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THE GOTHIC TRADITION IN SOUTHERN LOCAL COLOR FICTION

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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For Axel

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ABSTRACT

The American local color movement, roughly spanning the end of the Civil War to the turn of the century, attempted to preserve traditional regional lifestyles which were in danger of disappearing entirely in a rapidly expanding, increasingly hegemonic society. Historically, local color fiction has been dismissed as too narrowly focused, too nostalgically charged, too stylistically detailed, too lacking in "literary" merit, too quaint, too insignificant to warrant serious, critical investigation. Critics have typically regarded the movement as a subdivision of regionalism, and have privileged the fiction's characteristic adherence to realistic detail (dialect, folklore, character types, and regional setting) above all else.

Despite this popular critical assumption, realistic fictional techniques did not entirely dominate the local color movement. Using conventions of both European and American Gothic, this study explores the dark romanticism underlying some of the movement's fiction. In particular, it examines ways in which four southern local colorists--Mary Noailles Murfree, Amélie Rives, Kate Chopin, and George Washington Cable--use gothic conventions to foreground restrictions placed on culture, community, and individual. Through the gothic, these writers invoke the strange and bizarre; they portray alienated and isolated individuals; they revive the quest hero and heroine; they refigure conventional reality as a spiritual wasteland; they explore the breakdown and collapse of tradition; they confront and expiate both the private and public guilt of the past; most importantly, they initiate a gesture of revolt. Using such thematic devices, these writers may define individual identity against the chaos of the post-war South, or they may create a community within it. Further, this gothic perspective suggests a deeper, more subtle connection between these southern local colorists and their Southern Renaissance descendants.

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INTRODUCTION

Critics have widely discussed the frequent use of gothic conventions by modern southern writers such as Robert Penn Warren, Erskine Caldwell, Flannery O'Connor, William Faulkner, and Eudora Welty. The Southern Gothic, however, has not been a recent phenomenon. American writers had been employing gothic conventions as early as the seventeenth century in captivity narratives and later, in slave narratives. As a literary convention, gothicism evolved slowly in America, primarily because of the absence of an identifiable cultural past. Certainly, Charles Brockden Brown's romances and Washington Irving's fiction, influenced strongly by gothicism and set primarily in America, had achieved popular success. The writers of the American Renaissance, inspired by Emerson's injunction to establish a truly American literature not only in atmosphere but in idiom, finally grounded the gothic potential in American literary tradition.

The cultural changes of the nineteenth century provided fertile ground for questioning the past; moreover, the Calvinist tendency toward morbid introspection, unnatural emotional repression, and the struggle for survival in a hostile world contributed to national and regional self-scrutiny (Mogen, "Frontier Myth" 340). During the course of the century, major literary figures such as Edgar Allan Poe would employ gothic techniques to philosophic ends; Hawthorne and Melville would use the gothic to illustrate moral themes; and W. D. Howells, Ambrose Bierce, and Henry James would use the gothic to capitalize on the popular interest in the psychical. Gothic techniques appealed to these writers in their efforts to create a truly American literature because those techniques were so adaptable to varied purposes. The gothic allowed many writers to question established traditions and to examine their cultural identity, both of which were threatened by internal and external moral and social forces. As a result, the gothic genre often reveals "social and psychological truths less accessible to purely objective and realistic treatment" (Elizabeth Kerr 28).

Nowhere was this threat to the established social order more keenly felt than in the post-war South:

> [E]mancipation, Reconstruction, the return of white dominance, and depression followed one another in quick succession between 1861 and 1877. Slavery ended more abruptly and more violently in the South than anywhere else in the modern world. Politics lurched from one regime to the next between 1865 and 1877, recrimination and bitterness marking the transitions. Blacks and whites withdrew into their own houses, churches, and neighborhoods, watching each other warily. Death and separation weighed on many families . . . The history of the New South was, accordingly, a history of continual redefinition and renegotiation, of unintended and unanticipated consequences, of unresolved tensions. People experienced conflict within their own hearts and minds; classes, races, and partisans clashed. The New South was an anxious place, filled with longing and resentment, for people had been dislodged from older bases of identity and found no new ones ready at hand. (Ayers viii)

For generations "the sacredness of the soil and rural life in general [had] assumed the proportion of a cultural myth . . . . [T]he old way must be maintained as a key to cultural survival." These post-war changes in the conservative South had devastating consequences for traditional ideals and institutions and provoked an overwhelming sense of doom, estrangement, and confusion (Northey 50). The fear of cultural annihilation had become a reality, and in regions that were struggling to maintain their own distinctiveness as sub-cultures, the literature of the day reflected these disturbing conflicts.

The local color movement, roughly spanning the years following the Civil War to the turn of the century, attempted to preserve the traditional regional lifestyles and indigenous mores which were in danger of disappearing entirely under these massive, impersonal forces. Historically, the local color movement has, like initial critical reaction to the gothic, been dismissed as too narrowly focused, too nostalgically charged, too stylistically detailed, too lacking in "literary" merit, too quaint, and too insignificant to warrant serious, critical investigation. Most critical discussions of local color fiction tend to emphasize the superficial details of dialect, folklore, character types, and regional (often described as "quaint" and "picturesque") settings that are hallmarks of the literature. Critics have typically regarded the local color movement as a subdivision of realism and regionalism, have circumscribed its parameters, and have marginalized it for its apparent lack of depth.

In this respect, local color fiction and the gothic tradition have much in common. At one time, both were regarded as literary movements that did not warrant serious critical investigation. Both originated in social unrest. And both emerged from a cultural need to express and relieve fears about

identity, a need that critics Leslie Fiedler and David Mogen believe is inherent in the literary gothic. As in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, major changes were taking place in nineteenth-century America in terms of national philosophy and national identity.

Another similarity between the gothic and local color traditions is the tentative and often fuzzy boundary that both genres maintain between romanticism and realism. Remarkably, Horace Walpole's *Preface* to the Castle of Otranto (1764), written almost a century prior to the local color movement, describes the similarities in narrative intent of the gothic and local color:

> It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability; in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been copied with success. (19)

By combining the earlier romances of the sixteenth century with the "modern" eighteenth-century novel, Walpole hoped to "add imaginative appeal to . . . uninspiring, prosaic realism" (Roberts 2).

Defining specific boundaries between romance and realism presents a vexing problem in any discussion of the gothic tradition. Indeed, the argument over just how each figures in the gothic has been raging for centuries. Gothicist Clara Reeve complains of Walpole's lack of realism: "[The] machinery is so violent, that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite. Had the story been kept within the utmost verge of probability, the effect had been preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains the attention." To this Walpole responds: "Have you seen [Reeves'] The Old Baron, a Gothic story, professedly written in imitation of Otranto, but reduced to reason and probability! It is so probable, that any trial for murder at the Old Bailey would make a more interesting story"(Summers 186). Montague Summers comments that "Mrs. Radcliffe is the romanticist of the Gothic novel; Lewis the realist" (222). Kay Mussell further describes the historical confusion:

> In its earliest British version, Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto (1764), *gothic* was synonymous with supernatural horror; but almost immediately, in the works of Ann Radcliffe and Clara Reeve, among others, the gothic took on a more sentimental and romantic character, almost as though the novels of Samuel Richardson had been overlaid with gothic props. Unlike the gothics of Walpole and Matthew Gregory Lewis, those of Radcliffe and Reeve used the supernatural for terror but demystified it by providing a logical explanation in the end. Radcliffe and Reeve both used the medieval period with its exotic trappings of chivalry to provide excitement. This latter type of gothic was the most influential and appealing in America in the

> early nineteenth century. After that, the word *gothic* was not again consistently applied to formula novels until recently, even though the form flourished in those years. (xvii)

Mussell goes on to say that "[t]he term *romantic* is no less problematic since, in the literary sense, all popular fiction is romantic." As a moral fantasy, popular fiction allows its readers to transcend the limits of real life and live vicariously in a ideal world. Because the term romantic has been used by Richard Chase and others to define broadly a specific type of novel, Mussell feels that it is misleading to apply that concept to any work in the narrow sense of the word (xvii). As Bishop Hurd remarked, "The source of bad criticism, as universally of bad philosophy is the abuse of terms" (Summers 382). And abuse of terms has "plagued this field of study . . . since the terms *gothic* and *romance* do not lend themselves to consistent application." It seems then that the gothic tradition must necessarily encompass both romanticism and realism to varying degrees in achieving each author's intent.

The fusion of romanticism and realism in both gothic and local color fiction (along with other similarities in their uses of gothic conventions) has led literary historians to remark on the similarity of local color fiction to the historical novel, an offshoot of the gothic novel. As a literature of memory, local color often contains elements of the historical novel. While the historical novel attempts to delineate history's great figures or movements, local color fiction focuses more on "the scant record of time's passage left when a simpler way of life succumbs to one more complex" (Elliott 508-09). Despite the difference in intent between these two genres, local color fiction has been greatly influenced in several ways by the historical novel. The historical novel's fidelity to recorded history is similar to the regionalist/local colorist's preservation of a particular geographical setting and period as a central concern in the work. In addition, both fictional forms usually revolve around cultural conflict. Moreover, similarities in authorial intent, form, and technique between gothic literature and regional fiction have recently prompted good, but tentative, critical discussion of the relationship between local color and the gothic. Unfortunately, traditional critical stances which privilege the realistic aspects of local color fiction have obscured and inhibited discussion of the dark romanticism inherent in the genre.

Despite this traditional critical assumption, realistic fictional techniques did not supplant the literary gothic. Rather, the gothic has been a consistent and significant presence in both nineteenth- and twentieth-century American writing (Simpson vii). This study proposes to call into question Donald Ringe's assertion that the "brief reappearance of the Gothic mode in the serious fiction of the late nineteenth century was . . . a phenomenon of only minor importance in the history of American Gothicism" and as such was regarded more as an "idiosyncratic outcropping or . . . a temporary phenomenon, rather than part of a recurring pattern" (189). To the contrary, gothicism, in varying degrees and of various kinds, has been a consistent and pervasive feature even of non-canonical American fiction and of southern fiction in particular.

Using basic gothic narrative patterns, the common motifs of gothic narratives, and characteristics of European and American Gothic, this study will explore the dark romanticism underlying the local color movement and will further examine various ways that southern writers Mary Noailles Murfree, Amélie Rives, Kate Chopin, and George Washington Cable use gothic conventions to illustrate the restrictions placed on culture, community, and individual. These writers, oriented to the South and its problems, employ gothic conventions to reconcile or to redefine their respective cultural, community, or individual identities out of the chaos of the nineteenth-century.

In order to understand better the gothic's influence on these southern writers, a brief look at the history and criticism of the genre will suggest not only its popularity but the extent and flexibility of its influence. Since the publication of Walpole's Castle of Otranto in 1764, the gothic has experienced a rapid, if often controversial, rise in popularity among the reading public. Early critical studies, concerned primarily with historical approaches to the genre, consisted largely of what Eugenia DeLamotte has termed, "description by inventory." Although focused on conventional gothic trappings and therefore considered somewhat "limited" by modern critical standards, these studies represent landmark advances for their time in defining a gothic aesthetic. Gradually, critics began to see depth behind mere convention, and criticism, like the gothic itself, grew in significance. Serious critical strides during the

twentieth-century called attention to the literary gothic's sociological and psychological implications in European and American fiction. A discussion of these major studies in gothic criticism will shed some light on areas of inquiry that have been overlooked, if only by omission, and will establish a critical precedent on which this study can build.

CHAPTER I

THE GOTHIC LEGACY

In his definitive study of the English Gothic tradition, The Gothic Flame, Devendra Varma situates the gothic epoch in a "neglected and dim period: the interval between the four great eighteenth-century novelists, Richardson, Fielding, Smollet, and Sterne, and the nineteenth century with its Scott and Jane Austen." Varma goes on to say that the English Gothic "influenced the main course of English literature in a surprising number of ways, and followed [a] wayward current of literature through the early years of the nineteenth century" (3). This "wayward current" not only influenced English literature but rapidly flowed across the Atlantic appearing in work by such major American writers as Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Henry James.

The term *gothic* was first coined to describe architectural styles not associated with classical Greece and Rome, barbaric structures that were characterized by thick walls, cavernous spaces, tall towers, demonic ornamentation, and steeply pointed arches. Horace Walpole's effective use of the darkness, the vaults, stained glass windows, and tombs in The Castle of Otranto (1764) "effected a shift of meaning in the most common use of the word Gothic from the architectural denotation of 'Medieval buildings' to the emotional effect of weird, supernatural, fantastic, and terrifying events in a work of literature in which the Medieval cathedral or castle served as a theatre for such events" (Thompson 4). The cathedral symbolized perfectly the paradox in the gothic duality of good versus evil in its upward movement toward the heavens, and an inward, downward motion, convoluting in upon itself in labyrinthine passages and dark recesses, descending to catacombs deep in the earth" (4).

Most critics generally agree that the gothic tradition in literature was initially established by Walpole and further developed by Radcliffe, Lewis, Maturin, and Shelley among others. Burke's A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1756) probably provided the theoretical basis for the school of terror, and Bishop Hurd's Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762) certainly drew attention to gothicism and encouraged its popular appeal. However, historians have

generated much critical speculation on what exactly provoked the emergence of such an influential genre. Eino Railo attributes the antiquated setting, character types, and the preoccupation with the medieval past to the influence of such literary greats as Milton, Spenser, and Shakespeare. Other literary historians locate the genre's origins in several eighteenth-century revivals: an "interest in folklore, in the mythified Middle Ages, in the eccentric asocial individual, and in the mysterious Mediterranean world" (Nelson 237). The Marquis de Sade situates the gothic in revolutionary social context:

> Pour qui connaissant tous les malheurs dont les méchans peuvent accabler les hommes, le Roman devenait aussi difficile à faire, que monotone à lire . . . il fallait donc appeller l'enfer à son secours, pour se composer des titres à l'intérêt, et trouver dan le pays des chimères, ce qu'on savait couramment en ne fouillant que l'histoire de l'homme dans cet âge de fer. (32-3) [1]

Others, notably Maurice Lévy, assert that other factors contributed to the formation of the English Gothic novel. For these critics, the gothic tendency was a reaction to the Enlightenment, England's shift toward natural law, and the influence of Newton and Locke which led, in part, to the notion that salvation was not dependent upon God but on man. Some scholars have attributed the gothic's appeal to an instinctive human desire toward understanding the essential mystery behind life and death. Varma, for example, posits that the Gothic rose out a quest for the numinous, an almost "archetypal impulse inherited from primitive magic" and characterized by an "awestruck apprehension of Divine immanence penetrating diurnal reality" (211).

Whatever the reason, gothic literature soared in popularity after its auspicious beginnings in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Novels and tales bearing such frightful titles as The Miseries of Miranda, or The Cavern of Horror and The Secret Oath, or Blood-Stained Dagger and The Animated Skeleton, The Mysterious Hand stayed only a step ahead in satisfying the seemingly insatiable popular demand for gothic fiction. Unfortunately, these rapidly produced and inexpensive "formula" shilling shockers and chapbooks often compromised the aesthetics of the genre to capitalistic enterprise and led to

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[1] "For those who are acquainted with all of the ills that are brought upon men by the wicked, the romantic novel was becoming somewhat difficult to write, and merely monotonous to read . . . it was necessary to call upon hell for aid in order to arouse interest, and to find in this fantasy land what was common knowledge from historical observation of man in this iron age."

a scholarly disdain for any publication remotely associated with the word *gothic*. In On the Origins and Progress of Novel Writing published in 1810, Mrs. Barbauld observes, "books of this description are condemned by the grave, and despised by the fastidious; but their leaves are seldom found unopened, and they occupy the parlour and the dressing room while productions of higher name are often gathering dust upon the shelf." She adds that "[it] might not perhaps be difficult to show that this species of composition is entitled to a higher rank than has generally been assigned it" (Varma 1).

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, even popular enthusiasm for the gothic cooled as the genre's "forces spent themselves, its charms lost potency, its glamour was dissipated, and the Gothic spell broken. The reading public fell in a torpor--characterized by the languor of an exhausted appetite." Ensuing satires, skits, and parodies of the genre and scathing reviews that appeared in magazines and journals documented the process of disintegration (Varma 174-75). Some sentimentally mourned its passing:

> Sensibility changes from age to age, and the eternal swing of the pendulum of literary history, the ebb and flow of fiction according to certain inexpressible literary laws, inevitably brings in a reaction against any extreme. Thus it happened with the Gothic novel. (174)

Others took immense pleasure in its demise. Walter Scott suggested that, like children "tired of admiring a new play-thing," readers "[found] a fresh and distinct pleasure in breaking it to pieces." More likely, however, the enormous number of imitation novels in circulation probably contributed to the gothic's decline through an over-saturation of the senses. As Varma so aptly puts it, "[a] soupçon of terror is enough to impart a strong flavour; in excess the palate is deadened and nauseated." To make matters worse, the gothic novel also assumed the despicable role of an "evil sign of the times." Finally, as the gothic novel "encompassed a wider range of human experience, it [simply] lost its individuality and merged into other forms." It was not until the twentieth century that Michael Sadleir raised an important question: "It remains to inquire where, when its great days were over, the Gothic romance took refuge" (173-77).

During the sixty years of its prime, the gothic novel in England had matured in strength and intensity in two areas of development: in the growing realism of idea and depiction of character, and in the growth of metaphysical implications of theme and their embodiment in character. The intensity of these developments and their increasingly complex conception characterized the gothic novel as a complete literary cycle which would inspire literature in the next one-and-a-half centuries (LeTellier 38).

The gothic tradition persisted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in England and America in the guise of other popular literary modes: the detective story, a legacy of William Godwin; the historical romance, in the tradition of Walter Scott; and in science fiction, the offspring of Mary Shelley's "hideous progeny" (Wilt 124). The splintering of the gothic influenced other areas in nineteenth-century American fiction from Poesque stories of horror and detection to the melodrama (which often resembled gothic fiction in its use of conventions and in its world view) to the Western, in its use of Indians and the wilderness as threatening forces (Mussell 6-7).

Long before the rise of the gothic novel in England, America had been sowing the seeds of its own gothic world view. Early written accounts indicate that the exploration and discovery process was, like many of the gothic narratives, a journey-based spiritual quest. Indeed, Cabaza de Vaca's capture by Indians is perhaps the earliest recorded American nightmare, the outcome of his journey being cultural alienation.

Revolutionary upheavals (religious, political, social, and economic) similar to those which had provoked the gothic emergence in England, precipitated the Separatist and Puritan flight to America. Old Testament patriarchy and their common goal of building "a City upon a Hill" contributed to the Puritan's success in colonizing; Calvinist soul-searching provided the initial framework for gothic introspection. Early journals and diaries record these colonists' meticulous assessments of their inner psychological states and the condition of their souls in their journey toward spiritual salvation and physical survival in the New Eden.

Ethnocentrism had characterized America from the beginning, and formed the basis for later cultural clashes. Early American captivity narratives reflect the anxiety and fear when social, cultural, and in some cases, physical boundaries are transgressed. Kenneth Graham's discussion of such transgression in gothic fiction seems applicable to captivity narratives and Puritan introspection as well:

> Gothic fiction, its boundaries menaced externally by social and political chaos, is characterized by a prolonged contemplation of the objects in the internal world and the individual's ability to survive despite this transgressive threat. Many of the characters in Gothic mythology are archetypal survivors; indeed, "their narrative functions seem to be simply to evidence the possibility of survival, albeit at a level which approaches the transcendental. (11)

Mary Rowlandson's narrative reflects not only her certainty that God was testing her faith through the suffering that she endured at the hands of her Indian captors but also the eternal conflict between good and evil. Certainly, Rowlandson's account cannot be considered "gothic," but it does display some of thematic concerns associated with the genre. Similarly, Charlotte Smith's Indian episodes emphasize a brand of terror which is "not conventionally gothic" but extremely "innovative in the history of the genre of terror and influential in opening up the sources of fear in the American wilderness" (Roberts 130). In America, images of a primal, natural Eden on one hand, or a savage wilderness on the other, anticipated the emergence of the American Gothic.

