticism always implies value assumptions - there is no such thing as an absolute or impartial criticism - and the exercise of tracing the changing attitudes of critics to Gothic literature is a useful way to chart changing values. Not, of course, that the criticism of any period is uniform. Old conflicts of value continue to be fought, along with new ones. Today, as in the eighteenth century, there are rationalistic critics scornful of the excesses of Gothic literature. Indeed, criticism, tending to be a very conscious activity, seems to have had many difficulties in dealing with subconscious elements, particularly criticism operating in an academic context. (Some recent critics of Gothic literature, such as G.R. Thompson and Rosemary Jackson, have sought to remedy the problem.)
Critics sympathetic to Romanticism seem to have been generally more receptive to non-rational elements than other critics, but the tendency for many generations now has been to regard Gothic as a primitive fore-runner of Romanticism, as a mode that has been left far behind. Even with the current revival of interest in Gothicism, Gothic fiction is sometimes not represented in degree courses in literature, even courses that claim to be comprehensive. The popular conception of Gothic novels as a rather strange collection of ghost stories, full of trappings and devices that could only fool the young or simplistic mind, continues to crop up in general discussion. As G.R. Thompson has observed:

The word Romantic usually evokes an ideal world, infused with internal energy and dynamically evolving toward a yet higher state, in which the single, separate self seeks unity with Nature, itself symbolic of the aesthetic harmony of the Cosmos. Adding the adjective Dark may evoke an image of the lonely, isolated self, pressing onward despite all obstacles while either indulging or struggling with an internal evil, the very conflict a source of energy. But when the word Gothic is applied to literature, it merely evokes images of ghosts, demons, trapdoors, castles.

This more-or-less conscious stereotype of Gothic "as a popular literature, inexpensively produced for a mass audience, with the consequent implication that it is merely a literature of surfaces and sensations" is a major obstacle to appreciation. There is a need to spend more time with the Gothic, since what it has to offer is not 'surfaces' but, on the contrary, what lies below the surface.

The rise of Surrealism in the earlier years of this century provided an opportunity to renew our appreciation of the Gothic, since the Surrealists acknowledged it strongly as an ancestor. As André Breton defines the Surreal, the links between Surrealism and Gothic literature are close, although some traditional critics, like Montague Summers, would argue with this. For Breton the Surreal is a mixture of dream and reality which denies neither but combines and often transcends both: "I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, a Surreality, if one may so speak".
And: "To be even fairer, we could probably have taken over the word SUPERNATURALISM". Although Gothic differs from Breton's view of Surrealism in some respects, such as its stronger sense of possible conflicts between dream and reality, the relevance of linking the Gothic and the Surreal can be seen in the similar way both styles of expression have been treated. Today, Surrealism is dismissed by many critics as a 'period style', a set of surface mannerisms, in much the same way that Gothic fiction is dismissed.

At the time I began this thesis, major shifts in critical attitudes were taking place. Criticism by the nineteen seventies had moved away from the New Critical emphasis upon the text-in-isolation to a greater interest in the relationship between the text and its various con-texts. On the one hand, there was an upsurge in criticism that ignored subject boundaries and took pleasure in inter-relating literature and the other arts. On the other hand, the nineteen-sixties had intensified political awareness in a number of ways. Some suggestive parallels could be drawn between the nineteen-sixties and the period of political ferment at the end of the eighteenth century. Certainly, the ferment of the nineteen-sixties had in many respects an anti-'Enlightenment' or anti-'reason' emphasis. One aspect of this was the opposition to traditional conceptions of the University and of academic study. Meanwhile, in the area of popular culture, there was a surprising revival of Gothic interests such as magic, supernatural and alternative religions. The connections between these large cultural shifts and the practice of criticism is complex and difficult to define. I raise these issues here merely as speculation. It seems clear, however, that serious critical interest in the Gothic has revived during the past two decades, and critical approaches to it have become more sympathetic, diverse and wide-ranging. Critics such as Elizabeth MacAndrew, G.R. Thompson, Margot Northey, Joel Porte, John Ehrstine, Robert D. Hume, Virginia Hyde,
Maurice Lévy and Rosemary Jackson have helped to release Gothic literature from the bonds of a critical context that approached such literature with generally inappropriate criteria, often relegating Gothic to the realms of adolescent fantasy.

Maturin was the last and most mature of the Gothic writers during this period and it is important that his achievement should be kept alive and refreshed by succeeding generations of readers and critics. Though Maturin is today usually regarded as one of the best Gothic writers, the complexity of his work within its particular contexts has never been fully explored. Since he is remembered mainly for Melmoth, published in 1820, his earlier and later works have received little attention in studies of the Gothic novel, if they are mentioned at all. In terms of the development of the genre from 1764 to 1824, all his work falls into the category of 'late Gothic' since his first novel Fatal Revenge was published in 1807. Yet a wide variety of subjects, techniques and styles are reflected in the range of his writing.

Contrary to Mary Shelley's last vision of Frankenstein's monster and Maturin's chosen fate for Melmoth, most of Maturin's novels end with some kind of resolution, albeit contrived or rather bleak. Yet the rebellious power of the tale nearly always contradicts this external order, often imposed as a 'rounding off' device. In none of Maturin's novels is the resolution satisfying, and the reader is left to speculate about the novelist's attitude to his own endings. The theme underlying his work - with some basis in his own life - is a rebellion against authority or authoritarian power in all its varying forms, especially in a religious context. The subversive content and style of the novels present the reader with such a complexity of fragmented events and supernatural suggestions that a clear-cut resolution is no longer viable. This is particularly evident when there is an attempt to return to the pattern of order that imposed the restrictions
against which characters rebelled initially. The structure and content of the novel thus challenge the artificial ending. Rather than escaping literary responsibility, as the contemporary reviewers believed was the situation, Maturin seems to have adopted the strategy of providing the reader with a deliberately false explanation that was intended to provoke further questioning. The expectations imposed upon the Gothic writer, which were expressed in contemporary reviews, help to explain the necessity for the writer to employ symbolic devices to get across criticisms of contemporary society. It can be no coincidence, for example, that so many women, who were just beginning to recognise and talk about the nature of their oppression in response to publications such as Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* also took to writing Gothic novels. This genre provided them with a means of escaping from contemporary pressures and expressing their anger or anguish in a disguised form. In some cases they may not have been highly conscious of this unexpressed need in themselves, but felt drawn to a genre that was concerned with mysterious forces and forms of oppression, and with a questioning of given assumptions about nature and natural order. It is interesting to notice that women’s writing has tended to flourish in periods of ferment and rebellion, such as the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies, and at such times has been challenged by conservative critics.

In Maturin’s case, the symbolic devices were necessary and effective for a number of reasons. Initially, he felt constrained to write under the pseudonym of Dennis Jasper Murphy for reasons other than mere fashion. As a Protestant minister, whose family had long been associated with the Church through a succession of clerical careers, he must have felt the need to conceal his identity when seeking to publish a novel of revenge based on a plot of parricide initiated by a man disguised in clerical robes, a novel which clearly intended to criticise certain aspects of religious practice and to parallel them with criminal activities (a theme which was to dominate
his later works). Maturin's pseudonym is indicative of his awareness of the kind of reaction that such an anti-authoritarian novel, even in its disguised form, would receive. Although it is apparent to the careful reader of Maturin's work that he attacked not religion but certain abuses of religious power, this fact eluded many of his contemporary and even some later critics, who saw his work as immoral or betraying his religious duty. Such confusion compromised his literary and clerical careers, and seems to have cost him religious promotion, in at least one case. 36

Maturin's work embodies the spirit of the traditional Gothic novel and at the same time incorporates newer tendencies suggested by the term 'dark Romantic'. Gothic can be distinguished from Romantic by its special pull towards chaos and destruction. In terms of characteristic imagery, we may associate Gothic literature with a maze, a twisting and turning of labyrinthine passages leading into darkness. Visually it is nowhere more dramatically presented than in Piranesi's Carceri Etchings, where the 'self' seems to confront emptiness at each level of the staircase. There is comparable imagery in De Quincey's Confessions of an English Opium Eater, where the 'self' is confronted by oblivion at each turn of the corridor. Both the prison staircase and the corridor of De Quincey's imprisoned mind seem to be endless, leading nowhere. The Gothic quest seems unable to reach a satisfactory conclusion within its particular cultural context. In contrast, the Romantic quest seems to lead to some kind of reconciliation with the sources of creative energy, directing us towards the light and towards open perspectives. In these terms, Maturin is Gothic in his interests; his fiction is drawn towards destruction and chaos. Yet his church career and other writings reveal a basic Christian belief. He was a fascinating mixture of tendencies.

Not all of Maturin's novels followed the traditional Gothic patterns. In fact, most critics have preferred to call only Fatal Revenge and Melmoth Gothic. But I shall be arguing that all his novels may be seen as variat-
on the Gothic genre and its essential concerns. Women takes a more recognisably 'realistic' form than the others, while The Albigenses turns to the historical romance for its style. It is, however, useful to think of Women as realist-Gothic or social-Gothic, and of The Albigenses as historical-Gothic. The Wild Irish Boy and the Milesian Chief are both a mixture of historical-Gothic and romance. This sort of categorization can help us to see them in appropriate terms, and to relate them to Maturin's work as a whole. Maturin wanted to experiment with the Gothic genre and to adapt its devices to his own ends. Maturin's audience found the theatre particularly appropriate to his dramatic style of expression as the extraordinary success of his first play, Bertram, suggests. Yet no matter whether he was writing fiction, drama, or sermons, consistent themes and variations of those themes run through all his work. The dramatic style and imagery of his fictional creations lent themselves well to his sermons, while the preoccupations of his sermons often informed the themes and imagery of his fiction. Whatever the mode, Gothic elements are always present in Maturin's writing, and as full an understanding of Gothic and its context as possible is needed to assess his contribution to literature.
NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE


3. Ibid, p.3.


12. A. Béguin, L'Ame Romantique et le Rêve, Librarie José Corti, Paris, 1937. Essay by Béguin quoting Jean Paul whom he believed was "the first to notice profound affinities between his aesthetic experience and his knowledge of dreams". This essay is reprinted in The Romantic Movement, Anthony Thorlby, Longmans Green, Chaucer Press, 1966, p.45.


15. Since Maturin acknowledged the importance of ambiguity and controversy for original creative expression in his literary criticism, we can assume that he was one writer conscious of his attitude to contemporary events. "Men thus born amid controversy, and brought up among the perpetual fluctuations of opposite opinions, are of all others most apt to think and write for themselves" [C.R. Maturin, Review of Shiel's Apostle in Quarterly Review, London, Vol.17, 1817, p.254].


31. Montague Summers devotes a chapter of The Gothic Quest to refuting the links established between Gothic and Surrealist expression. He argues:

"The connection which the Surrealists are anxious to trace between their own paths and principles and the ideals and inspiration of the Gothic novelists, that is to say, in fine, of romanticism, to me appears to have no existence. As I can understand them, such arguments as are adduced would seem to be based upon misapprehensions, or are so far-fetched and purely fantastical in their setting-forth that they escape into vapour and mirage", see p.411.

His argument is somewhat defeated by his association of Surrealism with Communism, and his traditionalist rejection of both as a personal preference rather than as a literary scholar. (See The Gothic Quest, Fortune Press, London, 1939, p.411.)
Some indication of the importance of Gothic to the Surreal can be seen in Breton's preface to a French Edition of Malmuth in 1965 which reveals the similarity of ideas and motivation underlying Gothic and Surrealist expression. (See Bibliography.)


34. Regarding the number of women writing at this time, Ellen Moers states:

"We still have an imperfect idea of the numbers and quality of the women writers at work in that period, one which resembles our own in the sense that what Gina Loria calls 'The Feminist Controversy' was present in the conspicuousness of every writer, whatever his or her 'sexual politics'. Professor Luria's reprint series for Garland Publishing of forty or so volumes by Catharine Macaulay, Mary Hays, Helen Maria Williams, Amelia Opie, Jane West, and others; and Pierre Fauchery's massive new study of La Destinée féminine in European fiction of the eighteenth century; and Philippe Sejoume's staggering tabulations of the hundreds of novels written by women at the end of the century in England alone - all indicate that Mary Wollstonecraft was not the only, just the most brilliant of turn-of-the-century feminists in England, America, and on the Continent."


35. Maturin's choice of name indicates his rejection of French descendancy and an obvious claiming of Irish identity. This is reinforced by his increasing concern with Irish problems in his fiction.

36. Regarding this, his contemporary biographer recounted the following story:

A dignitary of the church, who became interested by some accident, in Maturin's circumstances, and was anxious to improve them, called upon him for the purpose of offering him some clerical promotion, or of consulting him as to the means of forwarding his advancement. It was during the time that Maturin was composing Bertram, and before he became an avowed writer: his works, however, were sufficiently well known to entitle him to the character of an author, and I believe the object of the good visitor was to rescue the poet from the necessities that forced him to write

"Profane conceits and fantasies - "

and to enable him to devote all his abilities to the offices of his spiritual calling. The reverend doctor was formally ushered into a sitting room, the poet being engaged at the moment in his study. He waited for some time very patiently, but the fascination of some frenzied scene was upon Maturin, who felt little compunction in sacrificing the divine to the
drama; and it was not till after an half-hour's delay that the poet made his appearance. He entered the room suddenly, reciting some rapturous passage - a part of the manuscript play in one hand, the pen in the other; his person attired in a theatrical morning-gown - his attitude that of an inspired provisante, his arms tossing, and his eyes strained, and thus continued his oration until he wound it up, by flinging himself on the sofa, beside the astonished minister. This unlucky interference of the ruling passion lost to poor Maturin, whatever patronage or advantage might have been derived from the intended friendship of his visitor, whose nerves or habits were not well qualified for the grotesque exhibition presented by the Curate of St Peter's: in vain did Maturin endeavour to neutralize the effects of his malapropos enthusiasm; and the only gleam of ecclesiastical hope that ever broke upon him, thus came and vanished in the same instant!


37. Sir Walter Scott sent the script of Bertram to Lord Byron, then chairman of the Drury Lane Theatre Committee. The play was first performed in 1816 during May, and was immediately successful, being acclaimed by many as brilliant, with Edmund Kean in the title role. It was certainly one of Maturin's few financial successes. Byron sent him 50 guineas and John Murray brought the book copyright for 350 pounds, while box office receipts earned more than 500 pounds. Maturin made a brief but exhilarating trip to London and was received in the best of literary company. Bertram has been translated and reprinted more than any other of Maturin's works. See Niilo Idman, C.R. Maturin, His Life and Works, Constable, London, 1923, p.126; Robert Lougy, Charles Robert Maturin, Associated University Presses, London, 1975, pp.44-45.
CHAPTER TWO
THE GOTHIC: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

My aim in this chapter is not to provide a systematic description or history of the genre, a task which has been performed by other standard works on the subject,¹ but to focus on certain aspects particularly relevant to the concerns of my study. Above all, I want to stress the changing nature of 'Gothic' in the perspective of history, and related to this, the range of value judgements and opposed viewpoints. In the course of its extensive history, 'the Gothic' has been more than once deeply involved in the battles of cultural politics; it has become a kind of touchstone, associated with strong reactions both positive and negative. It is important to trace some of this political history in setting the scene for Maturin's work and the responses it occasioned.

To speak of 'cultural' rather than simply 'literary' politics is to emphasize the strong connections between the various arts in the eighteenth century. In our own century, literary criticism has tended to take pride in its own specialization; but in previous centuries, discussions of Gothic moved naturally between literature, architecture, and the visual arts. Art critics and literary critics did not hesitate to encroach upon each other's territory, working from similar notions of 'good taste'. Horace Walpole, the first writer to attach the label "a Gothic Romance" to his novel The Castle of Otranto (in 1764), designed and built his own Gothic mansion, as did Beckford. The Gothic Revival incorporated landscape gardening as well as architecture. Political theorists such as William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft wrote Gothic novels, and writers tended to be less specialized in their commitment to particular genres.
The term 'Gothic' in the late eighteenth century had not one set of associations but many sets. One is tempted to state: "In the beginning was the word Goth", for many of the negative connotations of Gothic had their origins in the Teutonic race of Goths who (in the words of my Webster's Dictionary) "overran and took an important part in subverting the Roman Empire". So closely is our culture associated with that of the Romans that it is still difficult to see the Goths in any terms other than these colonialist ones, as 'barbarians' who destroyed a great civilization. Gothic, in the eighteenth century, meant 'pertaining to Goths', or 'rude, barbarous'. The association with destroyers of culture was a weapon always available to critics of any type of Gothic literature or art. Consider Freiherr von Canitz's remarks in 1727:

The so-called Nordic peoples then flooded the whole of Europe with their ignorance and with that Bad Taste which clung permanently to their descendants; this can still be recognised today from the remains, among other things, of their badly composed writings, rambling romances, immoderate passion for rhyming, clumsy monkish script, coarse-sounding speech, barbarous music, graceless costumes, badly-drawn paintings, and above all from their Gothic architecture.

It is common to see such aesthetic judgements becoming moral judgements ('coarse', 'immoderate', 'clumsy', 'graceless'). In reply to criticisms of this kind, it was sometimes pointed out that the term 'Gothic' had such a long and complex history that the association with barbarians was not automatically justified. To note a few examples, Costenoble, a German architect and art historian, wrote in 1812 that Gothic originated in Germany about the eighth to ninth centuries A.D., was intimately connected with Christianity, and had nothing to do with the race of Goths. In 1815, Moller, a leading figure in the Gothic Revival, proved five current theories of Gothic origins to be inaccurate. Twelve years earlier, Rumohr had rejected the term 'German' in favour of 'Gothic' yet still held that Germans played an important part in forming Gothic, whereas the Goths did not. Rumohr believed Gothic
architecture to be a natural development from early Romanesque and a product of Oriental influence, infiltrating by way of the Crusades and Venetian trade with Egypt and India.6

Gothic architecture, which in a variety of ways became an important element of Gothic literature, could be closely associated with Christianity via the building of cathedrals and abbeys during the Middle Ages. It should be noted that the term 'Gothic architecture' was a later creation - first used in 1610.7 The date is important because it is the evidence of the emergence of a new conscious sense of Gothic, via a new historical perspective. But while the eighteenth-century reader might associate 'Gothic architecture' with religious architecture, he or she would be aware that the religion was medieval, less complex and more superstitious, and involved Catholicism, and various types of extreme mysticism. There is more than one way to 'read' the architecture of the Gothic cathedral; but certainly it is not difficult to find traces of religious enthusiasm or extremism - architecture that reaches to heaven, walls (freed of the need to act as basic supports) able to seem weightless and to soar upwards, large stained glass windows creating an evocative sense of light and colour.

Questions of order and unity in Gothic architecture involve basic issues in taste and aesthetics. From one point of view, the development of this style carried architecture to a new level of sophistication, for the great cathedrals had a strikingly unified sense of space and form. Details were subordinated to large-scale effects. The term 'organic form' is appropriate, not only in terms of the relation of parts to whole, but also in terms of the deep affinities between the architecture and nature itself, as its builders conceived of it. Nature entered Gothic architecture as an organic part of its link between the church and Christianity. For example Abbot Sugar of St Dennis' monastery near Paris, erected a stained glass window illustrating a passage in Chapter xi of The Book of Isaiah,
which organically united "the growth of a plant, with the historical emergence of Christ's body, that flesh which he took from his mother, and through her from the root of humanity, Adam". The window celebrating Christ's humanity was placed in the 'caput' of the church, indicating the organic constitution of the church on earth, a body united by its physical nature to Christ, the Head.

Unity came through the relationship of Gothic with God. St Bernard of Clairvaux, in 1152, linked the unity of the three persons of God with a sense of human community, and described the change from "collective unity" ("when many stones make one heap") to " constitutive unity" ("when many members make one body, or many parts constitute one whole") as a progression towards total unity, manifested in the Gothic style of the late twelfth century. Forty-two years later restoration began on the Cathedral of Chartres, which, like most old churches, had been built on "the stubbornly irregular foundations of Romanesque buildings". Gothic is seen here as replacing disorder, imbalance and lack of symmetry with a unity inherent in its style: "The way in which these irregularities were smoothed out shows that the Gothic architects were consumed by a passion for order, consonance and cohesion". The important point to notice here is that 'unity' was being defined in a different way from that which had previously existed. The qualities which were now stressed had been inspired by a need for internal rather than external unity, a harmony within rather than a symmetry without. Gothic art of the thirteenth century continued to display this kind of inner coherence. Sculptors worked closely with architects on the Gothic cathedrals, such as Reims in 1225, which has been quoted as an example of "The great positive values of the first phase of Gothic art, [with]its theologically-inspired breadth of human feeling and passion for internal consonance and harmony".
Gothic gained an added dimension in the first half of the thirteenth century when it entered a "classic phase" whereby "the various elements in a building were integrated logically and lucidly". Intellect and clarity prevailed as Gothic became more secular. Henderson describes Gothic from 1140-1240 as a "peculiar integration of forms which originally symbolised the unity of desire of the citizens of God's invisible Temple". This classical form did not lose touch with the original sense of organic form. In 1724 the antiquary William Stukeley, a particularly sensitive observer of Gothic, was to praise the fan vaulting in the cloisters of Gloucester Cathedral "because the idea of it is taken from a walk of trees, whose branching heads are curiously imitated by the roof". It is important to stress such aspects of unity to balance simplistic assumptions about 'Gothic form' being necessarily associated with imbalance and disunity.

From another point of view, Gothic architecture was associated with mannerism and dizzying complexity. The huge cathedrals lent themselves to this 'reading' because of their complex subdivisions. There were also historical factors involved, since later examples of Gothic architecture moved towards mannerism. With this phase, which can be described as "mature Gothic", came a more lavish ornamentation where detail seemed infinite in its expression. Henderson describes the mid to late thirteenth century as moving towards "a disquieting formal equivocation". Why disquieting, and why the emphasis on movement? Apparently the stirrings of ambiguity, which I believe to form the inner psyche of the later Gothic literature, were already surfacing: "Architecture remained a major art in the scale and costliness of its productions, but here too we find an almost pathological dread of the definite statement, an endless pursuit of ambiguity". Later, Wilhelm Worringen talks of Gothic emerging through the Northern Renaissance, forcing energy and discord upon its harmony: "The Northern Renaissance forms did not long retain their moderation. They quickly developed into restless
crowded scroll-work, and it seems as if the old, suppressed Gothic energies of form were at work, disturbing and expanding this alien, organic world of art". This aspect of restless and even disturbing movement associated with strong works of Gothic fiction becomes a focus for the contemporary eighteenth to nineteenth centuries' critics' distaste for the genre, as we shall see when considering their criticism.

An additional factor for an eighteenth-century audience was the age of the Gothic buildings - the fact that so many were now in an advanced state of decay. There was an aesthetics of 'piles' and 'ruins' - "No modern art/Had marred with misplaced symmetry the pile". This is a formal aesthetic response, but also mixed up in the fascination for old buildings were various elements of nostalgia, exoticism, and general evocativeness. An important aspect of Gothic is the way that traditionally it has been opposed to Classic or Classical styles not only in architecture but in terms of artistic taste generally. Here we get at once a strong sense of cultural politics. The human tendency to set up oppositions - to think in dualistic terms - gives this opposition a wealth of implications. The first clash appears in the Renaissance, which was, among other things, a push in the direction of Classical culture, with the target of that reaction being identified in some areas as 'Gothic'. In 1518 Raphael wrote of the "grotesque and tasteless ornamentation" of Gothic buildings.

Six years after Münster's extravagant praise for Gothic, Vasari, in his Lives of the Painters, which was to have a crucial effect on influencing attitudes to the Gothic, wrote that this style was "monstrous", "barbarous" and "lacking anything that can be called order. Nay, it should rather be called confusion and disorder". During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Gothic debate raged and attitudes became more polarised than before. Despite continued criticism, some contemporary architects, artists
and writers were awed by Gothic. Eberhard Winheim in *Sacrarium Agrippinae* (1607) believed that even in its unfinished state Cologne Cathedral was an object of astonishment which, if completed, would be overwhelming in its majesty. In 1609 André Duchesne, historian, wrote that the Gothic Notre-Dame was "a church that far surpasses all other churches of Christendom, both in style and size". Yet architectural surveys continued to associate Gothic with the Goths, and by extension, with barbarism.

Sir Henry Wotton, in *Elements of Architecture* (1624) believed that the monuments of Gothic architecture "both for the naturall imbecility of the sharp Angle it selfe, and likewise for their very Uncomeliness, ought to bee exiled from judicious eyes, and left to their first inventors, the Gothes or Lombards, amongst other Reliques of that barbarous Age". Wotten's judgements were emotionally loaded against the Gothic, as though it represented a direct threat. Yet Morlière, only three years later, wrote enthusiastically of the excellent proportions of Amiens Cathedral, to which he believed no description could do justice. Other critics, like François Blondel in *Cours d'architecture* (1675) saw both sides. He applauded the symmetry and proportion of Gothic buildings "which make themselves felt despite the ugly ornaments which accompany them". This period also saw the production of guidebooks to Gothic cathedrals which aided a deeper understanding of the Gothic style in architecture.