Other cultural upheavals also anticipated the formation of the American Gothic. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England and America were shaken with the radical advances in philosophical theory espoused by Newton, Hobbes, and Locke. In addition, America was experiencing serious cultural, political, and civil strife which culminated in the American Revolution. Varma maintains that such an atmosphere of cultural disorder in response to political and religious insecurities is necessary to the formation of the gothic impulse (xiii).

Out of such revolutionary ferment emerged America's first recognized gothicist, Charles Brocken Brown. The influence of Locke and William Godwin in the areas of social philosophy and psychological analysis had provided Brown a theoretical basis for the initial exploration of the human mind. His depiction of the exaggerated or the grotesque corresponds in quality to man's deepest fears and guilts as

projected in his dreams or experienced in extreme situations (Fiedler, Love and Death 155). Brown's primary contribution to the development of American Gothic was in his Americanizing of the genre, his substitution of the haunted forest (in which nothing is as it seems) and the cave, the natural pit or abyss from which man struggles to emerge, for the haunted castle and dungeon. As Leslie Fiedler points out, this shift from the European gothic prototypes involves a profound change in meaning and myth:

> In the American gothic . . . the heathen, unredeemed wilderness and not the decaying monuments of a dying class, nature and not society, becomes the symbol of evil. Similarly, not the aristocrat but the Indian, not the dandified courtier but the savage colored man is postulated as the embodiment of villainy. Our novel of terror . . . [becomes] a Calvinist exposé of natural human corruption rather than an enlightened attack on a debased ruling class or entrenched superstition. The European gothic identified blackness with the super-ego and was therefore revolutionary in its implications; the American gothic (at least as it followed the example of Brown) identified evil with the id and was therefore conservative at its deepest level of implication, whatever the intent of its authors. (160-61)

In 1837, Emerson's address on "the American Scholar" marked the beginning of the American Renaissance and of a national effort toward a particularly American literature informed by particularly American experience. At the same time America's growing pains were becoming more severe. Widespread financial panic due to money expansion in 1837 led to economic depression. The population explosion had resulted in urban and westward expansion into the American frontier, causing more cultural conflict as Indian settlements were displaced and as Louisiana and Mexican districts of Texas and California were annexed. Religious awakenings became popular as individuals searched for ways to maintain order and community in the midst of extreme change. Economic disparity between the North and the South and tension over the issue of slavery finally resulted in Civil War. Divided economically and socially, the nation felt the uncertainty of revolution in which nearly all forms of authority are viewed as constricting systems. Literalizing the anxiety of civil strife, the gothic genre seemed a particularly appropriate means through which to express apprehension and dread about the rapid expansion of an industrial society. Margot Northey articulates this fear:

> The horror of technological society, with its reduction of the spontaneously human to the automatic, is one more version of the gothic-grotesque motif of mechanism . . . [suggesting] something demonic beyond the logical implications of a powerful system. It involves a fear of a world which is actively menacing as well as incomprehensible . . . . [Technological society's] will

> to power will not only turn a man into a desensitized, impersonal robot, but will eventually draw him, ordered and submissive to his doom. (81)

Moreover, the gothic reflected apprehension and dread about the human condition itself:

> Alone in a landscape of nightmare, the Gothic [protagonist] experienced the dark side of Romantic freedom: existential disorientation, wrought by the loss of defining structures. The Gothic paradigm dramatized for the first time the quintessential modern predicament--the plight of an alienated being whose rational skepticism had vitiated his capacity for belief, while paralyzing dread had betrayed the insufficiency of science and logic. It was the particular achievement of the Gothic to express in . . . imaginative terms the latent fears of Western culture in an urban, industrial, post-rational, and post-Christian era. (Howard Kerr 40)

In the midst of this cultural upheaval, Americans began to focus on such questionable disciplines as alchemy, phrenology, and mesmerism for answers to the perplexing nature of the life and times. "Scientific research into the occult, including such phenomena as mental telepathy and the perception of apparitions, inevitably led to an interest among writers in the psychological basis of strange and uncanny manifestations, in the kind of consciousness that perceives them, and in the nature of the reality they represent. To develop such ideas, American writers turned . . . to the Gothic and began . . . to produce a small body of fiction based upon a growing interest in human psychology" (Ringe 182-83).

Nineteenth-century writers found the romance an ideal form for depicting the past--provided that a certain degree of verisimilitude was used in shaping the narrative. Influenced by the gothic fiction of Lewis and Radcliffe, Hawthorne and Poe in particular illustrate that "the walls dividing the seen and the unseen world are often very thin." Hawthorne's gothic effect has been best described by Edgar Allan Poe as "chiaro'scuro . . . that blending of light and shade and shadow, where nothing is too distinct, yet where the idea is fully conveyed" (CWEAP 14:89). This affective form "infuses what is common with what is truly strange in order to upset our sense of fictive 'reality'" (Haggerty 108). The result is a mysterious atmosphere of foreboding which evokes the terrors of a strange and unfamiliar world. The mystery of death fascinates Hawthorne, but he does not extend his art to the domain of physical horrors: he is melancholy, not morbid; his world is shadowy and subdued, not harsh or crude (Varma 203). Unresolved ambiguity characterizes Hawthorne's gothic. His allegory is never static but constantly shifts. The relation between meaning and interpretation is constantly realigned; "we can never be sure of what we

know and must only remain vaguely aware of what we think." It is up to the reader's own "private haunting" to give meaning to Hawthorne's work (Haggerty 109-13).

Poe elevated this ambiguity, this ontological confusion, into a most powerful gothic effect (Haggerty 87). In Poe's gothic tales, terror achieves tragic heights through the author's dramatic and rigid economy of effort. The outline of his tales is distinct, the impressions swift and deep. Although his fiction is often associated with the morbid and grotesque, a fine awareness of mysticism and sinister beauty underlies the darker movements of his work. Poe "added 'psychology' to the old 'gothic' raw material, and captured the airy, gossamer filaments of sensations by touching upon obscure feelings of psychic dread" (Varma 204). Poe's emphasis not only on the physical but the psychological established the standard for the American Gothic.

Perhaps Poe's greatest contribution to the gothic is the literary form which he employed. The brevity of the tale allowed Poe to achieve what other gothic writers had previously found difficult to sustain in the novel--singleness of effect in portraying the passion, terror, and horror of the genre. He insisted that any element that did not serve to heighten that single effect should be excluded from the narrative. Poe's narrative intensity is conveyed through indirection and the power of suggestion rather than the power of meaning (Haggerty 93).

Brown, Hawthorne, and Poe accomplished much in their amelioration of the gothic from the early sensational, melodramatic adventure to that of emotionally, psychologically, and sociologically profound narratives. In the latter half of the nineteenth-century, writers began to present their apparitions in realistic settings, usually densely social, and they wrote in a style that had little of the romantic suggestiveness of their literary predecessors (Ringe 183). "Modern" gothic writing attempted to reveal the horror in the seemingly everyday. This shift in focus does not decrease the atmosphere of menace and terror; it alters the source rather than the quality of the fear (Northey 55).

Henry James held that "'a good ghost story must be connected a hundred points with the common objects of life,' and that he much preferred the 'terrors of the cheerful country house and the busy London

lodgings' to the clanking trapdoor ghosts of the Gothic romance" (Edel xxv). In this defiance of the traditional gothic, James suggests a deeper and more fully articulated sense of gothic material, one which can be brought into the realm of realist fiction, or brought out in it, without losing any of its intensity James's ghosts do not disrupt the surface reality of his narratives because the "common objects of life" have no meaning for him beyond the impression that they create. James does not devalue the real but insists that the real is more than realistic fiction has allowed it to be (Haggerty 142). Walpole's effort to blend two modes of literary discourse in the gothic novel, the ancient and the modern, becomes fully realized in James' fiction as literary convention and as human experience. James combines the haunting forces of an unreal and subjective world with a real and objective fictional world. The unreal is legitimized because it is more than merely metaphorical; it is a part of the human context (167).

Like Poe, James is more concerned with the affective nature of the gothic. James, however, takes Poe's doctrine of "single effect" and extends it beyond the devices within the work to the work itself. "What the tale has accomplished is in affective terms is all that it means, and our own horrifying conclusion becomes what the tale is 'about.' Nothing exists in the tale except to complicate our feelings about what transpires there" (Haggerty 157). To achieve this effect, James engages his readers directly in the gothic experience, making that experience exist as part of themselves (143). He directs the focus of gothic fiction from the inhuman to the human, from the supernatural to the natural, transforming the fear of imagined experience into real fear. James' gothic world is the "horror of a world in which boundaries are meaningless and subjective horror assumes public form" (148). His tales are not sensational works acting on us from without, but are deeply moving works that affect us emotionally and intellectually within. "The didacticism of these tales is at heart, emotional: Whatever we come to know as a result of the Jamesian Gothic experience, we have first been made to feel" (168).

All of these literary variations of the gothic go far beyond their eighteenth-century gothic predecessors. While these variations cannot be labeled "gothic" *as such*, the gothic influence is clearly apparent in narrative structures, in various conventions used to further plot and thematic interests and,

perhaps most significantly, in character development. The gothic's very nature and flexibility has allowed it to "to intensify"[2] its embrace of the depth of experience. Despite its characteristic exploitation of the sensational and the perverse, the gothic has led to a "fictional discovery of the true depths of human nature" (Nelson 238). Indeed, contemporary popular interest in historical romances and re-makes of classic films such as Dracula, Frankenstein and, more recently, Anne Rice's Interview With a Vampire, indicate our unwavering attraction to the genre.

In An Intensifying Vision of Evil: The Gothic Novel as a Self-Contained Literary Cycle, Robert LeTellier argues that the gothic metamorphosed from simple deployment of one-dimensional stock conventions to the sophisticated development of a powerfully affective literary form. Remarkably, literary criticism of the genre seems to have paralleled this transformation; simplistic, historical viewpoints have eventually evolved into analytical perspectives based on sociological and psychological theory. A brief critical overview will indicate several stages in the formation of a gothic aesthetic as well as the virtuosity of the genre in various literary works and movements in Europe and in America, and will further indicate by omission those areas in which further study of the gothic needs to be done.

Numerous literary and social cross-currents during the nineteenth century may have influenced the gothic's renewed popularity. The critical climate seems to have most significantly changed, however, in 1878 with the reprinting of the Marquis de Sade's Idée sur les romans. This study, first published in 1800, was most probably overlooked in the wake of that era's anti-gothic sentiment. Nonetheless, almost a century later, de Sade's treatise seems to have provoked a resurgence of interest in gothic inquiry in two significant areas: criticism which firmly established the origins of the genre in the English Gothic tradition, and criticism which explored the development of the genre in an American Gothic context.

Led by J. M. S. Tompkins, critics concerned primarily with the origins of the English Gothic wrote "histories" that gave the genre grounding and shaped its identity. Generally, these "older studies . . .

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[2] Robert LeTellier employs this terminology in An Intensifying Vision of Evil: The Gothic Novel as a Self-Contained Literary Cycle published in 1980 by the Institut Für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität Salzburg.

focus more upon defining the genre of gothic fiction and accounting for it in terms of other literary phenomena: the cult of sensibility, the renewed interest in gothic architecture and medievalism, the growing spirit of Romanticism, [and] the influence of French and German popular literature"(Roberts 4). One of the most widely respected studies of this period is Edith Birkhead's The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance published in 1921. Birkhead surveys the gothic romance in England, systematically chronicling the major writers, their works, and the sources of gothic inspiration. Similarly, Eino Railo's The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism, explores the historical and literary influences on the genre and establishes diverse conventions connected to the Romantic Movement. His massive study provides a compendium of gothic characteristics gleaned from hundreds of literary sources that range from character types to gothic symbols and icons, narrative structures and techniques, thematic concerns, and archetypes. Previously, literary historians had defined gothic literature by its predominant use of characteristic "trappings" as pure spectacle. While these "trappings" often produced the desired response of superficial fear in the reader's imagination, rarely were the reader's deeper emotional and psychological responses engaged. Significantly, Railo not only isolates but assigns depth to the use of these "trappings," maintaining that these characteristics and conventions are used primarily to elicit a more direct and profound emotional response in the reader.[3] Another lengthy and general survey of the gothic novel in England, impressive if only for its sheer bulk, is Montague Summers' The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel (1938). Of little critical value, this study espouses more of the author's enthusiasm, interpolations, and prejudices, than any objective critical analysis, but is important for its "spreading [of] the faith" (Mussell 75).

Other critics during this time were attempting to construct a particularly American Gothic tradition. Although Edith Birkhead had briefly mentioned American writers (Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, and Nathaniel Hawthorne) in her study, other critics began to see a very definite gothic literary legacy emerging in American literature. Oral Sumner Coad's article entitled

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[3] In this respect, The Haunted Castle anticipates the work of later psychological and reader-response theorists.

"The Gothic Element in American Literature Before 1835" published in the Journal of English and Germanic Philology in 1925 is one of the first critical studies to move beyond the usual focus on the English Gothic tradition in documenting gothic convention in American poetry, drama, and fiction. Coad discusses gothic aspects in the work of Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, and Washington Irving as well as writers not usually associated with the genre such as James Kirke Paulding, John Pendleton Kennedy, Robert Montgomery Bird, and Richard Henry Dana. Coad, moreover, is one of the first critics to emphasize the "Americanization" of gothic settings and popular employment of the short story as the ideal literary form for the genre. In addition to poetry, drama, and fiction, the gothic's legacy in America had also extended to magazines, a popular forum for gothic serials from the end of the eighteenth century through the nineteenth century. In her 1939 study, The Gothic Fiction in the American Magazines, Sister Mary Maurita Redden defines characteristics and conventions of both English and American "serial" gothic, provides plot summaries of many gothic stories along with a specialized bibliography and magazine list. Admittedly, these early critical efforts do little more than deal with the more superficial aspects of the genre's migration; yet they remain significant for their grounding of an American Gothic aesthetic.[4]

Having shaped the identity of the genre, critics moved into other areas of investigation, historicizing the genre but exploring the gothic in different and often eclectic critical contexts. Influenced strongly by Freudian theory,[5] criticism of the gothic began to concern itself more with the more profound aspects of the genre rather than with mere convention. Freud's writings, along with historical and literary perspective gained in time, dramatically expanded the scope and depth of scholarly investigations:

> The critical assessment of literature has been a continual series of corrections of earlier impressions by those who have the opportunity to examine the question in hand more thoroughly and with a more accurate knowledge as an aid to their considerations. Thus the field of Gothic fiction, long viewed as uninteresting and barren, has gradually come to be recognized as of

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[4] During the twentieth century, critics like Richard Slotkin (Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier) and Kari J. Winter (Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change: Women and Power in Gothic Novels and Slave Narratives, 1790-1865) would explore gothic characteristics in early American captivity and slave narratives.

[5] "The Uncanny" was published in 1919 and is of particular relevance to gothic inquiry.

> distinct artistic and literary importance, and is undergoing a new and more favourable critical survey. (Varma 2)

With the advent of psychoanalytic theory and its focus on the internal workings of the human psyche, the emotional and psychological appeal of the gothic became the subject of much critical speculation. Modern criticism, "accepting the limitations of the genre, [discovered] the challenge in taking up particular aesthetic problems and interpreting the novels from a psychological perspective" (Roberts 4). In 1933 Mario Praz contributed one of the earliest psychological approaches to the gothic entitled The Romantic Agony. Praz attempts to fit the Gothic romance into the pattern of a psychological theme in its discussion of algolagnia, masochism, and the fatal myths that have emerged from gothic fiction (Varma 8). Concern with the Freudian aspects of the gothic novel and the possibility of an underlying psychological thematic led Devendra Varma to explore the nature of the gothic impulse in his 1957 publication entitled The Gothic Flame. Like many earlier studies, he traces the growth, decline, and diffusion of the gothic tradition in literature (xv). Varma, however, examines more closely the numinous qualities of the "gothic flame," the depths of mystery and primitive emotion restored through the gothic tradition in a culture deadened by rationalism. These profound emotional and psychological implications focused critical attention on the literary significance of the traditional conventions associated with the genre. If, as James M. Keech maintains, the definition of a gothic aesthetic centers on the overall emotional effect evoked in the reader rather than on traditional gothic "trappings" associated with the genre, then the "trappings" themselves necessarily become important means of determining the degree of emotional and psychological profoundity within each gothic work. In "Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel," Lowry Nelson, Jr. agrees that these traditional, superficial effects often resulted in mechanical plot and primitive characterization, "childish fantasy," and "self-indulgent pornography" (238). Significantly however, this "exploitation of the sensational and perverse" proved a necessary step in the gothic's "fictional discovery of the true depths of human nature." The gothic novel, argues Nelson, had begun to suggest something more profound, "a mythology of the mind"(251). The publication of Northrup Frye's Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays and The Secular Scripture in 1957 and 1976, provided additional insight into the romance and other fictional

modes as a reflection of the human condition and in the use of archetype, myth, and symbol to convey meaning.

The relationship of the gothic novel to this "mythology of the mind" led scholars to explore yet another critical path--that of the genre's relationship to romantic philosophy in both England and America. J. M. S. Tompkins' The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800, originally published in London in 1932, had thoroughly considered the gothic tradition as an offshoot of the Romantic Movement. In 1971, however, a provocative exchange between Robert D. Hume and Robert L. Platzner sparked controversy. In the PMLA forum, Hume argued that the gothic is not romantic because it does not offer a transcendent vision. Platzner rejoined that the gothic rather succeeds in documenting as truth that which romantic thought rejects--the untranscendable, the paradox of being, the "mystery of evil," and the "power of blackness." The purpose of the gothic, as Platzner reminds Hume, is "affirming an ontology, a structure of being governed by mystery . . . "(Wilt 3-4). Encouraged by the Hume/Platzner exchange, other critics began exploring the genre's problematic relationship to romanticism. At issue were the spiritual or physical, internal or external entities that the gothic supposedly transcended or affirmed and the role of the individual in a romantic-gothic context. Although the topic itself was not new, a different historical and literary context by which to consider this paradoxical issue gave impetus to additional critical investigation and provoked further inquiry into the literary and historical position of the American Gothic.

Despite Hume's assertion, most critics considered the gothic an integral, albeit darker, outgrowth of the Romantic Movement. Perhaps in an effort to establish a truly American literary tradition, however, American critics seemed more concerned with establishing semantic differences rather than documenting the English Gothic legacy within the American Gothic. Richard Chase's The American Novel and its Tradition is a fairly detailed study of the romantic tradition in the novels of Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, James, Norris, Cable, Howells, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner. Early in the *Introduction* to his study, Chase makes the distinction between the novel and romance. Although there seem to be distinctive

gothic influences surrounding these American Romanticists, Chase prefers to use the term "melodrama" or "dark romance" in describing these traits and their effect on American fiction.[6] Chase connects the "power of romance to express dark and complex truths unavailable to realism" to the American literary tendency "to drive everything through to the last turn of the screw or twist of the knife . . . [resulting in] . . . a poetry of force and darkness." Like Richard Chase, Alexander Cowie is reluctant to label darkly romantic American fiction "gothic." In The Rise of the American Novel, he argues that America never developed a gothic tradition like that of England because of a lack of a social hierarchy, convention, and tradition. He does, however, acknowledge a similar use of conventions in, for example, the substitution of Indians and the wilderness for tyrants and castles as sources of gothic fear. Leslie Fiedler, on the other hand, argues for the "Gothicness" of virtually all American literature. Love and Death in the American Novel discusses ways in which the socio-psychology of the English gothic and sentimental novel influenced the development of the American gothic tradition in the novels of Brown, Cooper, Twain, and Poe. Despite their semantic differences, Chase, Cowie, and Fiedler generally agree that the "dark romanticism" of the English gothic is ideally suited to the thematic and symbolic fulfillment of particularly American themes. The gothic novel, for example, often portrays an irresolvable conflict between good and evil. In American literature, this theme is reflected variously in the determination of the individual to realize spiritual authenticity on the one hand, and a society that opposes him on the other, or in the individual's struggle against the evil inherent in his own human nature. These landmark studies do more than provide a critical foundation for discussion of the American Gothic as a distinct literary genre; they emphasize the primacy of the relationship between the gothic and the self. The impact of these historical and psychoanalytical approaches, and the examination of the gothic in a "romantic" context influenced, in part, a gothic revival during the 1970s.[7] American interest in the gothic seemed to

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[6] Chase's chapter concerning George Washington Cable is of particular interest to this study in that he comes extremely close to a discussion of gothic inheritance in The Grandissismes.

[7] The publication of Maurice Lévy's Le Roman "Gothique" anglais, 1764-1824 in 1968 and Tzvetan Todorov's The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre in 1973 possibly influenced this revival of interest in the gothic as well.

be influenced by the same factors which contributed to the genre's popularity in eighteenth-century England: guilt about a war in the recent past; the prospect of a materialistic, pragmatic, and narrowing future; and the uncertainties of a culture on the downslope of a century. Finally, mass production of paperback originals brought the gothic directly to a reading public (Wilt 3).

Various critical approaches began to inform gothic scholarship. Michael Sadleir interpreted the politically and philosophically subversive aspects of gothic fiction; Elizabeth MacAndrew explored the pervasive effect of the sentimental tradition on the gothic as an expression of the unconscious and an exploration of the nature of evil in The Gothic Tradition in Fiction; Eve Sedgewick's semiotic approach in The Coherence of Gothic Conventions focused on three types of content in gothic conventions: the phenomenological, the psychoanalytic, and the structuralist. Reader-response critics Norman Holland and Leona Sherman considered the Freudian and sexual implications of the gothic in delineating "the boundary between self and other" (281). While all of these critical approaches have certainly enriched the academic field, another approach has led to a massive revaluation of literary texts and of the literary canon itself. Feminist criticism has recognized the emotional, psycholgocial, and sociological profundity underlying the gothic, and of the primacy of "self" in connection with the genre.

Feminist criticism has been one of the most popular approaches to literary analysis in the last twenty years. These critics, intrigued by the female aspects of the gothic tradition, have opened new areas of dialogue in their reassessment of the traditional and contemporary aspects of the genre, its writers, and its readers. Again, the emotional, psychological, and sociological profundities of the literature and of their relationship to issues of the "self" assume primacy in discussions of gothic fiction. Ellen Moers offers significant contemporary feminist insight to the question of female gothic from Radcliffe to McCullers as "the haunted and self-hating self"; Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar give provocative definition to a "distinctively female literary tradition" which sprang out of a male-dominated society; and Bette B. Roberts explores the gothic's appeal to a late eighteenth-century female audience who simultaneously experienced "a reinforcement of restrictive, patriarchal social and cultural values and a

liberating escape from them." Moers, Gilbert and Gubar, and Roberts all focus on the gothic's imagery of enclosure and escape in connection with constricted social, sexual and authorial roles, and all view the genre as distinctively feminine. In 1989, Kate Ellis published The Contested Castle, the first book-length feminist study on the gothic genre to focus on novels written by women. The gothic became a gendered genre, undermining and subverting the eighteenth and nineteenth-century idealization of the home as feminine domain and masculine retreat.

As a female gothic aesthetic began to take shape, critics began to see that the gothic genre offered women an opportunity to re-envision their lives despite the constrictions of their social identities.[8] Kate Mussell views the female gothic as offering escape from the lack of identity, power, and meaning associated with being a woman. Moreover, it also provides a reconciliation with previous situations and roles. Eugenia DeLamotte locates the source of gothic terror more exactly--in an anxiety about boundaries, particularly the boundaries of the self (13-14). The gothic's nightmarish fusion of realism and romance asserts the identity of ordinary women's lives and "explores the problems of the self and its boundaries specifically in the context of the modes of transcendence available to women" (193). Similarly, in her study of nineteenth-century English Gothic, Alison Milbank sees female protagonists, in their break from control, the past, or injustice, rewriting history in an age of great social change to maintain traditional authority. This change often implies a re-working of the previous identity or self (usually in relations between men and women) to a new pastoral model or to an androgynous relationship.

Psychological, sociological, and historical aspects of gothic fiction and their relationship to the "self" continue to engage other scholars during this period. Gothic specialist David Punter regards the genre as one of the most powerful literary phenomena, dominating late eighteenth century to twentieth-century fiction in Europe, in Great Britain, and in America. At the heart of all this inquiry, the question

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[8] In response to this growing interest in the female gothic, Kay Mussell published Women's Gothic and Romantic Fiction: A Reference Guide (1981) as a resource to research on American women's fiction, specifically the gothic and the romantic. Mussell investigates the fiction, its publishing history, its audience, and brings interdisciplinary approaches (literary, historical, sociological and psychological) to the analysis of the information in an effort to understand its cultural significance. Juliann E. Fleenor's collection of essays entitled The Female Gothic (1983) attempts to define further a female gothic aesthetic.

of identity and its relationship to the gothic genre continues to be a particularly rich and compelling issue. In In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy (1985), William Patrick Day attempts to define the formal and metaphysical shape of the genre by examining conventions of character, atmosphere, and structure through the "organization and pattern of relationships that underlie and activate these conventions." Day examines the nature of masculine and feminine identity in conjunction with the social forces that shape that identity, and then focuses on the disintegration or fragmentation of identity as a result of the dialectic of fear and desire. Day views the gothic as a flexible medium through which to portray the modern human condition; it "helps to define the outer landscape of wasteland for the modernists and the inner landscape of the psyche for Freudianists." Similarly, Kenneth Graham's collection of critical essays explores the cultural, historical, and psychological origins of the gothic and examines changes in gothic sources of terror during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These changes are, again, directly concerned with the affective nature of the gothic and the focus on identity and self. Gothic Fictions: Prohibition/Transgression comments on the fundamental subversiveness of the gothic genre in reflecting both external cultural taboos, political constraints, or domestic interdictions and internal "patterns of self-assertion and self-definition." The influence of the gothic on modern American writers again came to the critical forefront in 1962 with the publication of Irving Malin's New American Gothic. In contrasting the bourgeois English Gothic tradition of Austen with an anti-bourgeois American Gothic tradition, Malin defines the gothic in terms of the isolation and narcissism of its protagonists and their antagonistic relations with the primary social unit, the family Through an analysis of three recurring images or symbols in gothic literature--the mirror, the voyage, and the house--Malin interprets the gothic novel as a means of spiritual growth.

The variety and scope of scholarly studies on the American Gothic reflect the extensive influence of the genre on the development of our American literary heritage. The gothic has influenced American fiction structurally in its methods of dramatic suspense combined with the picaresque type and in the predominant use of the Radcliffean "explained supernatural." It has also influenced American fiction

thematically in its fusion of romantic spirit (a spirit of curiosity and awe before the mystery of things) with realism (Varma 199). These influences have been extremely well-documented in the standard American canon of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the work of Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry James. Neither have gothic aspects of Modern Southern fiction escaped critical notice. Scholars have discussed at length the gothic and grotesque qualities in the fiction of such writers as William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor. No doubt the major writers of the nineteenth century greatly influenced these modern southern writers in their self-conscious scrutinization of southern settings and portrayals of realistic and grotesque "aspects of character and destiny common to all people." Yet the impact of non-canonical nineteenth-century writers on the South's uniquely modern gothic perspective has gone largely unexplored. The critical field must be widened to accommodate another small but significant gothic tributary, one that has affected the course of southern fiction from the years following the Civil War to well into the twentieth century: the local color movement.

The popularity of the gothic in the South may be rooted in several social phenomena associated with the Civil War and the resulting cultural disintegration. As Varma points out, gothic and grotesque varieties of expression originate in periods of cultural decay and disorder. Such expression can be a response to the political and religious insecurity of disturbed times, or it can be related to cultural death and disintegration or decay (xiii). Nowhere was this invasive conflict and systemic loss more intensely felt than in the nineteenth-century South. Decaying mansions and tyrannical patriarchs replaced ghosts, crumbling castles, and evil lords as fictive and, in some cases, nostalgic emblems of a collapsing order which had failed to provide continuity, stability, or authority. For many writers, the gothic became a plastic, imaginative medium through which to portray yet another variation of painful social reality.

Similarly, while the agrarian South's defeat in the Civil War may have ultimately led to a stronger sense of regional and cultural unity, it also viewed itself as a besieged minority threatened culturally and economically not only by the North but by the Industrial Revolution:

> Throughout the years the sacredness of the soil and rural life in general assumed the proportions of a cultural myth. The historical and economic fact became a doctrine: the old way must be maintained as a key to cultural survival. The onrush of technological change in . . . [the] conservative [South] . . . had a cataclysmic effect of the old ideals and institutions," provoking an "overwhelming sense of doom, estrangement, and confusion [more than in any other] area of North America. [Consequently], the gothic and grotesque theme of disintegration, both of a social and personal kind, has dominated [Southern] writing. (Northey 50)

Moreover, the Calvinist legacy and fundamental influence of the power of religion in this region may have created a greater awareness and fear of human evil than was present in many of the more liberal or humanistic religious attitudes in other regions. In any case, a sense of man's natural corruption or depravity remained strong in the South (Northey 50-51). As Richard Weaver has observed, tragedy was still a possibility in the South because of its belief in a dualistic philosophy; the choice between good and evil had not yet yielded to an amoral, mechanistic world (143). The gothic novel attempts to startle the reader into a recognition of this duality, this dark or evil side of life which people try to overlook or to rationalize (Northey 91). While traditional interpretations of this duality have viewed the conflict as one between good and evil forces fighting for control of a man's soul or the "young struggling in the power of the great old ones," more modern interpretations of this duality have seen it as the struggle of the alien brother within, or in feminist readings, as the struggle of male and female aspects of the self fighting for control (Wilt 110). Because many of the activities and actions in the gothic relate to a selfhood no longer fully realized in a suddenly unfamiliar society, many critics have viewed the Southern Gothic as an attempt to regain a sense of selfhood and an identity of some sort.

After the Civil War, regions were threatened with cultural annihilation as their own sense of identity as individuals and as separate communities was increasingly repressed by a collective social and individual menace. These small communities were threatened by "modern technological society's stamping out indigenous mores and desires, of massive impersonal forces acting against the villager's feebler, human particularities and peculiarities" (Northey 80-81). The local color movement began as a reaction to the onslaught of these impersonal cultural, political, and social forces as writers attempted to preserve a traditional American past that was in danger of disappearing entirely. While critics frequently

dismiss the movement itself as an offshoot of realism in its simplistic, realistic portrayal of regional culture, the literature itself (representative of an increasingly marginalized and fragmented culture) expresses an often profound and poignant search for cultural unity and identity. Indeed, "regional literature, ostensibly realistic and sociological, can emerge with demonstratable gothic qualities" (Northey 62). This study is concerned with the impact of those demonstratable gothic qualities on the development of an American Gothic aesthetic in the South during the nineteenth century and its anticipation of twentieth-century Southern Gothic.

Regional and local color writers have been the subject of some critical interest with regard to the gothic. Thirty years after Malin's landmark study, the gothic's influence on the American frontier came to the critical forefront in Frontier Gothic: Terror and Wonder at the Frontier in American Literature. This collection of essays edited by David Mogen, Scott Sanders, and Joanne Karpinski, maintains that the gothic can exist on a physical or psychical frontier, a frontier not necessarily European. For writers including Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, and Sarah Orne Jewett, the American frontier and wilderness proved an imaginative border between the known and unknown as these writers forged a truly American literature in their exploration of social, racial, gender, and aesthetic issues. The emphasis on setting in this collection brought local color writers like Jewett closer to serious critical evaluation.

Rather than make a direct connection between the gothic tradition and local color fiction, however, most critics have tended to make shallow attempts at analysis of individual nineteenth-century local color writers. Ottavio Casale, for example, delves into the "Dark Romanticism" of Chopin's The Awakening but never explores the gothic conventions so prevalent in her work. Similarly, Joyce Coyne Dyer's "Night Images in the Work of Kate Chopin" explores the relationship of the local color to "dark romantic" imagery in Kate Chopin's work, especially The Awakening but extends the analysis no farther. John R. May's "Local Color in The Awakening" connects local color elements in the novel to Chopin's development of theme and character but disregards the gothic legacy of those elements. Louis H. Palmer III's "Southern Gothic and Appalachian Gothic: A Comparative Look at Flannery O'Connor and Cormac

McCarthy" does situate the gothic squarely in a regional context but provides a rather superficial discussion of these two modern southern writers.

Somewhat more direct approaches linking the gothic to nineteenth-century local color writers have appeared more recently. Appearing in Great Plains Quarterly in 1984, Susan J. Rosowski's article entitled "Willa Cather's American Gothic: Sapphira and the Slave Girl," provides a fine analysis of Cather's novel from a gothic perspective. In Lynette Carpenter and Wendy Kolmar's collection of essays entitled Haunting the House of Fiction: Feminist Perspective on Ghost Stories by American Women, Priscilla Leder and Beth Wynne Fisken discuss the supernatural in connection with New England local colorists Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman. Although these studies progress toward a further valuation of the movement itself, local color deserves more critical attention than has traditionally been accorded it. It reflects the sociological, historical, and psychological forces that were significant part of the imaginative life of the nineteenth century and that shaped the twentieth.

This chapter has discussed briefly some of the major transformations of the genre in the traditional nineteenth-century American literary canon. Of the southern writers most commonly aligned with the American Gothic during that century, only Edgar Allan Poe of Virginia has been critically examined in any depth and, even then, not with attention to a particularly southern gothic sensibility. As American literary scholars have shown, the canonical "gothic" writers of the nineteenth century (Cooper, Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, and James, among others) were certainly influential in the formation of the modern Southern Gothic. It remains to be seen, however, what impact other nineteenth-century writers may have had on the South's uniquely modern gothic perspective.

This study will examine the influences of the gothic on southern literature of the nineteenth century traditionally excluded from the standard canon. The often marginalized local color movement appears to have a great deal in common with the plight of the gothic novel in England. After a rapid rise in popularity toward the end of their respective centuries, both types of fiction fell from favor both with their reading public and with the literary critics. Clearly the gothic, two hundred years ahead of the local

color movement, has rebounded in literary and popular circles. Perhaps the local color movement will achieve the same distinction as scholars re-examine not only its realism, but the gothic legacy and universal implications underlying its fiction--as well as its wider role in the formation of a distinctly southern literature.

All of the writers included in this study--Mary Noailles Murfree, Amélie Rives, Kate Chopin, and George Washington Cable--are generally associated with the local color movement. In addition to preserving regional culture, their fiction displays the movement's characteristic preoccupation with details of dress, landscape, dialect, customs, and folklore. These four southern writers, however, did not simply "exploit the quaint for the amusement of a more sophisticated metropolis." Rather, they were all deeply and aesthetically aware of the complexity of their respective geographical regions, its customs, and its people. As a young girl, Tennessee writer Mary Noailles Murfree spent her summers at Beersheba Springs in the Cumberland Mountains and frequented the Great Smoky Mountains which figure so prominently in her fiction. Amélie Rives was born in Richmond, Virginia, and spent most of her childhood at her family's ancestral home, Castle Hill, in the Blue Ridge foothills of Albemarle County. After her marriage to Oscar Chopin, Kate Chopin moved from St. Louis to New Orleans, and later lived on a plantation near Nachitoches. George Washington Cable, born of Virginian and New England parentage, spent his formative years in New Orleans. Despite their intimate ties to these regions, all of these writers eventually distanced themselves from these locales. Mary Noailles Murfree lived variously in Nashville, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Murfreesboro. Castle Hill remained home to Amélie Rives until her death, but she traveled abroad extensively, often for months at a time. After her husband's death, Kate Chopin returned to St. Louis. At the urging of Dr. Frederick Kolbenheyer, physician and family friend, she began writing and publishing her short stories and novels, drawing on her Louisiana years for inspiration (Toth 175). George Washington Cable left New Orleans for Northhampton, Massachusetts, shortly after the publication of The Grandissismes because of Creole resentment at his apparent disparagement of their culture. The balance between close, subjective knowledge of a particular region

and objective distance from that region perhaps elevated these writers' regional experience onto a more universal level.

In addition to having universal implications, all of the novels under consideration in this study (generally considered the best of these writers' longer works) have been influenced to some degree by the literary gothic: Murfree's The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains published in 1885; Rives's The Quick or the Dead published in 1889; Chopin's The Awakening published in 1899; and Cable's The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life published in 1880. Although all four writers employ gothic themes, conventions, and techniques in different ways in their work, their use of this tradition vests each southern region--whether it be Murfree's Tennessee mountains, Rives's Virginia piedmont, or Chopin's and Cable's New Orleans--with a sense of timelessness and underlying mystery. More importantly perhaps, this gothic legacy also enables these writers to express what William Faulkner much later called, "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself."

Each of these local color novels moves beyond the "local color" aim of preserving regional identity toward a more universal concern with the nature of individual identity. Generally, in these novels, the protagonist's search for his or her social or individual identity leads him or her into the darkness that is at the heart of human nature; only by confronting or acknowledging the darkness inherent in the human soul can the protagonist fully realize his or her own selfhood.

Historically and socially, the post-war nineteenth-century South provided fertile ground for this search as it came to terms with some of the darker aspects of its past (the issues of slavery and the feudal structure that had nourished that institution) and its new role in a rapidly expanding modern, imperial, industrial nation-state. In writing the southern regional identity, these local colorists were immortalizing their own "postage stamp[s] of soil" fractured by time and haunted by the past on which the workings of human fate could be enacted. Like the gothic novel, each of these novels is, as Linda Bayer-Berenbaum has observed, "not merely a collection of the characteristics that typify the genre but a unique entity of its own in which the gothic landmarks merely set the scene and tone. In other words, each work has its own

way of presenting the gothic vision, its own personal brand of characters and images, incidents and assessments. The particulars within the novel are analogous to the general identifying traits of the genre for they also mirror an expanded, intense reality . . . " (73).

CHAPTER II

GOTHIC THEMES AND TECHNIQUES

Because of the numerous influences on the development of the gothic as a literary genre, the various shifts in popularity of the gothic genre, and the various literary directions that the gothic has taken, the term *gothic* has been rather difficult to define. As G. R. Thompson has noted, "a theory of *genre* that precisely defines, analyzes, and distinguishes among themes, subject matters, formal elements, characteristic devices, philosophical concerns, or a developing tradition is yet to be written" (2). There are, however, methods of characterization, recurring narrative structures, uses of setting, symbols, devices, and conventions that are particular to the traditional literary gothic. A brief examination of these basic themes and techniques will provide a basis on which the gothic's influence on southern local color literature can be discussed.

Some of the more salient, gothic ingredients were satirically profiled in *Weekly Magazine's* "Recipe for a Modern Romance" in 1798:

> Take a haunted castle; pull down part of it, and allow the grass to grow on the battlements, and provide the owls and bats uninterrupted apparitions among the ruins. Pour in sufficient quantity of heavy rain upon the hinges and bolts of the gates so that when they are opened they will make creaks most fearfully . . . Take an old man and woman and employ them to sleep in a part of this castle and provide them with frightful stories of lights that appear in the western or eastern tower every night and of music heard in the neighboring woods and ghosts dressed in white who perambulate the place. Employ to this castle a young lady, consign her to the care of the old man and woman who must relate to her all they know, that is all they do not know but only suspect. Make her dreadfully terrified at the relations and dreadfully impatient to behold reality. Take her perhaps on the second night of her arrival through a trap door, and from the trap door to a flight of steps downward to a subterraneous passage, from a subterraneous passage to a door that is shut and from that to a door that is open, and back to a subterraneous passage; here show her a skeleton with a live face or a live body with a head of a skeleton or ghost all in white, and a groan from a different part of the dungeon or the shake of a cold hand or a suit of armour moving fast . . . Put out the light and then . . . Do this for several nights and after the lady has been dissolved to jelly with her fears, let her be delivered to the man of her heart and married . . . . (Redden 165)

In 1798, the gothic was in the early stages of its decline in popularity, and its more obvious and extreme conventions had degenerated to these humorous clichés. Employed as pure spectacle in "low" gothic fiction, these clichéd "trappings" have been partially responsible for the widespread assessment of the

genre as unworthy of critical attention. "High" gothic fiction writers, however, artfully employ these "trappings"--along with novelistic elements like narrative structure, characterization, setting, and symbolism--towards the development of a single theme: the struggle between good and evil.[1]

As Northrup Frye has discussed in Anatomy of Criticism, classical and Christian archetypes have informed the vast majority of Western literature. A philosophical shift during the eighteenth-century (the Renaissance view of metaphysical understanding as a path to unity in life had yielded to "scientific method" in which man could explain his biological origins) may have further encouraged the use of the Edenic archetype and its basic conflict between good and evil as a central component of gothic fiction. In philosophical terms, the loss of the "interpenetration of God and man" destroyed the original unity of creation. Man's mastery of the universe resulted, not in a perception of the mysteries of nature and its mirroring relation to the Divine, but in his exploitation of it towards his own self-interest. The resulting moral wilderness caused a fracture between the physical and the spiritual resulting in a limited, constricting world view, and a pessimism full of suffering, pain, and death (LeTellier 182-94).