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw a new surge of Classicism, or to be more precise, Neo-Classicism, in English literature. John Dryden said of the theatre, in his *Preface to The Art of Painting* (1695):

> The Gothique manner, and the barbarous ornaments, which are to be avoided in a picture, are just the same with an ill-ordered play. For example, our English Tragi-Comedy must be confessed to be wholly Gothique notwithstanding the success which it has found upon our theatre.

Dryden's words transferred an anti-Gothic prejudice from architecture and art to literature. More generally, his definition of Gothic in the same
Preface - "All that has nothing of the Ancient gust is call'd a barbarous or Gothique manner" - reflected a growing shift of taste which came to regard even Shakespeare's work as lacking in order and decorum. The Neo-Classicists were fired with the idea that they were improving upon the excesses of earlier literature, introducing greater order, proportion, and elegance. Yet Alexander Pope's response to Shakespeare showed a greater openness. In the 'Preface' to his 1725 edition of Shakespeare he drew an analogy between Shakespeare's works and the Gothic mode, arguing that stylistically each had similar positive and negative aspects:

I will conclude by saying of Shakespeare, that with all his faults, and with all the irregularity of his Drama, one may look upon his works, in comparison with those that are more finish'd and regular, as upon an ancient majestick piece of Gothick Architecture, compar'd with a neat Modern building: The latter is more elegant and glaring, but the former is more strong and more solemn. It must be allow'd, that in one of these there are materials enough to make many of the other. It has much the greater variety, and much the nobler apartments; tho' we are often conducted to them by dark, odd, and uncouth passages. Nor does the Whole fail to strike us with greater reverence, tho' many of the parts are childish, ill-plac'd, and unequal to its grandeur.

Other eighteenth-century critics of the Gothic were less successful in seeing both points of view, as we shall find when examining the contemporary criticism. The period was not, however, uniformly hostile to the Gothic. It brought a number of important advances in the understanding and study of Gothic, at least in some areas. Gothic was at last being taken seriously as an original art form with a style and psyche of its own, requiring re-interpretation. On April 12th, 1741, Soufflot (architect of the Panthéon) read a paper to the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Lyons. This was the first serious study of Gothic architecture in Europe. While not being an ardent Gothicist, and still assuming faulty construction in Gothic architecture, Soufflot stressed the importance of understanding the style in its own terms. The case he made for the Gothic seems particularly striking when one considers his background as a Classicist. He recognised the need to make a close study
of Gothic form, without which he believed that modern architecture would be severely disadvantaged. 27

The second half of the eighteenth century saw a Gothic Revival in various parts of Europe. England led the way with a rebellion against the Neo-Classical aesthetic. In architecture, painting and literature there was an increased interest in work that seemed wild and chaotic, but revealed a deeper unity - that of nature set free. The qualities of Gothic architecture - apparent irregularity, variety, and bold, unsymmetrical forms - come to be popular in literature and landscape gardening. 28

Early in the century, before Gothic novels emerged, poets had begun to explore the mood of Gothic, perhaps picking up on earlier literary expressions of its form in the melodrama of Elizabethan plays, which in turn were influenced by medieval drama. Among these were authors not usually associated with Gothic, such as Milton, Spenser and Pope. Sir Kenneth Clark asserts, with quotes to support his evidence, that "Spenser invented almost all the stage properties of Gothicism which were to furnish the scenery of later poets", while Milton's Gothicism is more restrained and more artful. 29 Although the connections between the architecture and literature may seem rather tenuous, "critical writings at the time", as Clark points out, "draw a direct analogy between non-classical periods of literature and Gothic architecture". One such case he quotes is Hughes's introduction to his 1715 edition of Spenser in which he states "To compare it [The Faery Queen] therefore with the models of Antiquity, would be like drawing a parallel between the Roman and the Gothick architecture". 30

While most literary historians have attempted to establish that Gothic architecture influenced literary taste, Kenneth Clark attempts to establish the opposite by asserting that "the reverse is true". It is not my intention here to argue one or the other, but to notice both, while probing to search for the mood, motivation and psyche which haunted the Gothic style and
seduced artists into expressing its needs. Whether the motivation was literary, architectural, horticultural or visual, it urged a kind of creativity which answered or partly fulfilled a need to express contemporary concerns with a revival of antiquarian interests which were modified and expanded to include eastern influences and mystical sources.

The popularity of elaborate eighteenth-century landscape gardens aided an understanding of the Gothic style. The tone of Gothic is more frivolous here and reminiscent of Rococo. Gothic yet has a strong association with that of early Gothic novels before the French Revolution. A taste for chinoiserie entered the Gothic, again reflected in the novels, William Beckford's *Vathek*\textsuperscript{31} being the most notorious example. If one considers De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, a Gothic novel, as Alethea Hayter did,\textsuperscript{32} the book could serve as an illustration of all these influences yet with a serious undertone throughout.

One work which interprets the Gothic mood, especially as it applies to the literature, has been surprisingly neglected. In 1762, just prior to the release of the first Gothic novel, Richard Hurd published his *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*.\textsuperscript{33} Hurd believed that the Gothic, whether expressed in art, architecture, or literature, must be judged on its own terms, that new criteria must be invented to deal with the Gothic, and that the mode was not as superficial as critics had led their audiences to believe. While the effect of Hurd's *Letters* was to vindicate and make fashionable the Gothic, the deeper psychological implications of this style had still escaped the notice of his readers. A year after Hurd's *Letters* were published, Dr Hugh Blair wrote *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian* (1763) which again focussed attention on the Gothic style, with particular regard to its atmosphere. Ossian influenced most serious writers of Gothic from Radcliffe to Maturin. Subsequent to Blair's study, several works showing an interest in antiquity and the emotional preoccupations of Gothic were
released. From the late 1760s until 1800 a craze for archeology was revived. The first quality collection of Gothic engravings was published in 1795 and aroused renewed interest in the Gothic feeling. The Gothic Revival took on a more serious role in Germany after the release of Goethe's essay *Von Deutscher Baukunst* in 1772. The tone of Goethe's essay could be contrasted with that of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* six years before. Gothic had become a serious medium for communicating political and philosophical ideas. Ambivalent attitudes also characterised German Gothic in both the works of its writers and critics. While Herder declared himself pro-Gothic in *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774), he concurrently attacked Gothic for being "barbarous", "tasteless", "overladen", "gloomy", "grotesque" and "monstrous". Like the English critics, Herder obviously misunderstood the significance of Gothic when in 1769 he wrote predicting that music would soon be like Gothic "ingenious in detail, but nothing when taken as a whole". That is, he could think of unity only in terms of its outer symmetry and the sum of its parts rather than in terms of the details themselves.

If Gothic needed to be defined by new criteria, it stood to reason that finer distinctions in using the term 'Gothic' needed to be made. Yet it was not until 1792-8 that this happened with the publication of Stieglitz's encyclopaedia. That Stieglitz himself was known as a jurist, architect, draughtsman, historian of architecture, landscape gardener and poet suggests his openness to many areas of thought and the wide influence he would have. Stieglitz was the first to make a distinction between Old Gothic (Romanesque) and New Gothic (Revival). Although a German, Stieglitz was interested principally in English Gothic and the importance of its medieval origins: "The social history of the Middle Ages is the only true guide to the history of Gothic architecture, the only means of preserving us from the false notion that this architecture originated in Germany". He made some progress
in defining Gothic as the Romantic spirit of the age, whether Medieval or Revival, and recognised national differences in the Gothic from Irish and Scottish to English and German Gothic.

It was in the early nineteenth century, when all Maturin's novels were written, at the end of the Gothic Revival, that the most rich and complex concepts of Gothic appeared. Gothic began to be examined from many perspectives. Drake wrote an essay On Gothic Superstition\textsuperscript{38} where he penetrated deep into the Gothic subconscious despite his attack on Gothic barbarity. The most distinguished German architect of the early Nineteenth Century, Carl Freidrich Schinkel, took to painting to realise the full potential of the Gothic style and was obviously influenced by the intense visionary character of Casper David Freidrich's works. There is a strong literary quality about Schinkel's paintings especially \underline{Abend}, which was described as his "strange drawing of the Gothic Cathedral, more like Kubla's pleasure-dome than any Gothic building known to man, rising spectrally out of the surrounding trees".\textsuperscript{39} The spirit of Kubla Khan could not be more central to an understanding of the Gothic, with its dream-like, ambiguous qualities. Schinkel took the Gothic out of material reality to stress its spiritual significance: "From henceforth, matter presented no obstacle to the architectural expression of the deepest and highest concepts of which human nature is capable".\textsuperscript{40} Schinkel had a far wider understanding of Gothic than any literary critic at the time. His interest in Gothic spanned all disciplines. He even designed sets for E.T.A. Hoffmann's opera, \textit{Undine}, in 1816. His most definite statements about Gothic were made in his project for a mausoleum for Queen Louisa of Prussia, written the same year that Maturin's first novel was reviewed, 1810. Schinkel saw Gothic as an expression of an idea, a triumph of spirit over matter, a transcendental and specifically Christian expression with an internal organic unity, all of which made it a superior art form to Classical.
Freidrich van der Hagen stated in 1818 that the Gothic style was more diversified and had a greater power to express the Christian faith than the Classical style: "With all its symmetry Classical architecture has something wearily monotonous about it, whereas Gothic blossoms in infinite variety". For von der Hagen, the Classical lacked "the transfigured vision into the Beyond, which Christian painting first revealed to us". He added: "Gothic architecture is the true Christian architecture, and the gothic church rises to heaven like a prayer, like a hymn with its accompaniment of organ and bells".\(^{41}\)

In 1820 Hegel was to verify Schinkel's comments and stress the essentially romantic, Christian and infinite nature of Gothic. Hegel went even further to state that Gothic is not only Romantic architecture per se, but the central manifestation of Romanticism. Though a Protestant like Maturin, Hegel felt the Gothic character to be Catholic. This is an interesting theory in the context of Gothic literature because the Gothic character and setting, especially its most evil aspects, tend to be strongly associated with Catholicism. Maturin uses Gothic architecture to express all the mystery and superstition he sees in Catholicism. Thus the architectural form becomes a literary symbol in his work. Ruined Gothic architecture, along with ruined convents, abbeys and Inquisition prisons come to stand for the breakdown of a system associated with superstition and negative excess.

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By the time Maturin wrote his novels, the tradition of Gothic had completed a full cycle and returned to its originally strong association with religion and nature. In the new conceptions of Gothic there had, however, been some important shifts of value. The championing of a Gothic revival in the context of an age that had for some time been dominated by Classical (or Neo-classical) values, had a polemical edge. Any debate
between these two forms of aesthetic taste is inevitably in danger of overshampionship - there are too many issues involved to reduce them to an either-or choice. Yet such dramatic simplifications, such taking of sides, seems basic to cultural change; and the lineup between notions of Gothic and notions of Classicism does raise some important, basic questions about art. What, for example, is the nature of order? The Classicist is likely to contrast order with disorder and chaos, with a strong sense of disapproval associated with the latter. Sir William Temple in 1720 showed a more flexible understanding:

Among us, the Beauty of Building and Planting is placed chiefly in some certain Proportions, Symmetries, or Uniformities; our walks and our Trees ranged so, as to answer to one another, and at exact distances. The Chinese scorn this way of planting ... their greatest reach of Imagination is employed in contriving figures, where the Beauty shall be great, and strike the Eye, but without any Order or Disposition of Parts, that shall be commonly or easily observ'd. And though we have hardly any notion of this sort of Beauty, yet they have a particular word to express it; and where they find it hit their eye at first Sigh, they say the Sharawadgi is fine or is admirable, or any such Expression of Esteem. And whoever observes the Work upon the best Indian Gowns, or the Painting upon their best Skreens or Purcellians, will find their Beauty is all of this Kind, (that is) without Order.

Disorder can become beauty, and order can become a kind of prison, depending upon one's position, one's viewpoint. Order can be associated with balance and symmetry, or with less regular, organic forms of unity. What I am discussing here are the effects of changing viewpoint. I have noted different possible 'readings' of Gothic architecture - stressing either its unity or its multiplicity of detail. I have also noted different 'readings' of Gothic literature. But I should now like to add a new complication - the fact that such literature in the late eighteenth century tended to embody opposed readings within itself. That is, it was not simply a shift from one position to another, but a literature of ambivalence, which was both drawn to new possibilities and at the same time very conscious of
the values against which it rebelled. In this respect the eighteenth-century Gothic was not merely a return to earlier versions of the Gothic but tended to have a new complexity or ambivalence. A sense of struggle or tension was central to the new Gothic. This literature appeared to be more concerned with expressing complex conflicts than with resolving them. While Gothic novels seldom provide adequate solutions, or convincing conclusions, they certainly make clear the problems. The only release appeared to be in yet more striving and tension. Having found himself, the Gothic hero has to lose himself again, often in an insane effort to transcend his mortality which usually ended tragically, Maturin's Melmoth and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein both exemplifying this pattern clearly.

Also typical of Gothic literature is the doppelgänger motif, which originated in German literature. It described two violently opposing characteristics embodied in one human being, perhaps the most famous today being the 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' of R.L. Stevenson. Sometimes, as in the case of Maturin's work, the double is depicted through two different beings often related by genetic bond, such as Ippolito and Annibal in Fatal Revenge, who are the victim of their true father, Orazio, who is in turn the victim of his true brother Count Montorio. Associated with the doppelgänger is the theme of innocent victimisation, of oppressive pursuer and innocent pursued, as is the case in William Godwin's Caleb Williams and James Hogg's Confessions of a Justified Sinner. Maturin adds an original variation to the doppelgänger theme by making the two heroines of his Women: or, Pour et Contre, Zaira and Eva, complementary as though they represented the dark 'earthy' and light 'heavenly' sides of one character. As mother and daughter, their bond is deepened by blood ties. Both are pursued and victimised by the same man who is himself torn between their opposite natures. Mario Praz remarks in his Introductory essay to Three Gothic Novels:
The double is a descendant of many a German Doppelgänger, the motif of the innocent accused and tried for a crime he has not committed, and incapable of proving his innocence, recalls episodes in Frankenstein, in Melmoth the Wanderer and in François Soulé's Mémoires du diable.

The dualistic tension implied by this motif was already present in early Gothic fiction but became more complex in later Gothic or Romantic literature. The Gothic writer grappled with the problems of good and evil, of God and humanity, of right and wrong, and finding no simple solution at either extreme, became fascinated by the theme of the split psyche, each side fighting for dominance. Gothic literature put strong emphasis on Original Sin and often depicted human beings haunted by their apparent inability to transcend their fallen state. Dualism is a traditional religious theme, but in Gothic literature it tended to develop a particular heightening of tension. As G.R. Thompson has described it:

The Void of Plenitude asserted God's immanence in all things; the Void of Nothingness imagined God's absence. The Dark Romantics tended towards an ambiguous midregion of agonised doubt or suspension, believing neither in Plenitude nor Nothingness - though obsessed with the latter possibility.

It should be added, however, that while Medieval Gothic was less ambivalent, it did involve an intense awareness of dualism, often associated with fear. Such is the interpretation of Wilhelm Worringer in his Form in Gothic which I would consider one of the most useful studies of the implications of Gothic, both medieval and modern, in the visual arts. Worringer argues that

In primitive man, who was still intellectually undeveloped, there was an absolute dualism, an unalleviated relationship of fear towards the phenomenal world, which in matters of art manifested itself naturally in the need for deliverance from the arbitrariness of the phenomenal world and a clinging to self-created values of an inevitable and absolute character. His art therefore was rooted in the need for deliverance: it was this need which imparted to it its transcendental character.
Worringer finds this same impulse underlying the stylization of Medieval art. We may compare Gothic literary styles of the eighteenth century with Worringer's account of Medieval art in terms of a "restless urge which in its quest for rest, its seeking for deliverance, can find no satisfaction but that of stupefaction or intoxication". And: "The Gothic line is full of expression, full of vitality. In contrast with oriental fatalism and quietism we have here a questing, impulsive movement, a restless activity ... The unsatisfied impulse of existing in this confusion of lines, clutching greedily at every new intensification, to lose itself finally in the infinite, is its impulse, its life".

It is true that this 'restless urge' could be seen as typical not only of Gothic but also of much Romantic art. And at times Romantic art conveys a similar sense of ambivalence. For example, Anthony Thorlby described Beethoven's music as providing

> The profoundest expression of Romantic polarity, the consciousness of a power and purpose new to music, a joy of possession and participation in the very vital core of being, and yet also a terror in its rhythmic force: rhythm on the point of turning from a conventional structure for melody into a demonic reality in its own right, the Titanic master of primeval chaos threatening to engulf the Ariel spirit of melodic loneliness.

This is very like the description of a sophisticated Gothic novel, the kind of novel that could have been contemporary with Beethoven's work. But while such similarities are important in indicating continuities between Gothic and Romantic, it may be argued that the kinds of tension I have described are most prevalent in Gothic literature, architecture, art, and music. Ambivalence seems to be central to Gothic, and one's reading of that literary genre must be sensitive to its particular push-pull of fascination and horror, and not regard it necessarily as a sign of aesthetic weakness.
An unfriendly response to *Melmoth* by the *Edinburgh Review* in 1821 highlights the differences of taste that I have been exploring. The critic objects to the giddy movement of Maturin's prose: "he exhausts himself in a continuous struggle to produce effect by dazzling, terrifying or surprising ... [He] has no quiescent figures:— even his repose is a state of rigid tension, if not extravagant distortion". He considers Maturin's energy to be "ludicrous", as though "heaven and earth were coming together". The critic is, in effect, objecting to the Gothic in Maturin's work.

He makes no attempt to understand this incessant restlessness, as Worringer does. He can only condemn the style for its "uncontrolled exuberance" and "imagination", which he regards as "primitive", an interesting choice of adjective in relation to Worringer's analysis. The fascination of this review is that the critic sees the surface features of Gothic so clearly and yet is so far from making sense of them.
NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO


11. *Ibid*, p.82.


19. Vasari, Lives of the Painters, Florence 1550; see Introduction to the Three Arts of Design, Ch.III (Robson-Scott, op.cit., p.5).


28. Contemporary examples of enhanced appreciation for the Gothic may be found in the following writings: Shaftesbury, The Moralist, 1709; Addison, The Spectator (Nos 412, 414, 477) 1712, and The Tatler (Nos 161, 218) 1710; Pope, Epistle to the Earl of Burlington, 1731.


30. Ibid, p.32.


34. Robson-Scott, op.cit., p.264.

35. Goethe, Von Deutscher Baukunst (1773) (actually 1772, although 1773 appeared on 1st edn) in Robson-Scott, op.cit., p.76.

36. Herder, "Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit" (1774), in Robson-Scott, Ibid, p.64.
37. Christian Ludwig Stieglitz, Enzyklopädie, i.vii-viii (1792-8), Leipzig, in Robson-Scott, op.cit., p.245.

38. Nathan Drake [On Gothic Superstition]; see also his Ode to Superstition; Summers, op.cit., pp.50-51.


46. Ibid, p.70.

47. Ibid, p.70.


50. The movement, variety, dramatic excitement and suspense which the Edinburgh Review critic objected to in Maturin's work, is commended by Maturin himself in his own literary criticism. In an otherwise critical review of Richard Sheil's Apostate in 1817, Maturin stresses the following qualities as the principal strength of the work:

"This tragedy certainly possesses one merit, - that of preserving unremitted interest in the progress of the narrative from the first act to the last; the dramatic excitement never ceases or languishes, it is supported by a rapid succession of events which, though destitute of intrinsic novelty, are at least varied; and by a catastrophe which, though common-place, is certainly unexpected - this is a great and necessary art in dramatic composition; without it poetry fatigues, and passion exhausts us -"

Mr Flosky: It is very certain, and much to be rejoiced at, that our literature is hag-ridden. Tea has shattered our nerves; late dinners make us slaves of indigestion; the French Revolution has made us shrink from the name of philosophy and has destroyed, in the more refined part of the community (of which number I am one), all enthusiasm for political liberty. That part of the reading public which shuns the solid food of reason for the light diet of fiction, requires a perpetual adhobition of sauce piquante to the palate of its depraved imagination. It lived upon ghosts, goblins and skeletons ... till even the devil himself, though magnified to the size of Mt Athos, became too base, common, and popular, for its surfeited appetite. The ghosts have therefore been laid, and the devil has been cast into outer darkness, and now the delight of our spirits is to dwell on all the vices and blackest passions of our nature, tricked out in a masquerade dress of heroism and disappointed benevolence; ... Mr Toobad: That is, because the devil is come among us, and finds it for his interest to destroy all our perceptions of the distinctions of right and wrong.

My aim in this chapter is again to explore the context in which Maturin worked, approaching it from a new angle - that of the contemporary criticism. I am concerned not only with the fact that Maturin received so much negative criticism but with the assumptions that seem to underlie the criticism. Assumptions of a particular period of literature, or of its surrounding culture generally, become clear through distance, especially the perspective that history provides. Only then does it become possible to see the contours of what was most deeply felt or taken for granted. Space as well as time can provide distance. We are strongly aware of the assumptions supporting a different political context, such as socialist realism in Russian literature and criticism. But it would be very difficult to sum up our own assumptions today, to see ourselves as (say) Russian or Third World readers see our literary preoccupations.
To look closely at the criticism, which includes reviewing and the more general literary discussion of Maturin's age, is a very useful way to expose and clarify the particular trends, tensions and sensitivities of the period in which he wrote. It was, in some respects, an age of more-than-usual conflict and change in literary values but literary criticism tended to reflect the conservative side of the debate. Hence, while not losing sight of the diversity of contemporary opinions, I would risk the generalisation that conservatism or fear of change is a particularly striking feature of criticism during the period.

The key to an understanding of why critics felt themselves to be guardians of public morality, as seen in all the reviews I will refer to and many more, is revealed by a remark made in a contemporary review of Lord Byron's Beppo in the evangelical British Review: "Such is the value of caveat opinion, and a right moral feeling, among Britons at this moment, that we cannot afford to be amused at the expense of decency, delicacy and principle". Mr Robert's emphasis on "a right moral feeling ... at this moment" is important, for it stresses the strong contemporary need to uphold traditional values and the status quo, implying that subversive elements are busy within the literary and social context. In 1816 the Monthly Review issued a similar statement which described the attraction of Maturin's anti-hero, Bertram, as "by far the most dangerous symptom in the literary taste of the day, because it was a symptom obviously connected with the tone of moral feeling".

The intensity of the ferment in literature and society at this time explains the conservative reaction in criticism but it also throws the critics' lack of flexibility into heightened relief. I should add that the very strength of their reaction to Romantic and other new tendencies serves to acknowledge the power of those tendencies and to imply a fascination for
the new energies released. This literary criticism is far from relaxed and assured in its conservatism - it is, in some respects, tense with ambivalence.

I shall limit my survey to criticisms of Maturin's work during his lifetime, from Sir Walter Scott's review of Fatal Revenge in 1810 to a review of The Albigenses in 1825. Objections to Maturin's writing on moral grounds may be found in the following periodicals: The Edinburgh Literary Magazine, The New Monthly Magazine, The Monthly Review, The Eclectic Review, The Edinburgh Review and The Quarterly Review. The last four were considered the "leading literary periodicals" of the period.5 For comparative purposes, I shall also consider some of the reviews received by Maturin's contemporaries, such as Lord Byron.

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I shall initiate my survey of the contemporary criticism by taking extreme examples to establish the spectrum of opinion. I shall describe one of the most conservative and one of the most liberal reviews of Maturin, appearing in the Edinburgh Review6 and The Examiner7 respectively, and analyse the approach taken by their critics. Both reviewers were negative towards their subject matter, though both also acknowledged Maturin's indisputable literary talent and 'genius'. The conservative approach tended to project onto the literature a set of values which was often out of touch with the intentions and concerns of the writer. It reflected an intense sense of moral responsibility towards the reader, while the liberal approach showed a greater sympathy for individual expression and the writer's intention, concentrated on practical faults of the work as an art form and left the reader to handle his/her own morality. While reflecting some assumptions of its own, the liberal approach tended to be more flexible and its criticism more constructive, suggesting ways the author could improve his writing within his own terms of reference.
During Maturin's literary career Francis Jeffrey was the editor of the Edinburgh Review. Jeffrey was brought up on Virgil, Cicero and Horace, and on Pope, Swift and Addison, and these writers formed his standards during his early years. Jeffrey used typical classical criteria of literary value which were reflected in the Edinburgh Review articles; he called ... for polish, good sense, clarity, decorum, and economy; and he condemned homelessness, 'mysticism', obscurity, eccentricity and wordiness.

Although described by Redpath as "liberal in its political attitudes", the Edinburgh Review was conservative in comparison with The Examiner.

The Edinburgh Review registered a basic objection to excess, of which it deemed the Gothic novel to be a prime example. The reviewer disliked Maturin's choice of genre, content and style in Melmoth. He began by launching an uncompromising attack on these supposed errors of taste:

It was said, we remember, of Dr Darwin's Botanic Garden that it was the sacrifice of Genius in the Temple of False Taste; and the remark may well be applied to the work before us, with the qualifying clause that in this instance the Genius is less obvious, and the false taste more glaring.