These Christian archetypes constantly reiterate man's moral position: the inevitability of his Fall, his subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and his compulsion to seek out knowledge of good and evil (LeTellier 183). This Edenic archetype often appears, with varying twists, in gothic fiction: the wandering soul (the protagonist) moves--of its own free will--out of a state of innocence and descends into experience where mystery, darkness, and violence threaten to engulf it. At this point, the exiled soul can split into "divided halves of what was once a primal moral unity" (Porte 63)[2] and continues to wander,

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[1] I am using the term "low" gothic in reference to the corrupted forms of the gothic novel which came into vogue in England between 1792 and 1820: tales, fragments, and *shilling shockers*. In addition to being much shorter than the full-length "high" gothic romance, these "pot-boilers" made extensive use of gothic properties--remote settings, idealized characters, and violent or erotic incidents set in an atmosphere of natural terrors. These undeveloped narratives typically, and abruptly, end at the moment of crisis. Some examples of "low" gothic include: The Clock Has Struck!!! a "Legendary Tale"; The Vision of Ismena; and The Abbot of Montserrat, or The Pool of Blood. Devendra Varma's The Gothic Flame contains further discussion of this "sensation-craze" (186-189).

[2] In the eighteenth-century, Schiller viewed this primal struggle as a conflict between the *Stofftrieb*, a compulsive urge towards life, and the *Formtrieb*, a constrictive, moral duty in an effort to achieve "a state of inner harmony between the impulses of the body and soul." In the twentieth century, Freud viewed it as a conflict between the *superego* and the *id* (LeTellier 156).

searching for the lost path of return. Wiser for its experience, the soul experiences an intense, sensuous, emotional, and reasonable apprehension of life and secures its transcendence into Paradise, the source of spiritual life. This return is often literally consummated in binding actions like marriage and ownership and is reflected in the civilized exultation of the senses, emotions, and reason (LeTellier 158-59).

All souls, however, do not experience this type of happy transcendence. The basic gothic myth of the soul's obsessive quest for experience is also directly connected to one of the most tragic gothic themes --that of the pursuit and destruction of the *anima* (female) by the *shadow* (male). In this theme, the soul is fragmented and thrust into experience where it wanders in search of its lost unity. Ideally, the soul recognizes and transfigures its limited and imperfect self-love into love for the Beloved in a fusion of love (from below) with grace (from above) in a mystical, metaphysical union (LeTellier 167-68).[3] Yet the evolving tragedy of Western civilization so clearly obvious in romanticism, is the death of any tradition that points the way to transcendence. The soul's search for the Beloved is frequently interrupted by an enemy who threatens or interrupts the love relationship; tragic annihilation of the love relationship occurs, and the female is often violently destroyed or consumed (172-73).

Gothic villains also follow this basic gothic myth with disastrous results. Early gothic villains, like Matthew Lewis' Ambrosio, travel a fairly straightforward path to Hell; they commit unambiguous crimes of power and ambition which lead directly to their downfall. Later gothic villains, however, like Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, suffer a worse fate. They are trapped in experience and lose the memory of the lost Paradise. They are eventually overwhelmed by a need for physical or intellectual self-gratification and renounce traditional social, moral, and religious values (LeTellier 154). In their lust for forbidden knowledge, these villains violate Divine Law, lose any hope of salvation, and fall prey to their own subjectivity and individualism (165).

The basic gothic myth generally employs three basic plots: flight/pursuit; journey/quest; and purposeless wandering. The flight/pursuit pattern typically concerns the pursuit of the Young Heroine by

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[3] Robert LeTellier maintains that in the more tragic forms of the gothic, the female can also implicate and trap her mate in the Fall (176).

the Villain-Hero with violation, either sexually or emotionally, as the end result.[4] The only course of action for the Heroine in this gothic pattern, other than suffering, is either death or transcendence. Eugenia DeLamotte discusses this type of escape in connection with Radcliffe's heroine, Ellena di Rosalba, in The Italian:

> The one escape route of which the gothic heroine may always avail herself while still confined within "the cold, the rigid rules of propriety" is transcendence through an appreciation of the sublime . . . [The] heroine's experience of the sublime affords a psychological escape, placing the villain in a perspective that reveals his powerlessness in the larger scheme of things . . . This kind of transcendence has its limits. It is merely a substitute for the physical escape the heroine is powerless to achieve; in addition, it reinforces the heroine's ability to "bear" her suffering "with equanimity" rather than giving her strength or inspiration to end it. (181-82)

The option of transcendence appealed greatly to the eighteenth-century gothic novel's primarily female audience. The pursuit provided an "outlet for the adaptation and aggrandizement of sublime male threats, which [revealed] a woman's projected fears and sense of actual victimization"; moreover, it justified vicarious and inward "adventure and escape, which [contrasted] dramatically with . . . everyday domestic experience." Finally, the moral victory of the heroine over the pursuer in the novel reflects a desired, but repressed emancipation from actual oppressors (Roberts 47).

Alison Milbank sees another variation of this type of ending in Radcliffean Gothic. The heroine does not merely escape the tyrant's control, but replaces the malignant patriarchy with a positive, regenerative precedent for the future. By examining the past to establish a true history which the patriarch attempted to falsify, she rewrites family history and brings past injustices to light "in order to maintain traditional authority in an age of great social change" (11).

The journey/quest plot may have evolved out of a need to explain the social and cultural enigmas surrounding the Romantic period. Certainly, many writers during this time seem to be occupied in a quest for a sense of place and identity (Thompson 110). The journey is more than movement from one place to another but denotes the steady ontogenesis of eternal destiny. It is a spiritual experience that provides the characters an opportunity to experience life, to vindicate their moral values, and to confront the "issues of

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[4] Kari Winter locates female terror in the familiar. Women usually attempt to escape the injustices of a patriarchal system, classicist social structures, and conventional religion (21-22).

salvation and damnation in a testing ground where the celestial and the infernal are in ceaseless conflict" (LeTellier 139-40).

The romance fable of identity, described in detail by Northrup Frye in his discussion of the traditional and romantic themes of descent and ascent, often informs the journey/quest plot. In this type of plot, the hero or heroine moves from a higher (Edenic or natural) to a lower (demonized) world in search of true identity. This descent is often made through the medium of a dream or through the process of doubling. While in the labyrinthine underworld, the protagonist undergoes endless transformations and ritual sufferings during which his or her identity is completely fragmented. Eventually, suffering leads to the discovery or recovery of identity and to ascent to the world left behind or to the establishment of a new paradise (The Secular Scripture 97-157).

In a similar vein, Eugenia DeLamotte differentiates between tragic and happy gothic. She cites Joseph Campbell's description of the hero-journey as the essential gothic myth: the hero crosses the threshold of the ordinary daylight world into an unknown world, where, after various difficulties, he acquires some essential benefit. He then manages to return to the world where the journey began. Happy gothic involves the discovery of knowledge at the heart of the unknown world which helps the ordinary world and, most importantly, enables the hero to return home again. The tragic gothic, on the other hand, involves hero-journeys that are unsuccessful. The threshold is crossed for the wrong reasons, and the knowledge discovered in the unknown world makes ascent to the daylight world and establishment of a new Eden meaningless or impossible (DeLamotte 54). The rejected and dislocated hero never recovers his or her true identity. Death is neither an escape nor a door through which the hero can pass to achieve a final humanity. Rather, in death the hero-protagonist-victim relinquishes his last vestiges of human identity and becomes fully a part of what tormented him, the embodiment of cruelty and terror. The vampire is perhaps the most striking example of a human being completely transformed by this descent. As William P. Day points out, the gothic is a fable of identity shattered and destroyed, a fable of the impossibility of identity (6-7).

For G. R. Thompson, this type of gothic embodies a "demonic-quest romance," in which an alienated, self-divided hero embarks on a self-destructive, insane pursuit of the Absolute. His quest is at once religious, mythic, and metaphysical, and defines the hero's dark or ambiguous relationship to the universe (2). But finally, the quest itself, as Melville's Captain Ahab has illustrated, is "metaphysical rather than purely religious, with destruction rather than redemption at the end" (10).

The flight/pursuit and journey/quest plots offer their protagonists either transcendence into some sort of heavenly or earthly Paradise or damnation to certain Hell. Another variation of the gothic plot, purposeless wandering, resembles eternal Purgatory. Its protagonists, cast out of society and into the wilderness, are doomed to wander indefinitely, searching for souls to damn or for companions with whom to share their miserable existence. Purposeless wandering is perhaps the most horrible of the three plots in that there is no hope of salvation and no hope of destruction. In the modern gothic, purposeless wandering most nearly approaches the existential condition.

The typical gothic plot usually revolves around different experiences of fear, suspense and anxiety; however, there appear to be significant differences in gothic plots written by women and men. Kate Ferguson Ellis argues that gothic novels written by women "can be distinguished by the presence of houses in which people are locked in and locked out. They are concerned with violence done to familial bonds . . . frequently directed against women . . . [Gothic conventions] contribute to a nightmarish atmosphere, intense emotional involvement, a sense of a mythic return to the origins of life (the mysteries of sexuality and the mother's womb), and a primal conflict between good and evil" (3). On the other hand, male gothicists seem to fear the suppressed power of the 'other' (particularly women, Catholics, Jews, and ultimately Satan) and linger over horrible descriptions of sexual violence, murder, torture, mutilation, and death. Interestingly, prior to the mid-nineteenth century, male gothic plots insured that legitimate male heirs inherited their rightful property despite efforts to the contrary by usurpers and deviant women (Winter 21-22).

Regardless of whether the gothicist is male or female, gothic plot is constructed on easily recognizable patterns which are integrally connected to the conflict between good and evil. Examining three patterns governing the gothic novel, Robert LeTellier traces a progression of narrative development in the genre: the *growing crescendo*, the *perfect circle*, and the *deepening recess*.

The *growing crescendo*, typical of Walpole and Reeve, is the simplest pattern. It involves a "movement from an initial point through a process of complications and clarification to a high point which brings complete resolution." This type of pattern typifies tales of crime and restitution in which a Young Hero, deprived of his rightful inheritance by the Villain-Hero, is eventually restored to his rightful position through the intervention of a powerful external agent. In a series of swiftly-moving events, the Villain-Hero is exposed and the mystery is clarified (119).

The *perfect circle*, characteristic of Radcliffe, epitomizes classic eighteenth-century balance. The circular narrative consists of deliberate exposition in which Paradise Lost becomes Paradise Regained with the "challenging experience of a fallen world in between" (123). Edenic archetypes along with the romantic themes of descent and ascent are usually incorporated into this structure. Its ending usually corresponds to that of the "happy" gothic described by Eugenia DeLamotte.

In the *deepening recess* pattern, several secondary narratives are usually embedded within the outermost frame. These embedded narratives provide thematic counterpointing. An ever-increasing depth of movement into an inner recess discloses each conflict and is followed by a movement outwards again. The *crescendo* and *perfect circle* patterns often accompany the *deepening recess* since the use of the frame device is circular by nature, a return after extended narration to the present time in which the story is related (135). Later and more sophisticated gothic plots tend to combine these three narrative patterns.

Interestingly, some critics have noticed the similarities of gothic plot to the narrative and structural technique of classical Greek tragedy. Like the tragic heroes of Greek tragedy, the gothic protagonists usually inspire admiration, but are sufficiently imperfect to be believably human and to be

responsible for their own downfall. Frequently, they encounter disaster through dogged pursuit of an ideal. Violation of moral or social law eventually overpowers them, and they experience a tragic fall from high estate. Walpole's The Castle of Otranto illustrates the parallels in structure that can exist between Greek tragedy and gothic fiction. The five chapters of the novel closely resemble the five acts of a tragedy with complications of plot resolved only in the concluding chapter (Varma 63). In accordance with Aristotle's theory, the plot preserves the unities of time, place, and action in its subsequent movement towards the climax. While this structure certainly does not apply to all gothic novels, the general assumptions underlying it seem relevant, the end result of most gothic novels being tragic.

Gothic prose style, in accordance with eighteenth-century standards, was directed toward manipulating the emotions of the reader in order to elicit a response of astonished admiration. Consequently, "the metaphor, the emotionally toned image, disrupted exclamatory and staccato syntax and the Sterne-type monologue provide a basic formula that is repeated with many personal variations" (Roberts 56). In order to evoke a particular response in the reader, gothic writers privileged suggestion, obscurity and exaggeration over clarity; in language, the general and abstract dominate the concrete; and in syntax, structure governs the tempo of emotion. Concrete, referential language, dependent upon a perception of external reality, often yields to vague description which conveys subjective renderings of events and apparent realities (56-57). The stylistic techniques of distancing, interruption, fragmentation, and acceleration emphasize the intensity, extremity, and irregularity of gothic reality.

Gothic novels work to distance the reader from the action. As David Punter explains, distancing serves a double function:

> [O]n the one hand, it lower[s] the pressure of the writers to compromise with the developmental realism of character or situation, while on the other it allow[s] a depiction of social and psychological tendencies, of states of mind, in extreme and grotesque form. (85)

In most gothic novels, a crime committed in the past, coupled with a framed narrative structure, accomplishes this objective. The frame, which allows only a partial revelation of facts, makes the ontological assumptions of the narrative available to the reader and both establishes and invites violation

of boundaries (Newman 154). The readers bear the burden of piecing together, detecting, discovering, and knowing the identity of the action (plot) and the characters. In the gothic novel, this process is more critical than the outcome (Bayer-Berenbaum 71). Recurring motifs such as the discovered manuscript, the medieval setting, and a consistently omniscient point-of-view are all ways that gothic writers maintain narrative distance (Roberts 74-75).

Aside from these considerations of plot, point-of-view is also an effective way to maintain distance. Robert Kiely explains why the first-person narrator works more effectively in the gothic novel than the omniscient narrator: "For once a too sensible, solid, prosaic tone has been successfully established, it is difficult to raise it passionately without sounding inconsistent, unconvincing, or silly" (20). First-person narration often takes the form of what Elizabeth MacAndrew terms "mediated narration." Usually associated with the recurrent theme of innocence and ignorance, mediated narrators appear in gothic fiction as old housekeepers who are useful in supplying limited information, reporting events from the past but not seeing or understanding the spiritual significance of the knowledge. Also termed "double narration," this type of structure evokes a dreamy impression in which a distant world interposes a consciousness between the reader and the tale. The emotional impact of first-person point-of-view and the immediacy it affords the reader clearly takes precedence over actual descriptive detail (LeTellier 142). The author can achieve a similar effect with the internal monologue, a subjective coloring of events which blurs fantasy and reality but still engages the reader's emotional involvement in scenes of suspense full of terror and horror (Roberts 173).

Anne Radcliffe first differentiated between the extremes of terror and horror in her essay, "On the Supernatural in Poetry." According to Radcliffe, terror "expands the soul" and "wakens the faculties to a high degree" while horror "contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them." G. R. Thompson extends Radcliffe's distinction into the dialectic of inner and outer: Terror comes from without, overwhelming us with an aweful sense of the sublime. The self is swallowed in immensity. Horror, on the other hand, rises

up from within, with an acute awareness of some awful evil sinking into a extensive unconscious reservoir of primitive dread (3-4).

Terror's effect on the reader is profound. Edmund Burke, concerned with the relationship between literature and the emotions, states that " [t]error fills the mind with great ideas, and the soul delights in the experience" (87). In other words, gothic '[s]ublimity begins with a strong feeling, such as terror or awe, the power of which enables a person to transcend his own finite state and to comprehend and experience powers greater than the individual" (Roberts 39). In the early gothic novels, episodes of terror are isolated and melodramatic. In later gothic novels, however, these episodes assume a more sinister cast; the concealed chaos becomes more exhausting in its spiritual implications (LeTellier 149-53).

Instability is central to the "pleasing dread" that shapes the paradox of the gothic response. The creative disequilibrium of the gothic is achieved in a number of ways (Napier 48). Narrative perspective can be disrupted by juxtaposing the first-person point-of-view with the omniscient point-of-view. An omniscient point of view in conjunction with the mental processes of the characters themselves allows the author to create anxiety and uncertainty between appearance and reality (Roberts 143).

In order to reproduce paradox, irregularity, and an atmosphere of decay in the gothic narrative, writers also employ exaggerated stylistic devices like interruption, fragmentation, and acceleration. These distortions destabilize the narrative (Napier 48). Interruption startles the reader or intrigues him with information known but not immediately revealed. It can extend rather than shorten the narrative with sudden and forbidding shifts in action or tone which hinder sequential analysis. Similarly, persistent repetition can also lengthen the narrative, creating a sense of infinity, a "double terror of boundedness and boundlessness, claustrophobia and vertigo." It creates the "infinite multiplication of what should be a discrete incident in time" in which the protagonist is caught in a single instant which simultaneously evokes the nightmare of eternity (DeLamotte 95). Writers often achieve narrative immediacy through auditory means such as dripping water, a pounding heart, or a ticking clock (Bayer-Berenbaum 67). On

the other hand, fragmentation curtails length and moves the story forward to prolong suspense or to create an atmosphere of unease that characterizes the gothic. Fragmentation is achieved through manuscripts which suddenly break off, become illegible in crucial places, or must be read in fragments or sections, or through auditory interruptions such as overheard snatches of conversation. This rapid or intensified sequence of events inhibits analysis of specific scenes and character development through conventional channels like reflective passages (Napier 56-57). Writers use rapidity of movement in the narrative, traditionally associated with magic and with the sublime, to jar the reader from the normal rhythms of his world or to suggest the presence of the supernatural. This acceleration heightens the frenzied pace of events and emotions and contributes to the anarchical and ominous quality so often associated with the gothic (52-54). As Linda Bayer-Berenbaum has observed, "Whether literal or figurative, trivial or cosmic, a radical shift from ecstasy to dejection--augmentation followed by drastic reduction--is the Gothic progression" (140).

Although frequently subordinate to plot and narrative technique, characterization is an important means of developing theme. Notably emblematic or symbolic, early gothic characterization is highly stylized or formal in its portrayal of various, and often extreme, character types; consequently, these figures are at once one-dimensional, static, uncomplicated, and undeveloped. The emotional impact of the symbolic representations of character types is clearly privileged over intellectual impact, as evidenced by the genre's sustained mood of violence, sadism, and fear (LeTellier 87).

As the gothic tradition developed, however, these characters assumed more depth and significance. Robert LeTellier discusses the intensification and symbolic resonance of the gothic character:

> From the paragons and villains of romance, through the tragic heroes of the high-mimetic and the suffering protagonists of the low-mimetic, through to the new myths of the ironic, all the features of the whole cycle of Western literature, from the early middle ages to modern times, are contained within the genre. The gradual unfolding of the modes parallels a movement form the static or emblematic character types, through the more dynamic and detailed evocations of character, back to the static type where big symbolic issues are the chief concerns of character. The return to origins, noticeable in the later novels, is at a much higher level and has very substantial intellectual and aesthetic intentions that show a complete understanding of characterization and a mastery of form and tradition of the Gothic novel, as it had been

> developing over forty years. It was as though the greater novelists of the school had drawn together all the types and methods of characterization at their disposal from world literature, and used them in unique creations. Certainly character, ranging from the primitive to the sophisticated, is the single most important ingredient of the fictional world of the genre. The whole gamut of character and characterization is present, stopping short only of the more modern techniques of figural narration. (222-23)

The four *mythoi* (comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony) of Northrup Frye's paradigm considers, at seasonal stages, all of these "paragons and villains of romance, through the tragic heroes of the high-mimetic and the suffering protagonists of the low-mimetic, through to the new myths of the ironic." The archetypal theme of each *mythos* varies: *Anagnorisis*, or recognition of a newborn society triumphantly rising around a mysterious hero and his bride, is the archetypal theme of comedy; *Agon*, or conflict, is the archetypal theme of romance; *Pathos*, or catastrophe in triumph or defeat, is the archetypal theme of tragedy; and *Sparamagos*, or the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or doomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world, is the archetypal theme of irony and satire (Anatomy of Criticism 192). As a literary medium, the gothic (as Robert LeTellier has observed) can assume any or all of these archetypal stages. Because comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony are all episodes in the total quest myth, comedy can even contain potential tragedy within itself (215). Gothic fiction then, as we have stated earlier, can be either happy or tragic, and the specific roles of the characters vary according to the archetype and narrative objective employed by the writer.