Maturin's judgment in using the Gothic mode to express himself was questioned: "No writer of good judgment would have attempted to revive the defunct horrors of Mrs Radcliffe's School of Romance, or the demoniacal incarnations of Mr Lewis". The reviewer asserted that Maturin's style was "almost as objectional in the manner as it is in the matter". The link between style and content and their association with social morality often led critics to condemn one on the evidence of the other. There was a distinct prejudice against Romantic fiction which Maturin seemed to arouse in its most extreme form: "It may be sufficient to announce, that the imagination of the author runs riot, even beyond the usual license of romance".

Maturin's anti-hero is described in this review as a "modern Faustus" and is associated with free "license of romance" and "unlimited worldly enjoyment" which the critic disdains. Other characters are censured because
they lack a sense of balance, order and harmony, being "all opposed to each other in glaring and violent contrast". According to the reviewer, Maturin's style of delineating their actions is similarly discordant and excessive: "all their adventures (are) narrated with the same undeviating display of turgid, vehement, and painfully elaborated language". The critic chides Maturin for creating an "expanded nightmare", a "phantasmagoric exhibition". This objection is interesting because it reveals the orthodox critic's belief that the dream world is mere fantasy and an unacceptable form of expression. Implied in this judgment is a narrow conception of reality suggesting that what lies outside is unreal or lacking in seriousness. The critic also sees Maturin's work in terms of stylistic decadence, a "transition from the lucid terseness and exquisite polish of Pope and Goldsmith, to the rambling, diffuse, irregular, and imaginative style of composition by which the present era is characterised". This transition, in general terms, is from Augustan or Neo-Classical to Romantic values. Particularly interesting is the critic's inclusion of the term "imaginative" with a negative emphasis. At the end of the eighteenth century, the word 'imagination' in literary criticism was still a confused but generally pejorative term.9

Stylistically it is the exhausting energy and movement of the prose that the critic objects to, or the lack of what he would consider balance, harmony and restfulness: "he [Maturin] exhausts himself in a continual struggle to produce effect by dazzling, terrifying, or surprising", and he "has no quiescent figures: even his repose is a state of rigid tension if not extravagant distortion". Maturin's energy is judged inappropriate, "ludicrous" and disturbing, "as if heaven and earth were coming together". The result, according to the reviewer, is that "In straining to reach the sublime, he perpetually takes that single and unfortunate step which conducts him to the ridiculous". To describe this absurd excess, he sums up Maturin as "the Fuseli of novelists". Like Maturin's writing, Fuseli's art was viewed by many contemporary critics with disdain.10
If we turn to Maturin's own criticism, we find a basic difference of aesthetics and values. That which the Edinburgh Review critic considers excessive is, in some respects, what Maturin particularly admires. For example, what the critic calls "offensively minute" detail was an effect Maturin wanted to emphasise. When discussing the drama of the Reformation period, Maturin stresses that Reformation writers "paid little regard to those rules by which succeeding critics have tried to restrain the enthusiasm of composition, or the sympathy of attention". Maturin praises the variety and detail of their work, for no matter how "trivial" an incident may seem "Every variety of passion, however unfit to be exposed, and every modification of character, however difficult to be traced, enter into their representations, which include the whole of existence. Many incidents in life are mean and trivial, yet they stoop to record them".11

Also relevant to the Edinburgh Review's criticism of Maturin's exhausting movement is Maturin's criticism of Richard Sheil's Apostate. Maturin praises the play, above all for its energy and variety:

This tragedy certainly possesses one merit, - that of preserving unremitted interest in the progress of the narrative from the first act to the last; the dramatic excitement never ceases or languishes, it is supported by a rapid succession of events which, though destitute of intrinsic novelty, are at least varied". 12

To add insult to injury, the Edinburgh Review critic attributes Maturin's excess to his Irish descent:

The fact, we think, cannot be disputed, that a peculiar tendency to this gaudy and ornate style, exists among the writers of Ireland and later qualifies this by linking "uncontrolled exuberance" and "imagination" with "a nation in one of the earlier stages of civilisation and refinement".
More generally, the critic attempted to link Maturin's taste in writing to a particular type of reader who was poorly educated. Here, political attitudes emerge clearly through the literary discussion. Maturin's "taste for horrible and revolting subjects" is linked with the unrespectable part of society: "He assimilates the sluggish sympathies of his readers to those of sailors and vulgar ballad readers". Associated with political degeneracy are novelty and change, qualities that Maturin admired but which the critic sees as partly responsible for corruption:

Political changes were not the sole cause of the rapid degeneracy in letters that followed the Augustan era of Rome. Similar corruptions and decay, have succeeded to the intellectual eminence of other nations; and we might be also led to conclude, that mortal as well as physical power, after attaining a certain perfection, became weakened by expansion, and sank into a state of comparative imbecility, until time and circumstance gave it a new progressive impetus. One great cause of this deterioration is the insatiable thirst for novelty, which, becoming weary even of excellence, will 'sate itself in a celestial bed, and prey on garbage'.

To illustrate his case, the Edinburgh reviewer gives a social example of people torpid from "an utter exhaustion of sensual enjoyment" who are led to seek "a miserable excitement, by swallowing the most amazing filth". To satisfy this need, the reviewer states:

There is ... a numerous class of inferior caterers to the public, ready to minister to any appetite, however foul and depraved, if they be once furnished with a precedent; and we foresee an inundation of blood and abomination if they be not awed or ridiculed into silence.

The critic's fear of religious and moral corruption is so exaggerated that it distorts his ability to realise that Maturin is also, in his own way, protesting against corruption, only by a different strategy. At the end of his review, the critic overtly links the need for social repression with the need for literary repression, and sees himself as literary director of that group he so admires: "The Society for the Suppression of Mendicity".
It is interesting that this society, led by Wilberforce, was mentioned by the Literary Examiner with relation to the work of Lord Byron. Unlike the Edinburgh reviewer, who associated vice with the lower classes of society, the Literary Examiner linked Vice with "the haut ton and Blues of London — a field altogether uncultivated by the Society for the Suppression of Vice" for, as the periodical stated, "there is much reason to fear, that people of quality swallow doses of Don Juan with more avidity than religious tracts". When commenting on the Literary Examiner, Theodore Redpath also notes:

Wilberforce's Society for the Suppression of Vice and Immorality was founded in 1802. It was one of a number of attempts made over the centuries to impose a strict morality on the country. Indeed, its Address to the Public, 1803, shows it to have been consciously a revival of the Society for the Reformation of Manners, founded in 1698 to tighten up moral standards after the laxity of the Restoration period. Wilberforce's society waged a strenuous war against blasphemous and obscene publications, brothels, fortune-tellers and sabbath-breakers.

Maturin objects to this type of heavy-handed repression in his literary criticism. He refers to attacks on contemporary theatre which represented it "as operating to the pollution of morals, the relaxations of laws, and even the subversion of governments". Maturin's retort is "that the drama is not the cause, but an effect of the state of society". Maturin describes the history of the English stage in two main periods, admiring times "when dramatic composition, free from all external influence, formed a distinct and separate school of its own", when writers were fortunate enough to be originators with "no authority to regard" and consequently they "had no dread of their audience" in contrast to "theatre which had been suppressed by the rigour of the Puritans".

It is interesting to notice the Edinburgh Review's particularly uneasy attitude to Maturin's religious subject matter. The reviewer tries to pretend that Maturin's religious attack is directed at what belonged only to an era of inquisitions:
We shall not stop to stigmatize, as it deserves, the wild and flagrant calumnies which he insinuates against three-fourths of his countrymen, by raking in the long-forgotten rubbish of Popery for extinct enormities, which he exaggerates as the inevitable result, rather than the casual abuse of the system ...

Much of Maturin's life, in his religious and literary occupations, was devoted to making people aware that these enormities were far from "extinct" or "casual", merely manifested in less dramatic ways. In dramatising them again, Maturin could allude to the corruption in a contemporary context. The Gothic genre provided him with a perfect vehicle to do so. Because critics like the Edinburgh reviewer were unable to understand the genre's intention and style, they associated writers like Maturin with exactly the same "intolerant zeal" (to use the Edinburgh's description) that he was keen to eliminate.

Underlying many of the Edinburgh Review's arguments is the basic assumption that an artist should aspire to balance, both morally and stylistically. The artist must balance dream with reason, evil with good, for the benefit of those "civilised" readers whom he instructs. If he violates the "bounds of decorum" he must provide adequate compensation. To illustrate his point, the critic calls Dr Johnson to his aid:

Dr Johnson, as a proof of the total suppression of the reasoning faculty in dreams, used to cite one of his own, wherein he imagined himself to be holding an argument with an adversary, whose superior powers filled him with a mortification which a moment's reflection would have dissipated, by reminding him that he himself supplied the repartees of his opponent as well as his own. In his waking dreams, Mr Maturin is equally the parent of all the parties who figure in his Romance; and, though not personally responsible for their sentiments, he is amenable to the bar of criticism for every phrase or thought which transgresses the bounds of decorum, or violates the laws that regulate the habitual intercourse of polished society.

The implication here is that the writer, in this case Maturin, is a criminal before the judges, the critics, by virtue of his trade. Although he may not personally agree with his characters, he must still defend them before the judges, and presumably also the public as grand jury.
Maturin must have been horrified, not only by the Edinburgh reviewer's patronising tone, but by his reference to Dr Johnson's rational balancing act and the implications of his statement. Maturin clearly rejected such prescriptions for the writer throughout his literary criticism and in the prefaces to his novels. When describing the influence of French theatre on English writers, Maturin launched a particularly fierce attack on the measured presentation of balanced theses and antitheses in writing:

Heroes declaim in elaborate antitheses on the respective claims of passion and duty, and heroines reply in speeches where the pour et contre is stated with technical precision in a nearly equal number of verses, with precedents and cases in point from reports of adjudged causes in the court of Cupid.

The Edinburgh Review critic sums up Maturin's ability in a surprising way:

Let it not be imagined, from anything we have now said, that we think meanly of Mr Maturin's genius and abilities. It is precisely because we hold both in respect that we are sincerely anxious to point out their misapplication.

Despite all his condemnations, he senses the power in Maturin's writing. Earlier, he had expressed regret at Maturin's failure to reach the sublime, a failure in relation to the fact that Maturin was a writer of "undoubted genius as the present work exhibits". Yet nowhere does the Edinburgh Review critic attempt to describe where this "genius" lies or how it is manifested in Melmoth.

To provide a contrast to the conservatism of the Edinburgh Review, I turn now to The Examiner. Edited by the radical and Romantic poet, Leigh Hunt, The Examiner was anti-Tory and known for its radical tendencies and support of new trends in literature. Its reviews of Lord Byron's work are consistent with its critique of Maturin's Bertram. The Examiner refused to jump on the bandwagon of critics outraged by immoral and irreligious tendencies in literature and even published defenses of such work. When a clergyman
objected to Byron's Don Juan for being "grossly indecent and profane in its language and allusions - licentious in its descriptions - morose, cynical and brutal in its sentiments", a critic in The Examiner replied that decency or indecency lay in the mind of the beholder:

Don Juan appears to me to be a work of extraordinary power and beauty, abounding in passages ... of great sweetness and beauty, and - until you and such as you polluted them by your gross, debasing comments, - innocent and moral.

This seems a brave attitude to have expressed in 1822, only a year after the Edinburgh Review article on Maturin's Melmoth. But The Examiner went further to counter charges against Don Juan for its profanity and indecency by making appropriate quotations from the poem and claimed that it contained "not one idea so gross as may be found in every page of Pope". The Examiner compared aspects of Byron's style with that of Shakespeare, but with sensitivity to the author's intentions, when it stated that Don Juan was "a satirical poem, not a sermon or essay on The Whole Duty of Man". The Examiner printed also a defense of Byron's The Vision of Judgment to counter the Tory Courier's attack, and challenged other periodicals for their conservative attitudes based on what the magazine considered to be outmoded critical criteria.

Maturin did not receive unqualified support for Bertram in The Examiner's review by William Hazlitt. Hazlitt's main comment praises the work's poetry rather than its drama: "Its beauties are rather those of language and sentiment than action or situation". He qualifies this with reference to the actual performance of the play. Like the Edinburgh Review critic, Hazlitt refers to literary precedents to provide a context by which to judge the work, but he does so in a constructive rather than destructive way. He examines the play as a tragedy, finding that Maturin does not entirely succeed according to Aristotle's definitions: "There is a want of that necessary connection between what happens, what is said, and what is done, in
which we take the essence of dramatic inventions to consist". Instead of condemning the play on these grounds, he seeks to find an alternative way of viewing it.