The Villain-Hero is one of the most popular of these gothic character types. The Villain can assume the role of sinister antagonist to the protagonist (usually the Young Hero) of the quest-romance; or the Villain can assume the role of protagonist in narratives that usually end tragically. Probably originating in the diabolical, Machievellian villains of Elizabethan drama,[5] the Villain appears variously as the Inscrutable Tyrant, the Criminal Monk, and the Accursed Wanderer. The Villain's insatiable lust for control, power, knowledge and wealth, his arrogant disregard for social values, and his insensitivity to

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[5] Devendra Varma sees a direct correlation between the emergence of gothic fiction and a revival of interest in Elizabethan drama. In its tendency to dwell on death and its sepulchral accompaniments, its crude presentation of the macabre, physically horrible, and revolting, its melancholy fantasies, its lurid violence, its crime scenes, characters, situations, and narration, Elizabethan drama provided thematic and structural models for the gothic novel (29).

the beauty of art and nature drive him far beyond the limits of humanity; he is a superhuman embodiment of Evil whose hedonistic lifestyle often leads to brutal, sadistic violence.[6] The Villain usually conceals a nagging remorse for some secret crime usually committed in his dark and mysterious past, and he often assumes the role of impostor or usurper to achieve his amoral objectives (LeTellier 17-20).

The Villain is most completely defined by his pursuit of the Young Heroine.[7] For the Villain, the Young Heroine represents an irresistible, feminine ideal that harbors secret or hidden knowledge or the spiritual wisdom that he so desperately desires (LeTellier 17). In Frye's paradigm, tragedy is concerned with breaking up the family and opposing it to the rest of society. The central female figure of tragic action often polarizes this conflict (218-19). Incest frequently underlies this pursuit pattern and deliberately violates the stability of relationships and disrupts the family; moreover, it corrupts the line of inheritance and destroys legitimacy and respectability (Day 120). This moral descent (represented in the narrative by images of confinement or entrapment) is often accompanied by a growing sense of isolation and immobility. Eventually, in the tragic gothic, recovery of identity and the ascent to the higher world becomes impossible.

Another type of gothic villain, the Criminal Monk, originates from a long line of ignoble churchmen inspired by Machiavellian villains of Elizabethan revenge tragedy. Outwardly, his piety and charismatic charm have gained him formidable status in the Church. Inwardly, however, the Criminal Monk carries with him the secret burden of crimes committed in his dark past. His intense desire for power, his pride, lust, and inhumanity eventually lead to his ultimate degeneration and downfall (LeTellier 21-29).

The Criminal Monk's character strongly derives from folk-tale and certain archetypal patterns: his lost parents and mysterious fateful contact with mother and sister are ancient folk motifs. Further, the pattern of his career uses another ancient motif derived from Arabian-Persian sources. In the fable of

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[6] Eugenia DeLamotte distinguishes between the quest for knowledge in tragic gothic and happy gothic works. In tragic gothic, knowledge leads to damnation; in happy gothic, the quest for knowledge is linked to the search for identity and leads to salvation, and of course, a happy ending (52).

[7] Jung has identified this archetypal pattern as the pursuit of the *anima* by the *shadow*.

"The Three Sins of the Hermit," the Hermit's faith is tested by fallen angels who offer him the choice of three sins. The Hermit chooses drunkenness, the least dangerous of the three. Consequently, his pride and fateful self-ignorance results in his falling prey to the seductions of Hell. In his unstable ecstasy and loss of reason, he unwittingly commits the other two sins, fornication and murder, which are eventually discovered and lead to his punishment (LeTellier 22-23). His character culminates in the gothic novel in such sinister personages as Lewis' Ambrosio and Radcliffe's Schedoni.

Frankenstein and Dracula are early prototypes of the third type of gothic villain, the Accursed Wanderer. These characters rise from beyond the grave and are walking, if not exactly living, gothic inversions of human identity (Day 7). Generally, the Accursed Wanderer is of aristocratic and mysterious origins. Self-condemned and self-exiled from society, he manifests an insatiable thirst for knowledge and power in his relentless investigation of the ultimate secrets of the universe. Despite his supernatural-heroic qualities and superior intelligence, he plays out the dark cravings of the human soul. He is completely consumed by a mad desire for vengeance and takes great satisfaction in crime and in the destruction of virtue (LeTellier 32). Lethargy and monotony typically characterize his state. "This monotony is an intensification of the experience of man trapped in the '[realm] of generation' unable to escape, fallen Man transfixed in the contemplation of his wretchedness" (216). Haunted with the secret knowledge of an ancient crime, the Accursed Wanderer retreats within himself, seeking other souls to take the burden of guilt and damnation or to provide companionship in suffering (32). He attempts to connect with other souls, as D. H. Lawrence has commented, by consuming or literally sucking the life out of them (101). His undying evil both haunts and fascinates men--as do his mysterious, blazing eyes, a recurring motif associated with his character.

This tendency to separate himself from the community and its ordinary moral anchors appears in two variations of the Accursed Wanderer: the Byronic Hero and Faust. George Gordon, Lord Byron, is most frequently credited with the creation of the fictional character that so closely paralleled the poet's own life in recklessness, moodiness, promiscuity, and aristocratic lifestyle. A Literary History of England,

however, indicates that Byronism and the Byronic Hero derived in long descent from Milton's Satan and immediately from the heroes of gothic romance--and were already prevalent when Byron availed himself of the concept.[8] Generally, the Byronic Hero, foreshadowed in Walpole's Manfred, is alienated from and filled with hatred for mankind. His solitude springs from the realization that he has overstepped social laws. Morally isolated beyond good and evil, his melancholy reflects a soul "lit by graveyard moonlight, cold, dismal, and despairing" and on the verge of insanity (Railo 308).

Another variation of the Accursed Wanderer is Faust. This legendary figure was based on a German necromancer named Georg Faust who achieved a certain amount of influence in powerful ecclesiastical and worldly courts. His exploits were first romanticized in German folk books (Das Faustbuch) in 1587 under the name of Johann Faust. Many variations of the legend soon followed. In Christopher Marlowe's The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus published in 1601, Faust is gripped with an overriding passion: a Renaissance longing for infinite riches and power. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, too, was attracted to the legend and employed it in Faust, Der Tragödie der erster Teil or Faust, The First Part of the Tragedy. Goethe's Faust, desiring to comprehend not only knowledge but experience, sells his soul to the Devil. Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus parallels the Faust legend to the fall of the protagonist, Adrian Leverkün.[9] All of these fictionalized versions of the Faust legend have contributed to a general character type who is "[d]issatisfied with all human knowledge and feel[s] himself cut off from Nature." His discontentment drives him to seek knowledge at any cost and involves him deeply in evil. He does not repent and so is destroyed (Thompson 112).[10]

The socially attractive Young Hero provides sharp contrast to the Villain in gothic fiction. The Young Hero is sensitive and displays admirable morality and nobility of character. Linked with both the

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[8] The editors refer to Byron, Childe Harold and Other Romantic Poems, ed. S. C. Chew (1936), pp. xxv-xxvi.

[9] The Faust legend has also inspired several operas: Boïto's Mefistofele (1866); Berlioz's La Damnation de Faust (1893); Busoni's Doktor Faust (1925); and Gounod's Faust (1859). Benét's Reader's Encyclopedia contains general information concering the Faust figure (329).

[10] In the pseudo-scientific horror of more recent gothic, the Accursed Wanderer assumes the form of the mad scientist or unfeeling automaton.

chivalric tradition and pastoral virtue, he is cultivated in the arts and nature. Early prototypes of the Young Hero include: Radcliffe's Valancourt and Vivaldi; Lewis' Raymond and Lorenzo; Maturin's John Sandal; and Shelley's Clerval. The Young Hero mirrors the beauty, grace, and compassion of the Heroine whom he adores. In the typical gothic narrative, however, he becomes separated from her, leaving her conveniently at the mercy of the Villain. In early gothic novels, the Young Hero suffers unjust rejection and temporary isolation from society.

His rescue and reintegration is due to resolution of the confusion which surrounds his origin and identity, a trope that pervades gothic narratives. Lost parents, fateful contacts with unknown, and encounters with mysterious strangers are characteristic variations of this trope. The restoration of the Young Hero to his rightful station is usually accomplished by several recurring gothic motifs which convey forgotten knowledge: identifying birthmarks or scars; ancestral portraits; miniatures; tokens of identity such as rings or other jewelry; manuscripts, confessions or wills, documents, maps, or scrolls tied with faded ribbon; and mirrors. The discovery of these motifs in secret hiding places usually has a dramatic and decisive effect on the gothic narrative. Inheritance is central to the question of identity since it involves the passing on of identity from one generation to the next. Inheritance attempts to domesticate the power of sexuality in the service of stability and continuity. While marriage, with the implied establishment of a line of succession, reconciles male and female in stable unity through inheritance. If inheritance is poisoned at the source, no genuine authority and power and no true identity can proceed from it (Day 80-81), again prohibiting ascent to an upper world or establishment of a new paradise.

Of the four *mythoi* described by Northrup Frye in Anatomy of Criticism, the one that most closely resembles the Young Hero's plight is that of comedy. Since comedy often contains a potential tragedy, the Young Hero often suffers as a victim for the sins of his fathers, "the natural prey of dark forces at large in the world and in the hearts of men" (LeTellier 40-49). Ancient archetypes undergird the character of the Young Hero. Robert LeTellier links the Young Hero to the scapegoat or *pharmakos* who is neither innocent or guilty, but represents "human nature under sentence of death." In later gothic, the Young

Hero prototypes denote the spiritual mystery of victimization as reintegration into society becomes the terrifying reality of death, a literal reenactment of Christ's sacrifice (40-44).

The Angelic Heroine embodies virtue. She simultaneously evokes the "fragile refinement" of the Virgin and the robust beauty of Mary Magdalene. Essentially a symbolic figure, she represents salvation and hope for the Young Hero and is usually the unwilling object of the Villain's sexual passion. Usually portrayed as an accomplished lady, the Angelic Heroine fulfills the feminine ideal. She is modest and innocent, refined and cultured, and has religious devotion without a "burning inner conviction of soul." She appreciates art and nature. In the gothic tradition, the Angelic Heroine's character evolves from that of a flat, colorless type aligned with the forces of good to suffering and sacrificial womanhood (LeTellier 52-68). Indeed, "the Heroine's suffering is the principal action of the story because it is the only action she can perform" (Russ 50). The Heroine's suffering can either be transcended in the happy gothic through marriage or can be (transc)ended in the tragic gothic through death (DeLamotte 185). Angelic Heroine gothic prototypes include: Walpole's Isabella and Matilda; Lewis' Agnes and Antonia; and Maturin's Immalee/Isidora.

The Demonic Woman is the antithesis of the Angelic Heroine and is characterized by her dark genius, demonic ambition, and a relentless passion for evil. Like her early prototypes in folk-tales, she frequently assumes the form of a mother, wicked stepmother, or influential mentor with decisive control over the lives of her children or charges. She is both a spiritual and physical threat to the Young Hero, the Young Heroine, and in some cases, to the Villain-Hero himself. Her objective in the narrative is to ensure destruction of the various forms of moral and social order. Towards this end, she displays a chameleon-like ability to adjust to any situation in pursuit of her primary goal, that of ensnaring an innocent's soul and damning it to Hell: she can become at once the wanton concubine, satanic mentor, or *femme fatale*. She effectively undermines the process of ascent (and narrative techniques of recognition and restitution) and forces the narrative action to remain in the dark underworld of the tragic gothic. In

damning those around her, she also loses her own soul (LeTellier 69-77). Early gothic Demonic Women include Lewis' Matilda and Radcliffe's Marchesa di Vivaldi.

Gothic novels frequently incorporate moral stereotypes that reinforce eighteenth-century values (Roberts 71). The Loving Father or Gentle Mentor represents paternal or maternal love. Robert LeTellier locates this type in the old hermit figure of romance. Wise and noble, the hermit represents a "rational and restrained view of life" and takes upon himself the Herculean task of assisting lonely travelers through life. This character type assumes various roles: surrogate father or mother, spiritual director, wizard, or protector in time of need. Occasionally such figures will inhabit subterranean dwellings which indicate the depth of their understanding of the secrets of the world (LeTellier 78-82).

No gothic novel would be complete without lower-class character types like the Garrulous Maids and Trusty Henchman. These characters roughly correspond to comic buffoons or *bomolochoi* in the comedy (Frye, Anatomy of Criticism 172). Generally portrayed as uneducated and superstitious, they provide spontaneous comic relief during periods of heightened suspense and terror in the action, thus delaying the narrative. They also serve as foils to the primary characters (LeTellier 85-87).

The grotesque is a tangential technique of characterization in gothic fiction. Modern American writer Sherwood Anderson attributes the grotesque qualities of Winesburg, Ohio characters to their single-minded pursuit of partial truths, a quality reminiscent of the obsessive behaviors of that community's traditional gothic predecessors. Similarly, D. W. Robertson attributes grotesqueness to a conflict between a character's outward acknowledgment of spiritual values or social attitudes and an inward reality which he actually practices. The character's divided response to this conflict results in humor and absurdity (252-53).

Both of these interpretations of the grotesque are correct. The grotesque derives originally from medieval, ecclesiastical gothic decorations which depicted mythical creatures of the earth and the underworld. These creatures were disturbingly familiar and frightening in their fusion of human and animal, beauty and ugliness, and good and evil (Bayer-Berenbaum 62). This fusion of opposing qualities

in ecclesiastical decoration and in the literary grotesque illustrates not only human perversity but, more profoundly, the unavoidable duality of existence at the heart of human nature.

The "idea of a double life, a parting of good and evil as though into two separate entities in the same individual, and of a veritable double, is an extremely vital theme of terror in romantic literature" (Railo 186). This unavoidable duality of existence underlying gothic fiction attempts to startle the reader into a recognition of the dark or evil side of life which people attempt to ignore or explain away (Northey 91). It has been portrayed variously as a conflict in the human soul between good versus evil, *eros* versus *thanatos*, insider versus outsider, conscious versus unconscious, female versus male, and sensual versus spiritual. Literary manifestations of doubling include: characters who are juxtaposed to each other; characters who have split personalities; or characters who have a double identity. Occasionally, a double conscience will haunt a character, or a double will act as an objectification of the evil within.

Devices of reflection often indicate the divided nature of the self. The reflection of a mirror, mask, portrait, or statue can imply an identity between the inward glimpse toward the dark recesses of the human condition and the outward, transcendent gaze towards spiritual truth; sometimes, in its darkest night, the soul somehow sees most clearly what is beyond itself (DeLamotte 116). Often the image appears at an odd angle that affords a new perspective. Occasionally, however, the reflective surface is distorted or darkened so that the image cannot be trusted (MacAndrew 155).

Religious symbols and images also present a picture of man as eternal victim of both himself and of something beyond himself. Some of these symbols and images include: demons, gods, mythic heroes, castles, cathedrals, manor houses, temples, graveyards, churchyards, dungeons, labyrinths, caves, icebound seas, high mountain crags, lightning, and storms. They are both metaphors of the self and of a nameless other, emblematic of the agonizing duality imbedded deep in the human personality (Thompson 7).

Other literary symbols, motifs, and techniques depict the perverse aspects of human nature. Automatons can indicate the passivity or insensitivity of mankind; vermin can suggest evil; and physical

deformity can indicate moral corruption (Lawson 171-72). In later gothic, however, a character's moral state becomes more difficult to intuit based on this type of physical description, as evil tends to be ambiguous and enigmatic (MacAndrew 154). Writers have used a variety of literary techniques--paradox, the oxymoron, synesthesia, mixed and far-fetched metaphors--to illustrate the grotesque's ambiguity, complexity, distortion, and incongruity of reality.

The best examples of gothic writing, though, use the elements of the grotesque wisely and sparingly. Ruskin's distinction between noble and ignoble forms of the grotesque seems particularly relevant in discussing the application of the grotesque mode to literary efforts. He differentiates between the mere spectacle of its use and its more profound grasp of higher spiritual truths:

> For the master of the noble grotesque knows the depth of all at which he seems to mock, and would feel it at another time, or feels it in a certain undercurrent of thought even while he jests at it, but the workman of the ignoble grotesque can feel and understand nothing, and mocks at all things with the laughter of the idiot and the cretin. (Stones of Venice III, 141)

The grotesque is not solely confined to gothic characterization but is also reflected in gothic setting, that is to say not a particular setting but a particular *use* of setting. Setting in the gothic novel can serve simply as a backdrop, or at a more complex level, can evoke mood and atmosphere, can recreate the illusion of reality, can act as a powerful symbol, and can assume intense religious significance. It can represent anything from melodramatic highlights to profound inner anxieties and fears. Gothic setting powerfully illustrates and echoes the central thematic conflict between good and evil.

Perhaps the most familiar settings associated with the gothic genre are the castle and the church in various stages of decay. Many critics generally agree that the gothic tradition arose in response to revolutionary cultural upheavals--as the known past gave way to an unknown and uncertain present. The gothic ruin serves as a symbol of the past in the present and displays a beauty which impresses upon

> the mind . . . a tender melancholy bred from reflexion upon times long since gone; it inspires the philosopher with meditations upon the swift passage of man, prince and peasant alike, all fallen to dust; the ivy clambering around the broken tracery of a noble window, the grass that waves where some stately altar stood, the sky seen through the gaping rafters of some great banqueting hall, the crumbling arch of some yawning portal, the lone courtyard that so often rang with the

> cheery noise of horse and hound, all these bear witness to the impermanence of human things, and in their decadence are in some sense symbols of a wider liberty. (Summers 189)[11]

These structures have become disengaged from their social moorings; the reclusive tendencies of their inhabitants indicates a complete lack of social function (Milbank 19). They are often representative of the collapse of the feudal period and its decadent aristocracy, indicating the triumph of chaos over order and, as Milbank has observed, of an imprisoned protagonist who wishes to escape and move outside (24). Similarly, in the female gothic which relates the symbolic burial alive of the female protagonist, a related sense of domestic entrapment and concealed suffering is conveyed (DeLamotte 153).

Often settings themselves become characters in the gothic novel. Montague Summers stresses the primacy of architecture in this genre, emphasizing that the protagonist is not the persecuted heroine but the

> remote and ruined castle with its antique courts, deserted chambers, pictured windows that exclude the light, haunted galleries amid whose mouldering gloom is heard the rustle of an unseen robe, a sigh, a hurried footfall where no mortal step should tread; the ancient manor, hidden away in the heart of a pathless forest, home of memories of days long gone before when bright eyes glanced from casement and balcony over the rich domain, the huge girthed oaks, the avenues and far-stretching vistas, the cool stream winding past the grassy lawns, but now tenanted only by a silver-headed retainer and his palsied dame; the huge fortress set high upon some spar of the Apenines, dark machicolated battlements and sullen towers which frown o'er the valleys below, a lair of masterless men, through whose dim corridors prowl armed bandits, whose halls ring with hideous revelry or anon are silent as the grave; the lone and secret convent amid the hills ruled by some proud abbess whose nod is law, a cloister of which the terraces overlook vast precipices shagged with larch and darkened by the gigantic pine, whose silences are only disturbed by the deep bell that knolls to midnight office and the ceremonies of solemn prayer. (191)

Gothic writers will often provide a tranquil, pastoral setting for the haunted castle to heighten the contrast and to balance the effect. Just as frequently, writers juxtapose the spatial realms of the castle, a site of insecurity, danger and crime, with the church, a place of holiness and refuge. Occasionally, gothicists will reverse expectations of this type of setting in order to evoke a more dramatic rather than symbolic effect in the narrative. The church, for example, might ironically be a refuge for evil rather than for good.