Hazlitt uses modern terminology, probably borrowed from critiques of novels, to express how Bertram works (for he stated in the opening sentence that the play did succeed on the stage and deserved to, despite his reservations): "It is a sentimental drama, it is a romantic drama, but it is not tragedy, in the best sense of the word". The critic distinguishes sentiment from passion, and this "modern romantic tragedy" from "The old tragedy" and makes an interesting analogy between the new drama, of which this is an example, and opera: "As the opera is filled with a sort of singing people, who translate everything into music, the modern drama is filled with poets and their mistresses, who translate everything into metaphor and sentiment". He uses Shakespeare to illustrate the particular type of drama under discussion, rather than to discredit the work: "It is a Winter's Tale, A Midsummer Night's Dream, but it is not Lear or Macbeth".

Hazlitt, like the Edinburgh Review critic, attributes the creation of this new type of drama and its faults to the state of contemporary society. But he does not call in the Society for the Suppression of Vice: he prefers to understand why it is so:

The poet does not describe what his characters would feel in given circumstances, but lends them his own thoughts and feelings out of his general reflections on human nature, or general observation of certain objects. In a word, we hold for a truth, that a thoroughly good tragedy is an impossibility in a state of manners and literature where the poet and the philosopher have got the better of the man.

Hazlitt also quotes extracts from the play, as the Edinburgh Review critic did, but not merely to mock. He analyses the extracts, pointing out exactly where the poet takes over from the dramatist. Particularly interesting is his quotation of a speech by Imogene, which is really a soliloquy expressing
her innermost thoughts and future fears. Hazlitt censures this because it does not arise out of the dramatic situation: "This is very beautiful and affecting writing. The reader would suppose that it related to events woven into the web of history; but no such thing. It is purely voluntary or poetical fiction of possible calamity, arising out of the experience of the author, not of the heroine". Here, it is interesting to note the negative use of the word "fiction" which is common in that period, and the assumption that the author should keep to what is appropriate for the heroine to feel, rather than what evolves from the writer's own experience.

Maturin would not agree with Hazlitt's reasoning, judging from his review of Richard Sheil's play The Apostle, where he comments upon the critics' inability to understand many new aspects of the contemporary drama. Maturin refers to the modern "vivid creations of fancy alone" which are not reliant on merely "visible" manifestations but can be seen "in the silent and unwitnessed workings of the human heart". Imogene's soliloquy is a perfect example of Maturin's skill in revealing otherwise invisible emotions to the audience. Hazlitt's objection that the soliloquy does not further the plot reveals a less sensitive awareness of contemporary dramatic trends than Maturin's. Imogene's soliloquy is not intended to advance the action, but rather to develop the depth of her character more fully. Maturin's awareness that the soliloquy represented something special in the context of dramatic history may be indicated by his special fondness for it, remarked upon by his contemporary biographer: "He was particularly fond of reciting Imogene's soliloquy, which he considered as one of the most eloquent specimens of the play".

The comparison between Maturin and Fuseli also strikes The Examiner reviewer, but in a slightly different context. Hazlitt uses Fuseli to highlight Maturin's darker or more Gothic approach. He refers to a "story which
Fuseli painted of a man sitting over the corpse of his murdered wife" and compares this to Maturin's plot, admitting that he can understand why "a man might wish to feed his eyes on the dead body of a person whom he had loved" but not, as in Bertram's case, "an enemy whom he had killed". That Fuseli occurred to both the conservative and liberal reviewers of Maturin's work is not mere coincidence. Similar myths grew up around the personal and literary attributes of both artists, and were in many cases created by those who least understood their shared interests and obsessions. Just as Maturin was said to be in league with the Devil, so Fuseli was described by his contemporary critics as "Painter in ordinary to the Devil". Coleridge's dislike of the "vigorous impotence" of Fuseli was in accord with his virulent criticism of Maturin's work in the chapter added to Biographia Literaria. Fuseli may have come close to answering Hazlitt's incomprehension of Imaginie's soliloquy with his aphorism: "One of the most unexplored regions of art are dreams, and what may be called the personification of sentiment". Like Maturin, Fuseli was criticised for his "dissonances of scale" and "irrational space". In general, contemporary critics were too quick to dismiss him as 'Gothic' - Fuseli justified his own approach in these words: "Genius either discusses new materials of nature, or combines the known with novelty".

As a whole, Hazlitt's review still conveys a positive response to Maturin's style. While trained in Neo-Classical aspects, Hazlitt balanced his objections with examples of Maturin's skill. He mentioned the "beauty" of the "language and sentiment", despite the apparent lack of action; the "grand and impressive" idea of Bertram contemplating the corpse of his enemy, despite its apparent lack of realism; and the "beautiful and affecting writing" of Imaginie's soliloquy, despite its apparent lack of relation to events in the play.
The Examiner went further than the Edinburgh Review to seek new definitions to describe the unfamiliar, and was careful not to criticise Maturin for his immorality, whereas the Edinburgh Review hardly strayed from this theme. The Examiner actively encouraged Maturin to continue writing plays, aware that they would be in this "modern romantic tragedy" form and hoping that Maturin would develop the mode further. In contrast, the Edinburgh Review warned against more productions of this kind and turned its energy to making sure there would be none. The difference in attitude between the Edinburgh Review and The Examiner reflects some of the tensions in society and in literary criticism at the time Maturin wrote. Like Byron, a powerful writer such as Maturin touched the nerve-ends of tolerance or anger, dividing the critics into separate camps.

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The negative attitude to the Gothic genre as a whole was widespread among reviewers, even in the case of an intelligent writer with an affinity for 'romance' like Walter Scott. Scott's discussion of Maturin's Fatal Revenge in the Quarterly Review in 1810 is exceptionally interesting because it was the very first critique of Maturin's writing. The magazine had been labelled as classical, conservative and dull, and Scott's review was an attempt to break away from this image. Scott was commissioned to read a massive selection of Gothic romance and contemporary fiction in an effort to extend the magazine's scope and to refute accusations that the Quarterly Review critics were all "respectable classical scholars" who abided by "the old-fashioned nature of our principles" and "ancient custom", and that they were full of "sarcasm" for new work. As Scott stated:

To prove the futility of the charge, we resolved to extend the sphere of our enquiries; and to review not only the grave and weighty, but the flitting and evanescent productions of the times; for the purpose of giving full scope to our ingenuity, and evincing the vivacity of our talents, so wantonly called in question.
Amidst all these "imitations", Scott considered Maturin's Fatal Revenge as the only work showing any sign of literary competence, despite the "bad taste in which it is composed", presumably meaning Maturin's use of the Gothic genre with all its associated 'trappings':

Amid these flat imitations of the Castle of Udolpho we lighted unexpectedly upon the work which is the subject of the present article, and, in defiance of the very bad taste in which it is composed, we found ourselves insensibly involved in the perusal, and at times impressed with no common degree for the powers of the author.

Scott's distaste for the genre did not prevent him from noticing Maturin's talent:

We have at no time more earnestly desired to extend our voice to a bewildered traveller, than towards this young man, whose taste is so inferior to his powers of imagination and expression, that we never saw a more remarkable instance of genius degraded by the labour in which it is employed.

Scott's main objection to Fatal Revenge was the author's "natural" explanation for the "marvellous" at the end of the book. Yet Scott never stopped to ascertain the possible reasons for Maturin's decision to impose the explanation:

In the first place, then, we disapprove of the mode introduced by Mrs Radcliffe, and followed by Mr. Murphy (Maturin) and her other imitators, of winding up their story with a solution by which all the incidents appearing to partake of the mystic and marvellous are resolved by very simple and natural causes.

But Scott does notice that the natural explanation does not resolve the tension exhaled by the plot:

But the machinery of the castle of Montorio, when exhibited, is wholly inadequate to the gigantic operations ascribed to it. There is a total and absolute disproportion between the cause and effect, which must disgust the reader much more than if he were left under the delusion of ascribing the whole to supernatural agency.

Scott failed to question why Maturin might have introduced this obviously inadequate explanation. By missing the link between Orazio's control over
his victims and that of the Roman Catholic church over its congregation, Scott glides over the most crucial pivot of the story, superstition. Had the book's victims not been so carefully prepared to be taken in by superstition through their religious conditioning, Orazio could never have gained control over them. Any other explanation is doomed to extinction by Maturin's own intention. Despite the apparent natural and explicable causes for the mysterious events, their effect is disproportionate to the cause, as Scott stated. Far from negating both as "supernatural", Maturin wants the reader to make his/her own connections when the apparently "natural" causes prove inadequate. Without doing this, the power of religion and superstition to delude the mind is lost, and with it, Maturin's aim in reinforcing the Gothic plot with a parallel religious 'plot'.

The Quarterly Review article illustrates how a perceptive critic like Scott can feel attracted to the literary powers of a writer yet still miss the strength and subtlety of his art by stereotyping his work as a typical example of a genre that he dislikes. Scott felt morally bound to recommend the cessation of these experiments upon the public, until their sensibility shall have recovered its original tone. The taste for the marvellous has been indeed compared to the habit of drinking ardent liquors. But it fortunately differs in having its limits: he upon whom one dram does not produce the effect, can attain the desired degree of inebriation by doubling the dose. But when we have ceased to start at one ghost, we are callous to the exhibition of a whole Pandemonium.

Yet Scott also pointed out Maturin's strengths:

He possesses a strong and vigorous fancy, with great command of language, and accurately predicted that despite

wasting his best vigour in irregular efforts without either grace or object ... there is much in these volumes which promises a career that may at some future time astonish the public.

It should be noted that Scott, in spite of his reservations, did more than any other critic to aid Maturin in his career.
Another aspect of Maturin's work that was widely criticised was the influence of German thought and writing on his expression. This possibly reflected British critics' fears that the "sturm und drang" movement in Germany might be reviving itself on English soil. Two Monthly Review articles registered the strongest objections to the German influence on Maturin's writing, one an 1816 review of Bertram and one a review of Maturin's second play, Manuel, the following year.\textsuperscript{36} It is interesting to note that Maturin himself criticised certain aspects of Germanic style, but in a somewhat different way. He focused on the excessively inward obsession of German writers at the expense of themes that carried wider implications:

They are too gloomy, metaphysical and recherché; too much wrapped up in their own peculiar conceptions, to attend to those broad and general delineations of life and passion that are required in dramatic exhibition.\textsuperscript{37}

Maturin's criticisms were motivated by stylistic rather than nationalistic considerations. Henry Fuseli, whose style was compared with Maturin's unfavourably in the Edinburgh Review critique of Malmoth (discussed above), was also criticised for the Germanic element in his art, this time by Maturin's more sympathetic reviewer, William Hazlitt, who complained that Fuseli's "distortions and vagaries are German, and not English: they lie like a nightmare on the breast of our native art."\textsuperscript{38} Presumably a sense of English nationalism lay behind many of these objections to German influence, but not all the critics shared this bias. Blackwood's Magazine, for example, acknowledged the positive results of this influence on Maturin's expression. It compared Maturin favourably with the Germanic masters of psychological horror, showed some sympathy for his intentions in using the Gothic genre and proclaimed: "in horror, there is no living author out of Germany, that can at all be compared with Mr Maturin".\textsuperscript{39}
Some critics called not only for a balance of good and evil in Maturin's work, but a complete avoidance of evil. In 1820 the New Monthly Magazine published a particularly extreme attack on Maturin's immorality. The reviewer defined what a moral tale was, then added:

We are afraid that this praise cannot be rendered to the work before us. Nothing vicious is ever recommended or palliated by its author; but its evil consists in the terrible anatomy of vice - in the exhibition of supernatural depravity - in the introduction of blasphemous expressions, though they are introduced to be hated. Alas! The pollutions of the imagination too soon find their way to the heart 'out of which are the tissues of life'. The best purity is that of him who thinks no evil. The very sentiment of peculiar detestation fixes black thoughts on the memory - the soul recurs to them with a kind of morbid curiosity - till they grow familiar to it, and lose their horror.

This critic's argument is familiar to the reader of today, since similar cries for censorship have accompanied the regular use of television, video and film in the home. Familiar also is the advice which follows, with the New Monthly Magazine urging Maturin to desist from displaying "his taste for strong emotion" because of the effect it may have on others less able to resist its strength:

We entreat him - when he is about to unveil some dreadful enormity to the gaze of the world - to reflect on that principle which he has so finely developed in his own Montorio, that evil thoughts, repeated even to shuddering souls, may stain and fascinate them forever.

This idea reinforces clearly the Edinburgh Review's stance when the critic states:

Some adventurous writer, unable to obtain distinction amongst a host of competitors, all better qualified than himself to win legitimate applause, strikes out a fantastic or monstrous innovation; and arrests the attention of many who would fall asleep over monotonous excellence. Imitators are soon found; - fashion adopts the new folly; - the old standard of perfection is deemed stale and obsolete; - and thus, by degrees, the whole literature of a country becomes changed and deteriorated. It appears to us that we are now labouring in a crisis of this nature.
The Edinburgh Review's critic links the deterioration in literature to a similar decline in the moral state of the country and describes the result as a "crisis". Similar concern was shared by various critics who called for a return to positive models. The New Monthly Magazine critic, for instance, who had protested against "supernatural depravity" and "pollution of the imagination", also looked forward to a time when he could see the powers of the imagination "settling into order and harmony" designed "to produce impressions on the national heart which will not decay".

This sort of exclusion contrasts with Maturin's attempt to achieve a complex view of morality in his own literary criticism. This is particularly apparent in his review of Maria Edgeworth's Harrington and Ormond, where he sketches a history of the novel and comments on individual authors. Maturin criticises Fielding for his extremes of morality which by their polarity seem to mock the balance between virtue and vice:

His mind appeared incapable of concocting a character of real virtue. His Allworthy is a proing, self-sufficient moral pedant; in Joseph Andrews virtue is ridiculous; in Tom Jones vice is honourable.

On the other hand, Richardson is criticised for never lacking copious good qualities with which he endows his characters "preaching forever in a monotonous key of maudlin morality", Richardson is guilty of raising virtue onto an idolatrous pedestal:

His mind seems to have been copiously furnished with an inventory of good qualities, which he deals out with unsparing and indiscriminating profusion, and with an absurd idolatry of human virtue.

Maturin admires Smollett for his more "varied knowledge of the human character and more extensive experience of human life", yet also notices that in achieving a balance between extremes of virtue and vice, Smollett's characters tend to be indistinguishable: "The great defect of his works is that his heroes, from Roderick Random down to Matthew Bramble, are all portraits of the same character in various costumes".
Maturin was very aware of the complexity of contemporary moral situations. His own work tended to fail most when the hero or heroine slipped into a role of extreme virtue or vice, and it most succeeded when a character was seen to be vacillating between both extremes, for example Orazio and eventually his victims, Ippolito and Annibal, in Fatal Revenge, or Raymond of Toulouse in his last novel, The Albigenses. Where he portrayed an exceedingly pious character, such as Eva in Women: or, Pour et Contre, it was always to highlight the absurdity of religious devotion when it grew so extreme as to dam up the flow of life or cripple the potential of human love. Virtuous characters such as Pierre the Pastor and the Monk of Montcalm in The Albigenses, with their exemplary behaviour, stood as symbols for the potential of religious piety rather than as real or believable human beings, as Maturin made clear from his deliberate use of them to 'balance' both sides of the religious debate central to the book, and his emphasis on their symbolism by using 'trade names' like Pierre the Pastor and the Monk of Montcalm.

Some of the most fascinating criticisms are those concerned with Maturin's anti-heroes. The anti-hero, villain-hero or rebel-hero, (depending on the emphasis the particular writer wishes to stress) embodies within one individual a sense of ambivalence, attraction and repulsion combined. He, or in the case of Zaira in Maturin's Women, or Marie de Mortimer in The Albigenses, she, is 'anti' the traditional notions of heroism, and in his/her villainy, subverts the status quo. The New Monthly Magazine in 1816 expressed its fear of the strangely attractive anti-hero created by Maturin and tried to distance this character from contemporary reality, identifying him as someone "who, like Milton's Satan, is himself alone". In the following New Monthly Magazine article, Milton was held up to Maturin in quite a different light as a holy writer whom he, as a religious cleric, should imitate. This fear of the anti-hero and the rebellion for
which he stood became widespread in other articles around this time. A *New Monthly Magazine* critique of *Melmoth* links Maturin's "fiend" directly with aspects of the contemporary society:

Mr Maturin has not only put appropriate blasphemies into the mouth of his fiend, but has himself too often borrowed illustrations from objects which ought to be shut out from the soul as infected merchandise from a city.

And:

The work opens in the year 1816 - a period somewhat too recent for the advent of an emissary of Satan.

Other periodicals echoed similar opinions, such as the *Monthly Review*, *The Eclectic Review* and (with an interesting variation), the *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany*, which in its review of *The Albigenses* congratulated Maturin for finally having given up "the Devil and all his works".

Such responses to Maturin's anti-hero are as interesting for what they imply as for what they directly state. While rejecting this figure as an unbelievable "apparition" (*Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany*), an alienated man with whom the public could not possibly identify (*New Monthly Magazine*), a blasphemous "fiend" or "emissary of Satan" (*New Monthly Magazine*) and the "Devil" himself (*Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany*), these articles continued to reveal the critics' strong fascination for him.

Critics feared the effects of this attraction on less wary readers and associated the anti-hero with chaos, contrasting his world with that of "order" and "harmony", "heaven" and "paradise". But trying to enforce these values on a society which was far from orderly or heavenly, and which was experiencing an enormous shift in values, was a tactic doomed to failure.

Like Mr Toobad in Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey*, Maturin's contemporary critics feared that writers like he and Byron, or an artist like Fuseli, had let the Devil loose among their audience, making it increasingly difficult
to distinguish clearly between good and evil. If Mr Flosky's predictions came true, then there would be chaos resulting in their internalisation of the devil's vices. Already the "blackest passions of our nature" were "tricked out in a masquerade dress of heroism and disappointed benevolence". In denouncing this new concept of a hero in their old terminology, the critics denied themselves the opportunity of understanding each writer's individual aim in creating rebel figures. There was certainly a surface similarity between the anti-heroes of Maturin and Byron, yet the motivations that drove the two writers to create such characters were quite different. The critics tended to denounce all anti-heroes, and were unwilling to move closer to draw finer distinctions.

The response to anti-heroes raises an interesting point of critical methodology. It seems that the method of comparing writers was used increasingly in this period, and became a more conscious act of discrimination. According to J.W.H. Atkins, the popular comparative method became "a treatment that added to the refinement of critical perception and enabled literary nuances to be more clearly distinguished". While it must be agreed that the comparative method is a useful tool for criticism, its problems are as apparent as its virtues. The response to Maturin's writing illustrates this with particular clarity. For instance, critics persisted in contrasting Maturin negatively to writers such as Shakespeare, Milton and Spenser. These three writers were re-evaluated by eighteenth-century critics, but the lack of a common denominator to compare their styles to that of Maturin reveals the inadequacy of the comparison. The main problem with using the comparative method was that critics of the period did not have an historical perspective developed sufficiently to keep the method under control. Neo-classical notions of permanent values were changing only gradually into the historicism of later criticism. The best contemporary use of the comparative method in discussing Maturin's work was that of
The \textit{Examiner} which employed it not to mock the new in the light of the old, but to clarify differences and to make the reader aware of new trends and groupings.

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Mary Shelley was the only other major Gothic writer publishing work during the period in which Maturin wrote. The last important Gothic writer before her was Charles Brockden Brown, a disciple of her father, William Godwin. Brown died in 1810, the same year that Maturin's first novel, \textit{Fatal Revenge}, was reviewed by Walter Scott. During this period there existed a steadily decreasing number of minor Gothic novels and romances which are today usually mentioned only in bibliographies.\textsuperscript{50} Although these books are not without interest, they add little to the main body of Gothic literature, other than to confirm trends already established by the major works. They do, however, provide a context that highlights the originality of Maturin's work in terms of its treatment of religion, and in its characterisation of women. Many of the women novelists satisfied pre-determined notions of how women should act. Nevertheless, in most of these novels, women are shown as victims of a prolonged and seemingly inescapable fate. Even if they do not rebel against it, if indeed there is any choice involved, their awareness of their oppression is great. It is often linked with religious oppression and persecution, thus binding the rebel heroine to the rebel hero in a very real way, though one may be more free than the other to rebel openly.

Many of these works would probably have been among those read by Walter Scott when the \textit{Quarterly Review} set him the task of reviewing an enormous pile of Gothic romances and other contemporary fiction in 1810. Although Percy Shelley wrote two terror romances, \textit{Zastrozzi} in 1810, and \textit{St Irvyne} the
following year, both are considered minor works. Each, however, is interesting in the context of his other writing. The next firmly Gothic work (aside from the more sentimental or romantic novels) was Polidori's *The Vampire* in 1819. Based on a fragment by Byron and written at the time Mary Shelley dreamed up her powerful *Frankenstein*, it is a rather disappointing and shallow work compared to any of Maturin's Gothic novels. It was described by a later critic as "a very mild tale of terror, he [Polidori] was so discreet in eschewing the sensational". The *Vampire* is most remembered, I suspect, for its association with that competition proposed by Byron which resulted in the creation of *Frankenstein*. The fact that Maturin wrote at the tail-end of a genre proved to be a disadvantage to him, in terms of critical response. The Romantic writers were also strongly criticised, but at least their originality had to be acknowledged. The fact that Maturin was producing new inflections, ringing changes in an old genre, was not so clearly recognised.

Scott wrote a review of *Frankenstein* in 1818 praising the subject matter of the book and commenting favourably on the style, an interesting fact when we remember that he objected strongly to Maturin's use of the same mode. However, *Frankenstein* is removed from the Gothic tale of terror in many respects, and is certainly unlike Maturin's work, with the possible exception of *Melmoth*. Its expression is more like later science-fiction stories than earlier Gothic novels, although Mary Shelley was concerned with some common Gothic themes, especially the loneliness and alienation of the individual. The difference Scott saw between Mary Shelley's work and that of other Gothic novelists whom he considered vulgar or irrelevant was based on her stylistic differences. Both Mary Shelley and Maturin produced more sophisticated works of Gothic fiction than previous Gothic authors, but unfortunately the response to *Frankenstein* is too isolated from the contemporary attitude to works displaying Gothic elements because, for my present purpose,
it reflects only one work and does not record a significant period response.

It is interesting to compare the response to Maturin's work with that accorded to Byron, since he had more in common with Maturin in terms of style and subject matter, than did other writers of the period. Also, Byron was a crucial influence on Maturin's career, extending his aid to enable Bertram to be staged, personally presenting the play to the Drury Lane Theatre Committee. Byron obviously felt some empathy with Maturin's work, and he came under attacks similar to those levelled at Maturin, both as a writer and as a man. In the judgments of many contemporary critics both writers were guilty of the same literary excesses. Some of Maturin's critics even compared aspects of his work to that of Byron, usually unfavourably. But there were also important differences between the writers which the critics ignored. Byron and Maturin both conceived of a powerful central figure in their works, an anti-hero, but they gave this figure a different motivation and a different sense of rebellion. Maturin was primarily concerned with abuse of power within a religious context, though he noticed its oppressive effect on all other areas of society; Byron was more explicitly political in his rebellion against all forms of institutional power. While Maturin seemed to be fulfilling the role of a traditional clergyman, while raising some subversive questions in fictional form, Byron was more aggressive in his denunciation of the traditional order. Maturin chose to change religion and society by reform from within the traditional structures, while Byron worked for change without. Yet despite these differences, the critics tended to lump them together as transgressors of the accepted laws of literary taste and style.

As in Maturin's case, it was the Gothic aspect of Byron's work that the critics most disliked. Referring to his poem, The Prisoner of Chillon, Francis Jeffrey found it "a grand and gloomy sketch ... executed with great..."
and fearful force" but "too oppressive to the imagination, to be contemplated with pleasure, even in the faint reflection of poetry". As Redpath comments: "Jeffrey's reactions are interesting. He is much more intensely impressed with the dark and terrifying side of Byron than with the 'sweetness' of The Prisoner"). This mingling of professed disdain and undeniable fascination for the dark side of the soul in Byron's work was reminiscent of the reactions of Maturin's critics.

Criticisms of Byron on religious grounds often revealed the critics' misunderstanding of the writer's intention. Such is the case with George Ellis' Quarterly Review article of Childe Harold I and II which "took exception to Byron's own expression of disbelief in immortality, and even to his intrusion of such topics into the poem". In Blackwood's Magazine John Wilson criticised Byron for being immoral and argued that good literature should be didactic: "much of what he had written was without instruction either for good people or for 'erring or passion-stricken' spirits. Indeed, it was morally dangerous". Another Blackwood's review of Don Juan accused Byron of even greater crimes. Not only were his morals attacked viciously, but also his conduct with his wife. (Maturin's private life also came under attack, being related to the duties of his religious career.) This Blackwood's critic shared the paradox I have come to see as typical of the period: he recognised Byron's genius despite his immorality, admitting that content and style should not be separated, yet still being attracted to the depravity he felt he must denounce. Hence it was said that Don Juan would remain to all ages a perpetual monument of the exalted intellect, and the depraved heart, of one of the most remarkable men to whom this country has had the honour and disgrace of giving birth.
The critics persisted in confusing writers with their characters, particularly when the characters represented the so-called Satanic qualities typical of the protagonists of Maturin and Byron. Jeffrey, in his 1812 review of *Childe Harold*, considered the hero "oddly chosen" and "imperfectly employed" and pointed out that although Byron had tried to distinguish himself from 'the Childe', his own reflections had "a shade of the same misanthropic colouring". Maturin wrote:

As by a mode of criticism equally false and unjust, the worst sentiments of my worst characters (from the ravings of Bertram to the blasphemies of Cardonneau) have been represented as my own, I must here trespass so far on the patience of the reader to assure him, that the sentiments ascribed to the stranger are diametrically opposite to mine, and that I have purposely put them into the mouth of an agent of the enemy of mankind.