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[11] Summers may be referring here to the inevitable and ultimate freedom of death, a common element in most examples of tragic gothic fiction.

The haunted castle or church generally had two sources of terror at its command: its dungeons and its supernatural elements (Railo 137). The architectural embodiment of the character's initiation this world of desire and terror is often set in surroundings suggesting the danger of the archetypal Fall (DeLamotte 72). Maurice Lévy observes that "Un château est essentiellement un lieu où l'on se perd" (271). Indeed, the places for losing oneself do seem, at times, endless: subterranean passages, vaults, crypts, and labyrinths are often associated with inexorable constriction by the forces of evil, death, and anti-life (108). They "become the symbol of the buried recesses of man's mind, the reservoir of his instinctive impulses. It is here that dark, inexpressible desires of the secret self find their fulfillment in a world where nightmares become real, a world of ghastly extremes where all restraint and moderation disappear. They are dark and frightening regions beneath familiar relationships and ordinary characters" (LeTellier 108-09).

Mysterious rooms, often locked and in various stages of deterioration within these structures, contain horrible secrets of crimes committed in them and the omnipresence of evil (Railo 90). Social law, restraint, and order do not exist within these enclosures and interiors (LeTellier 107). The gothic dialectic of inside versus outside is explained by Mark Madoff:

> Outside is the modern, civilized, orderly, banal, decorous place, where the Gothic protagonist . . . begins and . . . ends. It is a place where appearance and reality are trusted . . . Sexuality flows regularly into courtship and marriage, violence into lawful resolution of conflicts, desire and passion into commerce . . . Inside is the ancient, barbaric, disorderly, passionate, indecorous place where the Gothic protagonist . . . arrives only through apparently accidental transgression. Thus Gothic fiction uses space--the difference between inside and outside--as a metaphor of time --the difference between past and present--and as a metaphor of culture--the difference between self and society . . . [The] locked rooms of the Gothic also enclose an ambiguity: they are repulsive yet attractive, contemptible yet fascinating, places. (51-52)

The inside/outside dialectic plays itself out in the deserted suite, in which the protagonist is confined (and usually observed in a remote and solitary window)--and in the prison, the hidden cell, the madhouse, and its more modern counterpart, the laboratory of a cabalistic seeker of knowledge. The room often holds the key to the inmate's identity, a knowledge that is often concealed in secret drawers or behind secret doors (DeLamotte 195). The room is more often than not, however, the "[ante-chamber] to

the abyss which, in its turn, leads into the . . . eternal dungeons of damnation" (LeTellier 207). Monotonous repetition (of dripping water, for example) is often used to convey claustrophobia in these situations of entrapment.

Gothic architecture usually presides over regions where the spiritual atmosphere of the Middle Ages is still felt, where monasteries are still found, and where the horrors of the Inquisition are still fresh (many gothicists found Italy an attractive setting). The south was an exotic, colorful, luxurious region fusing mountain scenery and passionate inhabitants. In sternly Protestant countries, the latter awakened "pleasing and excitingly torturous visions" and many gothicists made use of its appeal:

> The longing for the south, for any alien and distant setting, is typical of romanticism and reflects the effort of their imagination to break away from the fetters of homely experience . . . [The South] denoted entrance to a territory and an atmosphere where, freed from the narrow confines of their surroundings, their visions, passions and the characters with whom they dealt, could develop to dimensions that in any other connection would have been both impossible and unendurable. (Railo 315)

Supernatural elements pervade gothic fiction, but the ghosts, forest spirits, witches, and demons themselves are largely secondary figures, theatrical constructs based largely on folklore. These "misty and vaporous spirits," representing at times the spirit of good, at times the spirit of evil, serve as mouthpieces for the author's opinions and are notable for their sheer lack of individuality. As such, these spirits (unlike other gothic character types) are "confined by tradition; the ghost has not proved capable either of development or of unrestricted use." Popular motifs associated with the ghost include the ghost's demonic stare and the ghost's appearance at some social gathering (Railo 257-62). Its appearance in labyrinthine passages of gothic castles is used primarily to evoke the past.

With religious issues of salvation and damnation foremost in the minds of gothic writers (along with the ambiguous role of the Church in resolving these issues), superstition played a significant role in the gothic novel. Ecclesiastical laws, aligned with everything anti-life, are usually portrayed as monstrous and inhuman. For Matthew G. Lewis, for example, the effects of religious life involved radical changes in personality. For Charles Maturin, religion was a draining of the life force. In the gothic novel, images of contraction and restraint used in connection with the Church are a sure indication of the presence of evil.

Often the Villain expedites the tragic demise of his victims through propagation of superstitious belief; it holds weak minds in frightened subjugation, provides an opportunity for the negative aspects of human nature to surface, and screens evil deeds from view. To fall victim to superstitious fear is to lose reason, to become less than human. It substitutes a defective system of frightening taboos for the unity and reassuring faith in God (LeTellier 211-16).

Writers also use gothic setting to heighten dramatic effect or to intensify terror preceding an incident by increasing emotional and sensual perception. Extreme contrasts are characteristic of gothic fiction: gentle breezes and howling winds, babbling brooks and roaring rapids, peaceful pastures and savage mountains, woodland glades and gloomy forests. Varied atmospheric phenomena such as clouds, wind, thunder, and lightning further intensify gothic terror while the dark ambiguity of nocturnal settings provides vivid contrast to daylight reality. Moonlight, in particular, throws a spectacularly vague, indistinct outline over every aspect of setting. To borrow Eino Railo's metaphor, "it is a theatrical searchlight cast from the wings at suitable moments" (11). Writers employ an accumulation of details to achieve the pessimistic tone and a constant atmosphere of doom and decay or to deepen the protagonist's detachment and alienation from society: the solitude of a mountain eagle, the eerie hoot of an owl in the night, oppressive silence, desert wastelands, severe heat, numbing cold, bells or clocks which proclaim time or bear a message, heavy textured tapestries which conceal horrible secrets, or the melancholy desolation of deserted castles and rooms. These details can be used as mere spectacle, as fictional environment, or to convey a more profound sense of meaning--as metaphorical expression or as an extension of a character's personality.

Elizabeth MacAndrew agrees that "exterior landscape, the storms and the sunshine are reflective of the figures in and beneath them, rounding out the otherwise scanty characterization and keeping personality traits general" (214). Often setting is representative of a character's spiritual life or will and carries heavy symbolic resonance. Destructive natural elements (violent storms, churning seas, frozen wastes, firestorms, attacks by wild animals, shipwrecks) for example, can represent the metaphysical

prison of the human condition, can reflect dark passions, or can symbolize psychological anguish, suffering, or moral decadence.

The gothic landscape can be as grotesque or as pure as the characters themselves. It can, for example, represent a spiritual wasteland which reflects the inner sterility of the characters. Because the gothic narrative often follows the Christian motif of death and rebirth and of regeneration through love, many of the "natural features have dual, symbolic functions, representing both the unregenerated and regenerated sides of existence" (Northey 90). Some gothic writers choose to portray a balanced universe in their uses of setting and employ a pastoral mode as a kind of prelapsarian Garden of Eden. These idyllic settings emphasize such moral principles as virtue and domesticity cultivated, of course, under ideal conditions (LeTellier 95). Uncivilized regions (including urban life), in contrast, connote the hellish consequences of the lawless and negative aspects of human nature.

Dreams serve to heighten the mood and the intensity of the gothic narrative in various ways by a seemingly plausible use of the fantastic, improbable, and surreal. They provide for the appearance of the supernatural but soften its impact (Roberts 75). They can resurrect the remote past. They can reflect or augment a character's personality, revealing aspects of the self through the subconscious and increasing understanding of human nature. Instead of the monologue, dreams can establish "immediacy and a psychological, subjective link between the interior character and his surroundings" (80). Dreams can also foreshadow impending doom and hidden crimes. By prefiguring impending danger for the protagonist, dreams paradoxically offer release from a restricted world (DeLamotte 194). They can, moreover, interpret narrative action in more direct, allegorical terms.

In his study of the gothic tradition entitled An Intensifying Vision of Evil: The Gothic Novel (1764-1820) As a Self-Contained Literary Cycle, Robert LeTellier discusses at length the intensification of these gothic techniques. The sheer spectacle of Walpole's The Castle of Otranto becomes dramatic background in the early Radcliffean novels, and further evolves into the allocation of moral values with more profound significance in the work of Shelley and Maturin (118). Over the last two hundred-fifty

years, the gothic has proven itself a plastic, imaginative medium by which to depict the peculiarities of the human condition. In nineteenth-century America, writers such as Irving, Cooper, Melville, Hawthorne, Poe, and James, to name a few, contributed their own individual interpretations of the gothic tradition to literary history. Similarly, all of the southern local colorists selected for this study found gothic themes and techniques ideally suited for their own and often very different, narrative ends. While all of these novels are of the gothic tradition, they are not necessarily in it.

We begin this study of the gothic tradition in the southern local color movement with Mary Noailles Murfree's second novel, The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains, published in 1885. In this novel, considered by many to be her best, Murfree uses the gothic tradition to tap into the heart of darkness at the center of human nature.

CHAPTER III

THE PROPHET OF THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS: MARY NOAILLES MURFREE'S GOTHIC *DEINITIATION*

Traditionally, most critical discussions concerning local color fiction have tended to emphasize its realism, the quaintness of dialect and regional customs, and the provincial aspects of the culture which, in their isolated and remote contexts, have little bearing on the real world. Certainly, the movement's lesser writers "settled for caricatures, extraordinary backgrounds, and mannerisms whose charms lay in oddity or in a spurious quaintness" (Cary 35). This approach has so focused on the oddities of regional dialect and character that it has virtually excluded the more profound implications of the better fiction emerging from the local color movement. The movement's better writers "achieved understanding of the milieu, interpreting character, setting, and manners as a complex of interacting forces which sustained little worlds sufficient unto themselves (34-35). Local color fiction does more than depict a sentimentally nostalgic, picturesque or grotesque view of a provincial culture. It frequently portrays life in a particular time and place and vests it with a fundamentally moral and psychological meaning; it often communicates a narrative of universal significance through the use of gothic themes and techniques.

One of the most compelling literary works arising out of the local color movement is Mary Noailles Murfree's The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains. Generally considered the finest of Murfree's novels, Prophet was first published serially in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1885, and afforded its author wide critical acclaim as a local color writer. Aside from its importance as a shining example of "local color" fiction, however, the novel's exploration of the heart of darkness at the center of human nature makes it a significant contribution to southern literature of the nineteenth-century.

Mary Noailles Murfree had ample opportunity to observe the subtleties of human nature. A childhood fever, contracted when she was five, would leave her partially paralyzed for the remainder of her life. In this respect, Murfree has much in common with the alienated protagonist of Prophet whose inadvertant murder of his wife and child leads to his own spiritual paralyzation. Forced to assume the role of observer rather than of participant, both Murfree and Hiram Kelsey display perceptive insights into

the intricacies of human nature. In the novel, Kelsey's insight translates into an apparent gift of prophecy. Murfree's insight translates into vicarious participation in the novel's action and also allows the writer to become herself a "prophet" in predicting the novel's outcome. Concerning Murfree's perceptive insight into human nature, Richard Cary writes:

> The indicative factor [of Murfree's writing] lies in [its] revelation of a mind meticulous in its scrutiny of individual behavior within a complicated framework of rules . . . She had an instinct for the motives that underlay manners and could pierce unerringly to them . . . Despite the fact that her mountain stories deal predominantly with people whose norms of deportment admit no such elaborate shams, she accurately confirmed such amenities and priorities as existed among them. To the extent that valley and town folk differed in their usages, she also observed these . . . . (32)

Some of Murfree's critics maintain that her generic blending of traits and customs from different mountain regions led to exaggerated and inaccurate depictions of the Tennessee mountaineers. According to Isabella Harris, Murfree was horrified to see her mountain friends identified with poor whites, but she had, unwittingly and unwillingly, contibuted to the stereotype of the mountaineer as lazy and prolific (212). Others, however, like sociologist Harry Toulmin, see in Murfree's fiction "a faithful reproduction of the actual conditions with little perversion for artistic purposes" (62).

Murfree's fiction, influenced as it was by "faithful reproduction of actual conditions," was also shaped by the popular reading trends of the day. Like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Henry James, Murfree was influenced strongly by English Romanticism and the gothic tradition which evolved from it. Her father, William Law Murfree, declared that "no education can be complete without a good knowledge of Scott," and the twenty-two volumes of the Waverley novels were often in use" (Parks 20). The Murfrees' private library occupied two of the upstairs rooms of their spacious, Georgian residence. "Its contents reflected a refined and educated taste: *The Spectator*, the Waverley romances, Austen, Thackeray, Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Bulwer-Lytton, Dumas, Fenimore Cooper. *Jane Eyre* headed the list of Gothic favorites. Among the early poets, Scott, Byron, Moore, and Tennyson predominated. Earlier periods were represented by Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan, Richardson,

and Edward Young" (Cary 15).[1] The childhood fever which had left Murfree partially and permanently paralyzed reinforced her interest in literature and writing. The precocious and imaginative child frequently "cast herself as heroine of innumerable romantic dramas in which a totally conceptual Henri Beauchamp figured as her habitual deliverer" (14). She was especially attracted to the work of Scott, Dickens, and the Brontës. The influence of these nineteenth-century gothic writers, their techniques and themes, is clearly visible in Murfree's own work (15-16). Indeed, critics William Dean Howells and Richard Cary among others have commented on the gothic aspects in Murfree's fiction and its similarity to the use of that tradition in the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Dickens, and Thomas Hardy.

Although not a "gothicist," Murfree nonetheless relies on gothic effects to shape her fictional space. These effects in Prophet not only structure the novel, but illustrate the protagonist's symbolic journey into the human heart of darkness, revealing the duality of good and evil in human nature. Transfigured in Prophet, the Tennessee mountains become a microcosm of the world itself and, to a certain extent, a moral landscape on which the battle for man's soul is waged. Murfree uses natural description to intensify conflict, to heighten suspense or tension, to create mood or atmosphere, and to reflect and expand her character types. Highly symbolic landscapes and settings along with images of enclosure and escape support the *deinitiation* of her protagonist from "civilized" society in the essential gothic conflict between good and evil.

In Prophet, Murfree does not initially render a physical sensation of fear in her audience, as had her English gothic predecessors, but rather communicates a psychological awareness of the essential enigma behind a particular place and its inhabitants. She imbues her Great Smoky Mountains with myth to effect the timelessness and mystery underlying the duality of human nature. The remoteness of the region and the apparent absence of time are reflected in the faces of Kelsey's congregation in the log meeting-house poised "high on a rugged spur":

> It was strange, looking into their faces, and with a knowledge of the limited phases of their existence, their similarity of experience here, where a century might come and go, working no change save that, like the leaves, they fluttered awhile in the outer air with the spurious

[1] Elizabethan drama provided thematic and structural models for the gothic novel (Varma 29).

> animation called life, and fell in death, and made way for new bourgenings like unto themselves . . . . (180)

Christian mythology dominates Murfree's Tennessee mountains. The spirits of Old Testament prophets roam the "barren, awful heights" and meet with Parson Hiram Kelsey "on the bald" just as surely as Satan hunts the grief-stricken mountain prophet like "a pa'tridge on the mounting" for his involvement in the accidental deaths of his wife and child. The mountains contain "some coercive internal evidence of the great truths . . . On a mountain the ark rested; on a mountain the cross was planted; the steeps beheld the glories of the transfiguration; the lofty solitudes heard the prayers of Christ; and from the heights issued the great sermon instinct with all the moralities of every creed" (169). Murfree's narrative also contains references from Greek and Roman mythology. In opposition to Kelsey's sublime mountain heights, Cayce's cave, a veritable "Tartarus" of men, is symbolic of man's heart of darkness. The primal nature of evil is evident in "the immortal echoes who were here before him, and here still" (159).

Murfree also employs myth to round out her characters. Hiram Kelsey is perhaps the best example of this technique in the novel's obvious parallel of the prophet's life to the Christian myth of Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice and resurrection. Similarly, Greek and Roman mythology informs many of Murfree's characters. The Hephaestian blacksmith Gid Fletcher, is described as a "rural Hercules," and Murfree repeatedly emphasizes Dorinda Cayce's almost immortal, classical beauty. These mythological references provide an important link between past and present. In this timeless, remote, and distant setting, The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains speaks to its readers not as folksy anecdote but as commentary on the human condition.

During the eighteenth century, American gothicist Charles Brockden Brown had pioneered the substitution of the "haunted forest (in which nothing is as it seems) and the cave, the natural pit or abyss from which man struggles against great odds to emerge" for the haunted castle and dungeon (Fieldler, Love and Death 160). Murfree continues this "Americanizing" of the gothic tradition in her novel. The grandeur of the Great Smoky Mountains evokes the sublimity of the gothic aesthetic and provides Murfree a picturesque and highly symbolic canvas on which to paint the struggle between good and evil. The

novel's opening lines neatly summarize the disparity between the ephemeral ideal to which her individualistic protagonist aspires and the real world of human frailty of which he is undeniably a part. Amid the "mingled phantasmagoria of shifting clouds and flickering sheen and glimmering peak," and "shivering vapors,--vague, mysterious, veiling in solemn silence the barren awful heights," the Tennessee mountain wilderness graphically illustrates the extensive separation between the ideal and reality:

> Always enwrapped in the illusory mists, always touching the evasive clouds, the peaks of the Great Smoky Mountains are like some barren ideal, that has bartered for the vague isolation of a higher atmosphere the material values of the warm world below. Upon those mighty and majestic domes no tree strikes root, no hearth is alight; humanity is an alien thing, and utility set at naught. (1)

Throughout the novel Murfree repeatedly contrasts the lofty and sublime heights against the abysmal depths of the Smoky Mountains to reflect the chasm--between good and evil, between the ideal and the reality, and between the individual and society--that divides and alienates Parson Hiram Kelsey from an awareness of his selfhood throughout the novel.

Murfree aligns her darkly romantic protagonist, in his quest for spiritual truth, with the savage and sublime beauty of the mountain wilderness in the romantic tradition of French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau. Like the prophets of old, Kelsey goes out to pray in the mountains to be nearer to God. In an introspective monologue later in the novel, Kelsey describes the unfortunate circumstances surrounding his personal tragedy and his subsequent "calling":

> But it 'peared ter me ez religion war 'bout all ez war lef', arter I hed gin the baby the stuff the valley doctor had lef' fur Em'ly,--bein' ez I couldn't read right the old critter's cur'ous scrapin's with his pencil,--an' gin Em'ly the stuff fur the baby. An it died. An' then Em'ly got onsettled an' crazy, an' tuk ter vagrantin' 'roun', an' fell off'n the bluff. An' some say she flunged herself off'n it. And I knows she flunged herself off'n it through bein' out'n her mind with grief. (78)

The sublime contemplation of nature presumably brings Kelsey nearer to his spiritual ideal. Inspired and exhalted by the creative spirit in nature and in man, Kelsey is free from the social restraints of law and religion, and approaches his happiest possible state.

Despite their majesty and spiritual edification, however, the prophet's mountains are haunted by the forces of evil. Suicide, infanticide, and homicide drive the novel's primary narratives while Satan and

the social institutions of law and religion pursue their own brands of justice. The seriousness of these conflicts delineated at the outset of the novel is further emphasized by Murfree's trademark use of natural effects to create suspense and heighten dramatic action. Frequent juxtaposition of moonlight and shadows illuminates the dark passions in the human soul and establishes the threatening mood and atmosphere that pervades the entire novel: "The shadows were beginning to creep slowly up the slopes of the Great Smoky Mountains, as if they came from the depths of the earth" (29). Similarly, the Cayces' "honor," compromised by Sheriff Green's threats to Dorinda for her protection of the outlaw Rick Tyler, results in the clan's deadly vow of revenge against the Sheriff in a primitive, moonlit ritual:

> There was a flash in the faint moonbeams, as he held out to her a long, sharp knife . . . "No, no!" she reiterated, as one of the younger men, her brother Peter, stepped swiftly out from the shadow, seized her hand with the knife trembling in it, and, catching the moonlight on the barrel of the rifle, guided upon it, close to the muzzle, the mark of a cross. (34)

Ending the chapter with a "melancholy waning suffusion of light, and the night very dark," Murfree leaves no doubt as to the evil implications of the ritual or of the conflicts she has outlined so far. Settlement storekeeper Nathan Hoodendin's repeated warning serves only to augment the ominous atmosphere and the pervasive nature of man's propensity to evil: "Satan's a-stirrin',--Satan's a-stirrin' 'roun' the Big Smoky" (47).