The identification of writer with anti-hero explains much of the critics' distaste for this sort of character, and it was probably for exactly this reason that both Maturin and Byron publicly disassociated themselves from their anti-heroes. Privately, it is unlikely that such a strong disparity in views did exist, but each author had to try to guard himself against a simplistic public identification.

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Maturin was a popular writer, despite the critics' attacks. H.P. Lovecraft has noted that:

Melmoth was widely read and eventually dramatised, but its late date in the evolution of the Gothic tale deprived it of the tumultuous popularity of Udolpho and The Monk.

This problem can be confirmed by turning back to the contemporary criticism, such as the review in the *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* of 1821, which remarked: "one would think this would scarcely be a time when a supernatural narrative could be acceptable to the public ...".
Monthly Review did, however, say of Maturin's Melmoth:

it is confessedly possible for a man of decided genius to revive, for a while, this exploded predilection for impossibility, even among better readers; and if, in this uphill work, he should even for one season gain his point, we might be disposed to ascribe to him nearly the same honours as to the inventor of gas or of galvanism; inasmuch as he also would illuminate one of the darkest and most hopeless corners of literature, and might even be said to have recalled, for one apparent instant, the spirit of the dead.

The critic grants this genius to Maturin, despite its late blossoming in the genre.

It is important to note Maturin's isolation in his cultural context. While the young Romantic writers at least belonged to a growing literary movement (even if they scarcely recognised it as a movement at that stage), Maturin was fighting to survive in Ireland with few literary contacts, and those only by letter. The effect of Maturin's literary isolation in Ireland was recognised by a contemporary biographer:

Had it been his fate to have been cast among kindred beings - to have mixed with the intelligence of the day - the necessity of appearing, what he really was, a man of talent, would have placed his character in its proper light ... But he never had that opportunity. Living in a quarter of the kingdom where literary fellowship cannot be obtained, his habits were assimilated to the idle company that courted him; and his pliability of temper and amenity of disposition contributed to confirm the modes to which his communion subjected him.

Maturin's own awareness of this problem is shown in the preface to his first novel, where he expresses regret "that I never had a literary friend or counsellor," and in the preface to The Wild Irish Boy, where he pleads to the Earl of Moira:

I am an Irishman, unnoticed and unknown, a professional man without preferment, and an author without celebrity. No man covets obscurity, yet I would not willingly emerge from mine, till I am called forth, and feel that I deserve to be called forth, that society owes me something, and is solicitous to repay me, that I have a place and a name on earth. 'Ex fume dare lucem', I think an excellent motto for a man not indignant of concealment, but not formed for concealment.
Maturin's hurt pride and sense of his own true worth surfaces in these prefaces. Negative reviews of his work must have had a very depressing effect in these circumstances.

Maturin's literary situation was perhaps even more embattled than that of other contemporary writers in Ireland, such as Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan, who had important British contacts. Although Edgeworth spent most of her life in Ireland, she was fortunate enough to have a rich and influential British father who conducted her business for her, managing transactions with her publisher. Scott later aided Maturin in this way but it was different from having such a close contact and the opportunity to use it frequently without fear of rejection. The importance to Edgeworth's work of this contact with England is apparent in her particularised knowledge of current trends, while Maturin's 'idealistic naivety' apparently weakened his credibility, according to some later critics. Certainly it did so for the contemporary reviewer of his book, Women. As for Lady Morgan, she made several journeys to London to establish and maintain her contact with British literary trends and was able to use this in her writing. Maturin's one journey to London, recorded in his letters to Walter Scott, 65 was certainly a resounding success, but its effect was short-lived and did not change the course of his literary career aside from launching Bertram. In fact, the visit might have finally done more harm than good if we are to believe his contemporary biographer:

In 1816, partly in consequence of hearing that several persons were claiming the authorship of "Bertram", Maturin came to London, and from the obscurity and depression of his former life, was suddenly elevated to the most dizzy and flattering distinction. He was caressed by the first men of the day, recognized by the audience during the performance of his play, and received with acclamations, and in one brief month of brilliant applause, obtained the reward of years of neglect and anguish and distress ... His character, habits and opinions seemed to undergo a total alteration. He returned to Ireland,
gave up his tuitions, indulged in the intoxications of society, and became a man of fashion, living upon the fame of his genius. Yet he did not abandon that art by which he became distinguished: in the delirium of sudden reputation he planned fresh works, and contemplated new and untouched designs. He was to have furnished a tragedy for one theatre and a comedy to another. He was solicited to write for Covent-garden, and he undertook the task: novels, poems, and dramas, in confused procession passed before him; but he planned, sketched, and abandoned his countless projects. From the labours of the mountain came forth a mouse:

Had Maturin not been so tied to his religious career and under such a heavy financial burden, he could have made regular visits to London. Such response as there was to his work had to come through published reviews. His biographer noted that "Maturin was very sensitive to animadversions and comments upon his own writings". Had more of the critics experienced Maturin as a person and a preacher, they might have hesitated before dismissing the seriousness of his moral and religious themes.

Maturin was so deeply affected by negative reviews that they were no doubt a contributing factor to his changes of direction. After the initial criticism of his work, in the Quarterly's 1810 review, Maturin attempted to incorporate elements of his Gothic style with the theme of nationalism rebelling against British control in The Wild Irish Boy and The Milesian Chief, his next two novels. He then attempted realism in Women, but with a pull back to the Gothic in his characterisation of the religious extremists. He returned with a vengeance to his favoured mode in Melmoth, his most famous and most Gothic work. Maturin tried historical romance for his last novel, The Albigenses, which, according to his preface, was initially planned as a trilogy. Far from relying upon strict historical accuracy, he used historical incident in creating the setting and characterisation of his novel but employed recognisable elements of Gothic style to exaggerate certain aspects of the religious sects. Maturin did so in order to make more obvious to the reader his criticisms of the crusades and the violence that all forms of religious fanaticism engender.
Despite appearances, Maturin never really deviated very far from the Gothic. His dramas are all Gothic in content and style, and this is even true to some extent of his sermons. Maturin's reasons for attempting to vary his work include a genuine interest in experimenting, together with a desire to avoid some of the critics' objections. Economic pressure - the need to supplement his small clerical salary - made his search for the right formula, that would simultaneously satisfy his readers, his critics, and himself, even more difficult and uncertain. It is ironic that the further Maturin deviated from the Gothic genre, the less financially successful his works became.

Particularly hurtful to Maturin were the critics' objections to his use of religion as the dominant theme of his works. Their criticisms ranged from sweeping generalisations about Gothic literature being irreligious by virtue of its supernatural interest, to attacks on Maturin for attempting to combine the two supposedly incongruous careers of fiction writer and preacher. The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany was typical in its claim that a cleric should have had nothing to do with the Gothic:

To be sure, the appetite for absurdity, not to say impiety, that swallowed Frankenstein, did afford some encouragement to show how much ability might be wasted on a very disgusting and improper subject. But yet, Mr Maturin's profession should have done something more to prevent him from touching the brink of all we hate.

Even the most tolerant critic warned Maturin to steer clear of religious issues in his writing for his own good. Yet all Maturin's novels and plays had religious themes central to an understanding of their action. He does appear to have heeded the critics' advice to some extent by advocating religious toleration as the finale to his last novel, The Albigenses. Although in this novel he balanced irreligious and amoral characters by creating such extremes of goodness as Pierre the Pastor (to salve the heretic
conscience) and the Monk of Montcalm (to salve the Catholic conscience), it is interesting that simultaneously he transferred his passionate invective against religious corruption and abuse of power to a more rational, analytical level in his *Five Sermons on the Errors of the Roman Catholic Church* published in the same year. 71 The relationship of Maturin's sermons to his fiction, and their shared Gothic style, becomes the focus of my next chapter.
NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Thomas Love Peacock, Nightmare Abbey, Ch.VI, Dent & Sons, London, 1964, pp.179-80. Flosky was the character Peacock invented to represent Coleridge. This passage, and the one directly following in the text, are both fascinatingly relevant to the contemporary critics' treatment of the Gothic in Maturin's work, since they are similarly satirical attacks on this mode of writing. As here, a particular distaste for the anti-hero, or rebel-hero, surfaced also in criticisms of Maturin's work.

2. Particularly interesting was the Eclectic's analysis of Byron's 'Rouge et Noir' which claimed that the poet's descriptions were deliberately "adapted to harden the heart" (Eclectic Review, XVI, October 1821). Maturin had earlier been accused of exciting horror in Bertram at the expense of the "softer sensations of nature" (see The New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register, 'Dramatic Register', Drury Lane, 1816, Vol.5, pp.450-1.)


6. The Edinburgh Review, Vol.XXXV, Part LXX, July, 1821, pp.353-362. [All the quotations following are taken from this review.]


10. Fuseli's working life covered the period of Maturin's entire life, from 1770-1825. During this time, Fuseli was subjected to similarly conservative reactions to his work which was, like Maturin's, concerned with the 'dark side' of the imagination. Fuseli's most comprehensive biographer, Peter Tomory, describes this reaction:

   "It was Fuseli's and others' misfortune that they lived in a period when the fashionable taste of a single class of society precisely determined the mode and depth of expression in each category of painting - the wrong mode, too little or too much expression, would damn the performance."


15. Ibid, pp.254-5.


22. The myths which surrounded Maturin’s life and career were also typical of Fuseli’s. They are myths created by those who misunderstood, or put little emphasis on the value of the creative imagination, preferring the safety of ‘Reason’. Academic success helped Fuseli gain recognition, just as Maturin’s dramatic success with Bertram gave him entrée into the fashionable literary circles of London and Dublin, yet in both cases, this success was short-lived and countered by myths. As Fuseli’s biographer, Peter Tomory, states:

"Admittedly, longevity or a ranking position in the Academy would gain for the artist the respect of lip service, although not necessarily purchasers. Thus in 1788, Fuseli had his Ariadne called 'a sick idiot', but in 1790, when he became an R.A., he won a favourable review in the *Public Advertiser* only to have it made known that he depended upon the eating of raw pork for his imagination."

Peter Tomory, *op.cit.*, p.33.


24. Ibid, p.44.


29. *Ibid.*, pp. 341-2. Walter Scott erroneously refers to the 'Castle of Udolpho'. No such Gothic novel has been written, and it appears that he has confused Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* with Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Or is it a deliberate irony?


35. See The Correspondence of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Robert Maturin, ed. and introd. by Fannie E. Ratchford and William H. McCarthy Jnr., University of Texas, Austin, 1937.


38. Peter Tomory, *op.cit.*, p. 44.


48. See quotation introducing this chapter.


54. Redpath, op.cit., p.30:


59. H.P. Lovecraft, op.cit., p.35.


65. See F. Ratchford, W. McCarthy, op.cit.


67. "An interval of five years elapsed after the publication of 'The Mile- sian', when Maturin again appeared before the public. The distresses of his family - his own increasing necessities - and all the accumulat- ing ills that a man struggling between the desires of genius and the pressure of misfortune is subject to, no doubt chilled his ardour and discouraged his exertions. .... He stood alone. His feelings - his motives - his sufferings - his hopes - were all single and unshared. His intercourse with the world had sharpened his sense of calamity, rather than instructed him to bear it; and his sensitiveness increased as his means and his expectations diminished. The results of an
unfortunate act of generosity were at this time impending over him, and embittering every effort he made at extraction. He had kindly, thoughtlessly, disinterestedly, become security for a friend for a sum of money: - the friend became insolvent, and the debt and the costs were levied upon him whose heart had uttered a pledge of responsibility which his pocket was ill able to redeem! Yet amidst these trials he contrived to snatch stolen interviews with the muse, and to forget, in the dream of poetry and inspiration, the wrongs of fortune."


See also, New Monthly Magazine, Recollections, No.IV, p.371.


71. C.R. Maturin, Five Sermons on the Errors of the Roman Catholic Church, preached in St Peter's Church, Dublin, by the Rev. C.R. Maturin, William Folds & Son, Dublin, 1824.