Like many gothic writers, Murfree is drawn to alienated and fragmented individuals torn between the extremes of good and evil, salvation and damnation. Parson Hiram Kelsey's relentless search for his "ideal" and for the experiences that give meaning to life inevitably lead him to social confrontation--depicted in several convergent narratives within the novel. Often in the gothic tradition, as Eve Sedgewick has observed, social and cultural forces restrict the protagonist "from something to which he ought normally to have access." Traditionally, this access is gained through an initiation into society; resolution of conflict is achieved through some sort of social institution, usually marriage. Generally however, as R. W. B. Lewis points out, in American literature "the valid rite of initiation for the individual in the new world is not an initiation *into* society, but, given the character of society, an

initiation *away from it* . . . (115). This *deinitiation* theme is not unlike the tragic gothic narrative pattern described by Eugenia DeLamotte in chapter two of this study.

In the typical gothic hero-journey, the hero usually descends into an unknown world where, after various difficulties, he acquires some essential benefit which ensures his ascent to the world where his journey began. In the tragic gothic, however, the hero-journey is unsuccessful. The descent is made for the wrong reasons, and the knowledge discovered in the unknown world makes ascent into the daylight world meaningless and impossible (DeLamotte 54).

Parson Hiram Kelsey roughly follows this tragic gothic *deinitiation*. In the ordinary daylight world, Kelsey associates with "'bold, bad, men,' . . . before 'he got religion, an' sot hisself ter consortin' with the saints'" (191). The deaths of his wife and child due to his own negligence, however, alter Kelsey's perspective and cause him to introspectively and relentlessly seek spiritual truth in a physical and psychological wilderness. Linda Bayer-Berenbaum describes the motivation behind this gothic quest:

> The exotic, the outcast . . . is characteristic of the other whom one becomes through loss--loss of native land, loss of past, loss of innocence--and the internal gap that results, the void filled by guilt, the changed sense of self, precipitates a greater self-consciousness and self-knowledge that separate the stranger first from his old self and then from the rest of humanity. A certain complexity that invites inspection, that leads to still other complications, beckons the stranger to unravel the mysteries . . . . (138)

Kelsey's ensuing experiences and his final encounter with the evil deep at the heart of "civilized" society eventually lead him, either directly or indirectly, to the truth that he seeks. Murfree intentionally leaves the nature of this discovery ambiguous: it has, on the one hand, spiritually and physically redemptive qualities for Kelsey's life and for the lives of others; it also, unfortunately, prevents his return to the daylight world of reality. The protagonist's transcendence into a heavenly Paradise or his damnation to certain Hell remains obscure.

The narrative structure of Prophet has led many critics to concentrate foremost on the chronological order of the intersecting narratives, thereby relegating the Kelsey narrative to the realm of the incidental and affording the Tyler narrative principal attention. However, the narrative pattern that Murfree employs in Prophet is typically gothic and roughly follows what Robert LeTellier calls the

deepening recess narrative pattern in which several secondary narratives are usually embedded within an outermost frame. Although Murfree does not directly introduce "prophet" Hiram Kelsey into the novel until well into the third chapter, the main narrative which concerns him and his quest for spiritual truth and personal identity serves as an integral outer frame. In the *deepening recess* pattern, an ever-increasing depth of movement into an inner recess discloses each conflict and is followed by a movement outwards again (LeTellier 135). The conclusion of this type of pattern is generally, like the problematic conclusion of Prophet, open-ended and lends itself to ambiguous interpretation. Viewed from this perspective, the Kelsey narrative becomes the primary narrative, and in this respect, the embedded narratives support and further its action and significance to the novel as a whole.

Murfree lays expository groundwork in the opening chapters for the Kelsey narrative as well as many of the novel's embedded narratives: the pursuit of Rick Tyler by the law for his suspected involvement in the murder of Joel Byers; the romantic relationship between Dorinda Cayce and Rick Tyler; the pursuit of Kelsey by the law for his suspected involvement in the escape of Rick Tyler; and the pursuit of Sheriff Micajah Green by the Cayce clan for his informing against them. All of these narratives follow the gothic flight/pursuit pattern and concern the central gothic struggle between good and evil, suggested by Rick Tyler's pistols which swing incongruously from the plough-handles and give "caustic suggestion of human adversaries as fierce as the moral pursuit of the Principle of Evil . . . " (3-4).

The abstract nature of the primary narrative in which Kelsey is pursued by Satan becomes real in the secondary narratives in which other characters (including Kelsey) are pursued by representatives of social institutions: Sherriff Micajah Green and his self-appointed deputy, Gid Fletcher, for example, represent valley "law;" the Cayces' represent their own brand of mountain "justice"; and Brother Jake Tobin represents "religion." The pretense and hypocrisy underlying these social institutions is even more pronounced in the impotent character of the Judge, who is unable to effect a peaceful resolution to any of the conflicts.

This adversarial relationship between individual and society is evident in Murfree's alignment of both Satan and the social institutions of law and religion on the side of evil. Rick Tyler, for example, likens his own pursuit by the law to Kelsey's pursuit by Satan: "Ef [Kelsey] hed ever hed the State 'o Tennessee a-huntin' of him he would n't be so feared o' Satan . . . Satan's mighty active, cornsiderin' his age, but I'd be willin' ter pit the State o' Tennessee agin him when it kem ter huntin' of folks like a pa'tridge" (11). The line of demarcation between law and religion is, furthermore, blurred in Mrs. James' "vague idea that the whiskey tax was in the interest of temperance, and the revenue department was a religious institution" (144).

Of all of the secondary narratives in this struggle between good and evil, the Rick Tyler narrative most closely and more realistically mirrors and supports the Kelsey narrative. Like Kelsey, Tyler has been implicated in the murder, not of his wife and child, but of Joel Byers. The nemesis of both men eventually assumes the human form of Sheriff Micajah Green. Like Kelsey, Tyler is somewhat superhuman in stature: "His equestrian figure, darkly outlined against the far blue mountains and the intermediate valley, seemed of heroic size against the landscape . . . " (15-16). Moreover, the wilderness shelters both fugitives: "The deep shadows of the woods encompassing the clearing fell upon [Tyler] presently, and he, too, was but a shadow in the dusky monochrome of the limited vista. The dense laurel closed about him, and his mountain fastnesses, that had befriended him of yore, received him once again" (16). But instead of apprehending the sublimity of the wilderness, Tyler apprehends only the interminability of his exile, intenstified by "the melancholy moonlight in the melancholy pines, where the whip-poor-will moaned and moaned!" (38). Spurred by his jealousy for Dorinda, he travels to the Settlement where he is captured by Gid Fletcher. Tyler's own realistic, epic struggle with the blacksmith roughly parallels the immensity of Kelsey's spiritual struggle between the forces of good and evil:

> There was a turbulent struggle under the great silver moon and dead trees. Again and again the swaying figures and their interlocked shadows reeled to the verge of the cliff; one striving to fall and carry the other one with him, the other straining every nerve to hold back his captive. (54)

The rift between good and evil, between the ideal and the reality, between the individual and society becomes more readily apparent in Murfree's cast of characters. These characters are neatly aligned, as were their gothic predecessors, with the forces of good and evil. In discussing his sister's fiction, William Law Murfree, Jr. observed that she tended to delineate types, not individuals (Parks 177). Murfree, however, occasionally vests characters with complex and intriguing personalities, using gothic conventions to round out her characterization.

Parson Hiram Kelsey is an interesting fusion of several gothic types. He is at once the novel's Young Hero and Byronic Hero. In his study of the gothic, Robert LeTellier links the Young Hero to the ancient archetype of the scapegoat or *pharmakos*. The *pharmakos*, neither innocent or guilty, represents human nature under the sentence of death. In later gothic, this prototype denotes the spiritual mystery of victimization as reintegration into society becomes the terrifying reality of death, a literal reenactment of Christ's sacrifice (40-44). As Elizabeth Kerr observes, the "crucifixion . . . [is] the ultimate horror available for use in Christian-oriented fiction" (130).

The gothic novel revolves around the Biblical myth of the Fall of Man and his subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden. In this slightly different version of the gothic hero-journey, the wandering soul descends from paradisical innocence into experience. Here, the soul splits into "divided halves of what was once a primal moral unity" (Porte 63); mystery, darkness, license, and violence reign. Exiled, the soul is forced to wander, searching for its path of return. Eventually experience causes an intense, sensuous, emotional, and reasonable apprehension of life and secures the soul's transcendence into the second Garden of Paradise, the garden of the sublime innocence of the Resurrection (LeTellier 158-60).

The resemblance of Kelsey to Christ has attracted the attention of a number of critics. He is an innocent victim who paradoxically suffers: in attempting to heal his wife and child, he murders them instead. Isolated in "monastic indifference to the world," Kelsey prays in the "desert places on the 'bald' of the mountain." Murfree couples gothic effect with natural imagery to recreate the mystery surrounding

religious worship. The great dome, enshrouded by a "shivering, filmy mist," reminds Dorinda of "the veil of the temple, and she had a sense of intrusion" (60). Moreover, several events in the novel concerning Kelsey recall obvious similarities to events in Christ's life: Gid Fletcher's betraying Tyler for "blood money" recalls Judas' betrayal of Christ for thirty pieces of silver; Kelsey's expulsion of an intoxicated Amos James and Deputy from the log meeting-house recalls Christ's ousting of the money-changers from the temple; and Brother Jake Tobin's refusal to post bail for his fellow preacher provokes a Biblical outburst from Kelsey: "Pa'son K-Kelsey,--he hed t-turned plumb bleached, like a corpse, he stood up an' sez, 'The Lord hev fursaken me!'" (258). Finally, in the problematic conclusion of the novel, Kelsey's final and ultimate sacrifice of his own life to save Sheriff Green's is perhaps the most obvious indication of Kelsey's similarity to the central figure in Christian mythology.

In his self-imposed alienation from mankind, Kelsey also recalls the brooding figure of the Byronic Hero, whose solitude springs from the realization that he has overstepped the moral and emotional laws recognized by society. He is guilt-ridden over the deaths of his wife and daughter. His melancholy soul is "lit by graveyard moonlight, cold, dismal, and despairing" on the verge of insanity (Railo 308). Indeed, from infancy, Kelsey "had never been like his fellows . . . He had . . . peculiar gifts. He was learned in the signs of the weather, and predicted the mountain storms; he knew the haunts and habits of every beast and bird in the Great Smoky, every leaf that burgeons, every flower that blows. So deep and incisive a knowledge of human nature had he that this faculty was deemed supernatural, and akin to the gift of prophecy" (81). Kelsey's wandering in the wilderness, his conversations with the spirits of prophets, and his prophetic ability only reinforce the fact that Kelsey "air in no wise a sociable critter" (9). His mental anguish is reflected by the "uncomprehended light" in his eyes and a gaze that is "not of [this]world" (63). It is also evidenced in "voice of the man who was wont to go and pray in the desert places on the "bald" of the mountain . . . [There was] something indescribably wild and weird in those appealing, tempestuous tones, now rising as in frenzy, and now falling as with exhaustion,--beseeching,

adjuring, reproaching" (60). Constable Ephraim Todd simply maintains that "Hi Kelsey . . . war always more or less teched in the head."

Murfree repeatedly contrasts gothic extremes in natural description to emphasize Kelsey's alienation from society, from himself, and from God. She continually juxtaposes the lofty and sublime mountain peak, "splendidly illuminated with the red glamour of the sunset . . . and bar[ing] its brow before the majesty of heaven" (30), with deep ravines replete with "wild confusion of splintered and creviced rocks" (17). The contrast in natural landscape dramatically illustrates the chasm that divides Kelsey throughout the novel, the gulf between "his faith and unfaith" (79), between his "trusting heart . . . [and] . . . his doubting mind" (81), and between "[h]is ideal and himself, himself and what he sought to be" (185).

Kelsey's sympathetic female counterpart Dorinda Cayce is also aligned with the forces of good and mirrors his character. Like the Young Heroine, her goodness and grace are reflected in her classical beauty: "Her face was grave, but there was a smile in her eyes, which had the lustre and depth of a sapphire, and a lambent glow like the heart of a blue flame. They were fringed by long, black lashes . . . there was something impressive in her simple beauty, her youth, and her elastic vigor" (4). Both Kelsey and Dorinda have an innate understanding of human nature that foreshadows future events. At the novel's outset, torn by her concern for Tyler and for Green, Dorinda has "a wild vision--half in hope, half in anguish--of her brothers, in the saddle, armed to the teeth and riding like the wind" (76).

The characters most closely aligned with evil border on grotesque caricatures, a bizarre fusion of animal and human. In the traditional gothic, ecclesiastical gothic decorations usually depicted fanciful creatures of the earth and the underworld based on myth and folklore. Mufree's minor characters, usually comic, are lighter, more whimsical grotesques. Miller Amos James and Constable Ephraim Todd are both described as owlish. Kelsey's grandfather chirps like a "super-annuated cricket." The "filly-like" Mirandy Jane, "her tousled mane and black forelock hanging over her eyes," "canter[s] in and canter[s] out" (73). Settlement storekeeper Nathan Hoodendin's son, "a small tow-headed boy of ten . . . had an

alert, startled expression, as if he had just jumped out of a bush. His hair stood up in front; he had wide pop-eyes and long ears, and a rabbit-like aspect . . . " (44-45). These lower-class character types are typical of gothic fiction. As minor personages, they enliven the narrative with their animated actions and serve as foils to darker characters. They also provide spontaneous comic relief during periods of heightened tension and delay the narrative (LeTellier 85-87).

The physical and, at times, animalistic grotesqueness of these darker characters indicates not only inner depravity and corruption, but a general collapse of values. The actions of these characters often mirror their physical deformity. As in the grotesque creations of gothic art mentioned in chapter two, "the horror in these creatures is not otherworldly but disturbingly familiar; it is the more frightening for its fusion of good and evil, beauty and ugliness" (Bayer-Berenbaum 62). Sheriff Micajah Green, accompanied by his "buzzardy deputy" in his relentless pursuit of the outlaw Rick Tyler and later of Hiram Kelsey, resembles "a hound in the midst of hunting season." Gid Fletcher, the Settlement blacksmith whose "heart [is] ez hard ez [his] anvil," demonstrates "the supple ferocity of a panther" and is variously described in the novel as a bear and wildcat. Fletcher's predatory nature is evident in his capture of Rick Tyler for "blood money" and as Kelsey's adversary at the gander pull. The equine Pete Cayce, son of family patriarch "Groundhog Cayce," "was afflicted with a stammer, and at every obstruction his voice broke out with startling shrillness, several keys higher than the tone with which the sentence commenced. He was loose-jointed and had a shambling gait; his hair . . . hung in locks of dreary drab around his sun-embrowned face. His teeth were irregular and protruded slightly" (74). He is the epitome of evil in his hot-headed lust for conflict: "Pete thrust his aggressive face forward . . . His gaunt head, with long, colorless hair, protruding teeth, and homely prominent features, as it hung there in the isolating effect of that sharp and slender gleam,--the rest of his body concealed by the darkness,-- had a singularly unnatural and sinister aspect" (155-56). Similarly, the outlaw Rick Tyler lives the life of a "skulking wolf." The animal imagery used to describe these characters "provides a further indication of a

savage, meaningless world . . . and suggests the grotesque, spiritual pointlessness of human existence; man is, to use William Van O'Conner's phrase, 'caught in his own biological nature'" (Northey 60).

The lack of humanity that these characters manifest in their appearance is further emphasized by the restrictive narrative spaces that they inhabit or frequent, illustrating the gothic theme of enclosure and escape described in chapter two. External and internal forces usually converge on the individual in varying forms: social limitations, internal demands willed by the self, internal demands inflicted by memory, or internal demands inflicted by the past. The evil nature of these forces is usually associated with imprisonment of some kind and the progressively diminished space of the characters. The Settlement, the Cayces' cave, and the log meeting-house all illustrate these social limitations.

Shaftsville, the nearest bastion of civilization, is described as a "vale o' tears an' the valley o' the shadder o' death" (27). Its outpost in the Great Smokies, the Settlement, is a "sacrilege of civilization" (39):

> The shadows of the great dead trees in the midst of the Settlement were at their minimum in the vertical vividness of the noontide. They bore scant resemblance to those memorials of gigantic growths which towered, stark and white, so high to the intensely blue sky; instead, they were like some dark and leafless underbrush clustering about the sapless trunks . . . The mountains with each remove wore every changing disguise of distance: shadowing from sombre green to a dull purple and so away to the vantage-ground of illusions, where the ideal poises upon the horizon, and the fact and the fantasy are undistinguishably blended . . . The landscape was still,--very still; not the idle floating of a cloud, not the vague shifting of a shadow, not the flutter of a wing . . . . (96-97)

The Settlement provides Murfree an irresistible opportunity for satire--where better to find political "candidates,--talkative, full of anecdote, quick to respond, easily flattered, and flattering to the last degree" (98)--than in this spiritual wasteland? Her humorous political caricatures, grotesque distortions of the corrupt, superficial legal system, bring temporary relief to the mounting suspense and intensity of her narrative.

The entertainment during the political rally, however, eclipses the ruthlessness of politics in its violence and inhumanity. The gander pull is cruelly led by Gid Fletcher, who has succeeded in capturing and in brutally restraining Rick Tyler. If there were any doubts about the blacksmith's evil nature up to

this point in the novel, Murfree dispels it in her description of Fletcher's joy at playing master-of-ceremonies at the gander pull:

> The element of domination in his character gave a peculiar relish to the rôle of umpire; yet with his pride in his deftness and strength it cost him a pang to forego the competition in which he felt himself an assured victor. He armed himself with a whip of many thongs, and took his stand beneath a branch of one of the trees, from which the gander was suspended by his big feet, head downward. (101)

The cruelty of the event is so casually related by the narrator that it assumes a horrible aspect of normalcy. Horsemen, their mounts spurred by the sting of Fletcher's whip, attempt to pull the greased neck of the swaying gander as they ride past their target. The gander's screams mingle with the screams of its small owner and with the screams of the delighted spectators: "[he] was so funny one could hardly look at him." The gothic horror inherent in the screams provokes an awareness of some awful evil sinking into an extensive, unconscious reservoir of primitive dread (Thompson 3-4). In the midst of this hilarity, "[t]he blacksmith was fain to support himself against the tree for laughter, and the hurrahing Settlement could not remember when it had enjoyed anything so much" (108-09). Murfree's indifferent narrative voice and the intentional blurring of screams of distress and horror with screams of joy and delight, further illustrates the barbarity of "civilization."

In many respects the gander symbolizes the human condition as it sways at the mercy of the Settlement gladiators. Astonished at Kelsey's intervention in the "time-honored sport," Amos James comments that "Pa'son talked like the gaynder war his blood relation, own brothers, I'm a-thinkin'," (114). Indeed, the gander's awkward predicament, its ridiculous head and neck greased and "protrud[ing] with its peculiar motion unaware of the clutch it invited," is similar to the predicament of Everyman and of Kelsey himself, an innocent victim of evil and "the natural prey of dark forces at large in the world and in the hearts of men" (LeTellier 40-49).

This grim protrayal of the Settlement resembles more a living Hell than "civilization." The knowledge that Kelsey seeks, however, is not in a place where inhumanity and cruelty are merely played out. Although he is unaware of it as yet, his search for redeeming knowledge must necessarily take him to

the source--farther down, beyond the living Hell of the Settlement, and into the subterranean depths of the Tarturus of men, the Cayces' cave.

The serpentine approach to the cave by way of "a narrow bridle path, leading deep into the dense forests" is an even more symbolic journey into the blackness central to the heart and soul of man, a journey deep into primeval passion and superstition:

> It might have seemed that he was losing his way altogether when the path disappeared among the bowlders of a stream, half dry. He followed the channel up the rugged, rock-girt gorge for perhaps a mile, emerging at length upon a slope of outcropping ledges, where his horse left no hoof-print. Soon he struck into the laurel, and pressed on, guided by signs distinguishable only to the initiated: some grotesque gnarling of limbs, perhaps, of the great trees that stretched above the almost impenetrable undergrowth . . . . (147)

A "narrow passage, growing wider . . . and taller, but darker and with many short turns" ends in a "great subterranean vault, where dusky distorted figures, wreathing smoke, and a flare of red fire [suggest] Tartarus" (149). Repetition in the gothic narrative creates narrative immediacy in the "infinite multiplication of what should be a discrete incident in time" (DeLamotte 95). To achieve this sense of immediacy and to heighten the dramatic effect of the cave, Murfree exploits the reader's senses through aural repetition: "Again and again the abrupt echoes spoke; far down the unseen blackness of the cave a hollow whisper announced his entrance, and he seemed mysteriously welcomed by the unseen powers of the earth" (149). These aural effects become intensified when juxtaposed with visual effects. Alternatively, firelight and darkness delineate further the distortion of the cave dwellers' souls: "[t]he shadows [of the distillers] were all grotesquely elongated, almost divested of the semblance of humanity, as they stretched in unnatural proportions upon the rocks" (151). This physically claustrophobic atmosphere, a nightmare of eternity, is made even more confining in Murfree's deft combination of progressively diminished space with progressively diminished time. Past and present become confused "for in these sunless depths one knew nor [sic] day nor night" (157-58).

Supernatural figures, secondary figures in gothic fiction, further illustrate the distortion of the souls in Cayce's cave: "The stories went on, growing weird as the evening outside waned, in some unconscious sympathy with the melancholy hour . . . stories of bloody vendettas, and headless ghosts, and

strange previsions, and unnamed terrors" (157-58). As Robert LeTellier explains, superstition provides an opportunity for the negative aspects of human nature to surface, and screens evil deeds from view. To fall victim to this restrictive, constricting fear is to lose reason, to become less than human (211-16). Murfree's incorporation of superstition into her novel--particularly in Amos James' fable of a mountain witch whose hungry dogs feed on human flesh--vividly recalls the grotesque fusion of animal and human in Murfree's darker characters. It, moreover, illustrates the lack of spirituality and the corporal decay at the novel's symbolic heart of darkness.

Throughout the novel, Mufree repeatedly uses the horse motif to indicate impending disaster and evil. Thundering hoofbeats announce the impending arrival of Sheriff Green in his pursuit of Rick Tyler and of Hiram Kelsey; thundering horses also prefigure the Cayces' revenge on Sheriff Green in the concluding chapter. Murfree also effectively employs the horse motif in the cave. The immediacy of evil in the past and present is reflected in the grotesque shadows of Amos James' horse on the cave walls:

> Amos James's horse cast on the wall an image so gigantic that it seemed as if the past and the present were mysteriously united, and he stood stabled beside the grim mastodon whom the cave had sheltered from the rigors of his day . . . . (151)

Occasionally, the horse assumes a militaristic attitude, evoking the horrors of war:

> [N]ow and then the horse pawed, raising martial echoes, as of squadrons of calvary, among the multitudinous reverberations of the place . . . . (157)

Similarly, the horse's shadow indicates the omniscience of evil in the past and the present:

> [T]he horse was distinct in the background, now dreaming and now lifting an impatient fore-foot, and his gigantic stall-mate, the simulacrum of the mastodon, moved as he moved, but softly, that the echoes might not know,--the immortal echoes who were here before him, and here still. (158-59)

And, as Amos James leaves the cave "the mastodon vanished, with noiseless tread, into the dim distance of the unmeasured past . . . the horses hoofs reverberated down the cavernous depths, echoed, reechoed, multiplied indefinitely" (167). Again, Murfree evokes a sense of immediacy in her narrative with aural reverberation and multiplication.

To heighten further the contrast between good and evil and to emphasize the enormity of Kelsey's internal conflict, Murfree moves from the dark amusements of the Settlement and the cave to the mountain wilderness. The contrast is striking. Sublime contemplation of nature brings Kelsey nearer to God and, presumably, to the object of his quest, as he "jogs along the valley road . . . his eyes lifted to the . . . unpeopled summits":

> On and on the chain of mountains stretched, with every illusion of mist and color, with every differing grace of distance, with inconceivable measures of vastness. The grave delight in which their presence steeped the senses stirred his heart. They breathed solemnities. They lent wings to the thoughts. They lifted the soul. Could he look at them and doubt that one day he should see God? He had been near,--oh, surely, He had been near . . . He was almost happy. The clamors of his insistent heart were still. His conscience, his memory, his self-reproach, had loosed their hold. His keen and subtile native intellect stretched its unconscious powers, and discriminated the workings of character, and reviewed the deploying of events, and measured results. (168-70)

He is, however, "whirled from high ethereal spaces by the attraction of the earth" in a roadside encounter with a disciple who flatters his vanity and pride. Kelsey, again in the mundane, "civilized" world, enters his final experience in that realm.

Images of enclosure, along with gothic effects, heighten the drama and tension surrounding Kelsey's confession. Perched on a "rugged spur of the Great Smoky" and encompassed by dense forests, the claustrophobic log meeting-house and its false prophet become emblematic of human limitation and of propensity to evil:

> From its rude, glassless windows one could look out on no distant vista, save perhaps in the visionary glories of heaven or the climatic discomforts of hell, according to the state of the conscience, or perchance the liver. The sky was aloof and limited. The laurel tangled the aisles of the woods . . . The acorns would rattle on the roof, if the wind stirred, as if in punctuation of the discourse. The pines, mustering strong among the oaks, joined their mystic threnody to the sad-voiced, quiring within. The firs stretched down long, pendulous, darkling boughs, and filled the air with their balsamic fragrance. Within the house the dull light fell over a few rude benches and a platform with a chair and table, which was used as a pulpit. Shadows of many deep, rich tones of brown lurked among the rafters. Here and there a cobweb, woven to the consistence of a fabric, swung in the air. (178-79)

Brother Jake Tobin provides stark and humorous contrast to the tortured "prophet." Instead of "sorrow[ing] . . . [from] some high and spiritual grief" (174), Brother Jake "sets mo' store on chicken fixin's than on grace, an' he fattens ev'y year" (178). His enthusiasm and shallow zest for the ministry

contrasts sharply with Kelsey's wavering religious belief. Brother Jake "kin hardly hold hisself together, a-waitin' fur his sheer o' the joys o' the golden shore" (177). He seems the mirror image reverse of Kelsey in his religious fervor:

> Brother Jake Tobin might be accounted in some sort a dramatic reader. He was a tall, burly man, inclining to fatness, with grizzled hair roached back from his face. He cast his light gray eyes upward at the end of every phrase, with a long, resonant "Ah!" He smote the table with his hands at emphatic passages; he rolled out denunciatory clauses with a freshened relish which intimated that he considered one of the choicest pleasures of the saved might be to gloat over the unhappy predicament of the damned. He chose for his reading paragraphs that, applied to aught but spiritual enemies and personified sins, might make a civilized man quake for his dearest foe. He paused often and interpolated his own observations, standing a little to the side of the table and speaking in a conversational tone. "Ain't that so, my brethren an' sisters! But *we* air saved in the covenant--ah!" Then, clapping his hands with an ecstatic upward look,--"I'm so happy, I'm so happy!"--he would go on to read with the unction of immediate intention, "Let death seize them! Let them go down quick into hell!" . . . After concluding the reading he wiped the perspiration from his brow with his red bandana handkerchief, and placed it around the collar of his unbleached cotton shirt, as he proceeded to the further exertion of "lining out" the hymn. (181-82)

Kelsey hears and sees "the "duality of cerebration by which Brother Jake's mind was divided between the effect on God, bending down a gracious ear, and the impression of these ecstatic outbursts on the congregation" (185). Finally, the "petty contemptibleness" of the over-zealous preacher--along with his own self-doubt--provokes Kelsey's confession of his lack of faith before a stunned congregation.

Writers of traditional gothic novels would, at this point, seize the opportunity to dramatize Kelsey's confession with carefully timed thunder or lightning. Murfree, however, employs natural imagery coupled with recurring motifs to effect narrative suspense and to indicate impending doom and the omnipresence of evil: "There was a sound upon the air. Was it the rising of the wind? A thrill ran through the congregation. The wild emotion, evoked and suspended in this abrupt pause, showed in pallid excitement on every face" (189). Ominous hoofbeats signal the approach of the law and of Kelsey's judgment: "On and on it came. It was the galloping of horse,--the beat of hoofs, individualized presently to the ear,--with that thunderous, swift, impetuous advance that so domineers over the imagination, quickens the pulse, shakes the courage" (190).

Kelsey realizes the value of what he has lost at the moment of his capture by the hound-like Sheriff: [A]nimated at this moment by a pulse as essentially mundane as if he had seen no visions and dreamed no dreams, [Kelsey] had not known how he held himself,--how he cherished those values, so familiar that he had forgotten to be thankful till their possession was a retrospection" (192). This epiphany marks a turning point in the narrative for Kelsey. He recognizes his own spirituality and individuality, now supressed, but necessary for his direct confrontation with the evil underlying human nature.

Following his imprisonment and excommunication, Kelsey returns to the Tennessee wilderness in search of his own individuality and spirituality--as well as the "redemptive knowledge" needed for "civilization." All of the embedded narratives converge, at this point in the novel, and the narrative action unwinds rapidly in cinematic fashion. Again Murfree uses gothic description of the landscape to illustrate the darkness of her protagonist's soul, a dead and frozen wasteland:

> The snow came with Kelsey. One day, when the dull dawn broke, the white flakes were softly falling--silent, mysterious, ghostly invasion of the wild wintry air and the woods. All adown chasms and ravines, unexplored and unknown, the weird palpitating motion animated the wide and desert spaces. The ground was deeply covered; the drifts filled the hollows; they burdened the crests of the jutting crags and found a lodgment in all the fissures of their dark and rugged faces . . . Vague solemnities pervaded the silent marshaling of these forces of Nature. The wind held its breath. An austere hush lay upon the chilled world. The perspective had its close limitations and the liberties of vision were annulled . . . And the wilderness was sheeted and still. (288-89)

The "tempestuous fury" with which Kelsey regards his persecutors, and the unyielding nature of his soul are reflected in the "towering balds [which] rose in unbroken whiteness, imposed in onyx-like distinctness upon the azure sky" and in "crags . . . begirt with icicles" (291). Despite his frozen soul, Kelsey can feel that "Christ the Lord liveth. An' sometimes that seems doctrine enough. An' mebbe someday I'll find Him" (290). Kelsey's climactic visit to the Cayces' proves to be the catalyst that thaws his soul.

As Kelsey approaches the Cayce cabin, natural imagery takes on a militaristic cast foreshadowing the Cayces' attack on Micajah Green: "The overhanging trees were cased in glittering icy mail. The

blackened cornstalks . . . were writhen and bent, and bore gaunt witness to the devastation of the winter wind" (292).

The snowy landscape, symbolic of Kelsey's frozen soul, provides sharp, black-and-white contrast to the uncomfortable warmth of the cabin in which Groundhog Cayce and his sons are restlessly anticipating their adversary's arrival. Murfree effectively juxtaposes the inside atmosphere, charged with "repressed excitement," to the frozen stillness outside to evoke ominous portent:

> Outside the gibbous moon hung in the sky, and the light, solemn, ghostly, pervaded with pallid mysteries the snowy vistas of the dense, still, woods. The shadow of the black boughs lay in distinct tracery upon the white surface . . . Vacant of illusions was the winding road,--silent, and empty, and white, its curve visible from the fire-place through the black rails of the zigzag fence. (298)

Repeatedly, Murfree contrasts the external cold of the natural wilderness with the unnatural, internal heat of the Cayces' passionate and predatory desire for revenge:

> [A]mong the pulsating red coals there were dazzling straw-tinted gleams, and a vista of white heat that repelled the eye. Outside the wind was rising--its hollow voice, keen, and shrill as it swept over the icy chasms; the trees were crashing their bare boughs together. It was a dreary sound. From far away came the piercing howl of some prowling hungry wolf, familiar enough to the ears that heard it, but its ravening intimations curdled the blood. (298)

Generally, in the gothic novel, these enclosed spaces contain the presence of evil. Mark Madoff's dialectic of inside and outside applies here:

> Outside is the modern, civilized, orderly, banal, decorous place, where the Gothic protagonist begins and . . . ends. It is a place where appearance and reality are trusted . . . Sexuality flows regularly into courtship and marriage, violence into lawful resolution of conflicts, desire and passion into commerce . . . Inside is the ancient, barbaric, disorderly, passionate, indecorous place where the Gothic protagonist . . . arrives only through apparently accidental transgression. Thus Gothic fiction uses space--the difference between inside and outside--as a metaphor of time--the difference between past and present--and as a metaphor of culture--the difference between self and society . . . [The] locked rooms of the Gothic also enclose an ambiguity; they are repulsive yet attractive, contemptible yet fascinating places. (51-52)

As in her other settings--the Settlement, the cave, and the log meeting-house--, Murfree employs this gothic dialectic in the cabin to indicate the active presence of evil. Her repeated movement of the narrative from inside to outside effectively portrays the evil imports of the revenge and increases the tension surrounding the ambush: "A change was impending. Clouds had come with the wind, from the

west to meet the moon. Though tipped with the glint of sliver, the black portent was not disguised" (298). Again, inside, Murfree employs the metaphor of fire to indicate the smoldering hatred of the Cayces' for the former Sheriff:

> The great fire was burnt to a mass of coals. The wind filled the ravines with a tumult of sound. The bare woods were in a wild commotion. The gusts dashed upon the roof snow perhaps, or sleet, or vague drizzling rain; now discontinued, now coming again with redoubled force. (302)

Kelsey's frozen soul thaws in the heat and passion of the Cayces' revenge. His spiritual awakening is precipitated by his coming face-to-face with evil, with "something so cruel in [Sol Cayce's] face, so deadly in his eye, a ferocious satisfaction in the promised security so like the savage joy of a skulking beast." Suddenly comprehending the horror behind this deadly revenge, he is suddenly "himself again" and prophesies to the Cayces' the unfortunate consequences of their evil actions: "His eye blazed. He had risen to his feet in the intensity of his fervor. And whether it was religion or whether it was lunacy, it transfigured him" (299). Murfree suggests that Kelsey's sacrifice is premeditated. With an "uninterpreted, inscrutable light" in his eyes, Kelsey accompanies the men "swift and silent as shadows" (302) toward their prey.

As the horsemen near the cave with their terrified victim, Murfree again uses gothic landscape to augment the turbulence of the narrative action. The stillness of the snowy landscape becomes a cacophony of sound: "The skies were dark, the mountain wilds awful in their immensity, in the deep obscurities, in the multitudinous sounds of creaking boughs and shrilling winds" (303). The approach to the cave is difficult: "[d]ense, umbrageous undergrowth" surrounds the cave opening and "branches, barbed with ice, and . . . evergreen leaves, burdened with snow, struck sharply in their faces as they forced their way through" (303). In the traditional gothic, "a castle is essentially a place where one loses oneself" (Lévy 271); the same concept applies to the American Gothic's haunted forest and cave. In their flight, the men become lost, not only spiritually but physically. The flooded cave, figuratively "damned" by the government raiders, becomes Murfree's metaphorical heart of darkness as the Cayces' hastily and unintentionally tear Kelsey instead of Micajah Green from his horse, throw him into the depths, and block

the entrance with a great boulder. Each of the horsemen, "fleeing as if from pursuit, [finds his] way as best [as he] might out of the dark wilderness" (304).

Murfree's novel, unlike the low gothic shilling shockers, does not end at the moment of crisis. Rather, Murfree intentionally leaves the conclusion to her novel ambiguous. On the one hand, Kelsey in the words of Henry Nash Smith, is thrown "back in upon himself . . . [in] his terrible and sublime isolation . . . an anarchic and self-contained atom--hardly even a monad--alone in a hostile, or at best neutral universe" (Lewis 110). Instead of bringing light into the darkness, Kelsey is consumed by the Cayces' hatred, swallowed by the darkness and evil he hoped to vanquish. On the other hand, however, unexplained mystery surrounds Kelsey's death. Possibly *deinitiation* from his old self and from the rest of humanity along with a mythic return to the origins of life is both necessary and inevitable in the moment of spiritual truth. At the moment of sacrifice, perhaps Kelsey does "finally [know] all, and . . . in the exaltations of that sacrificial moment, . . . [finds] Christ." Perhaps, like the underground spring which both floods and purifies the cave, the forces of good prevail over the forces of evil.

CHAPTER IV

THE QUICK OR THE DEAD?: AMÉLIE RIVES'S FEMALE GOTHIC

The gothic novel is a particularly compelling genre for women writers (and their readership) because of its nightmarish figuration of feminine experience within the home. As has been previously noted in this study, feminist scholars Juliann Fleenor, Margaret Anne Doody, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar attribute the gothic's appeal as fiction largely by women for women to its unique ability to address sublimated social and psychological concerns. Feminist critic Ellen Moers is generally credited with coining the term "female gothic" to describe how women writers, from Ann Radcliffe to Carson McCullers, use the genre's paraphernalia of claustrophobic castles, villainous dominating men, and beleaguered heroines to thematize women's sense of isolation and imprisonment within a domestic ideology fast becoming hegemonic by the end of the eighteenth century (Heller 14). The gothic both reproduced and challenged the patriarchal world in which they lived (Fleenor 13).

In her best known, and perhaps most controversial novel, The Quick or the Dead? A Study (1888), Amélie Rives illustrates her heroine's conflicting passion to remain in the past with memories of her late husband or to marry his cousin. Rives's biographer Welford Dunaway Taylor declares that Rives never intended to take a stand on either side of this dilemma. Rather, in this "study," Rives simply wanted to depict the inner conflict of a character grappling with these two forces. Taylor further maintains that the protagonist's predicament suggests interpretations on at least two larger scales--for the protagonist and for the writer herself. Barbara Pomfret must choose between a sentimental attachment to the past and the practical acceptance of the reality of the present. Similarly, Amélie Rives "had an important decision to make: whether to continue with the past and the sentimental emphasis which usually accompanied its depiction or to treat contemporary subjects realistically" (37). The writer's predominant use of gothic conventions, however, suggests a more important sociological objective: the plot of The Quick or the Dead? is structured by its gothic perspective on feminine experience while its gothic themes and techniques encode feminine subversion.

Amélie Rives was born in Richmond, Virginia on August 23, 1863. As soon as the conditions of the Civil War and her mother's health permitted, Amélie was taken to Castle Hill, the family's hereditary estate located along the Blue Ridge foothills in the shadow of Peter's Mountain in Albemarle County (Duke 4453). She was reared in a traditional, stratified society and was educated by her distinguished paternal grandparents, William Cabell and Judith Page Rives,[1] and by her parents, Colonel Alfred Landon Rives and his wife, Sarah Catherine MacMurdo.

> To this task [her paternal grandparents] brought the experience of many years in the French court and among intellectual circles in Washington and Richmond, not to mention their own educations which had been obtained from the best tutors available in the Commonwealth of Virginia. More importantly, both were literary people; Senator Rives was the author of a biography of James Madison and Judith Page Rives of two autobiographical volumes about her residence in Europe . . . Amélie was given free reign of Senator Rives's library (which numbered several thousand volumes); and she read, as her interest dictated, a truly eclectic assortment of them. These ranged from *The Letters of Junius* to the *Nibelungenlied*; from illustrated volumes of the naturalist Georges Louis Buffon to the medieval chronicles of Jean Froissart; from the Robin Hood legends . . . to Shakespeare and numerous other Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists . . . .(Taylor 21-22)

Under the instruction of tutors and governesses at Castle Hill and in Mobile[2], Amélie also studied Latin and French, music, and art.

Whether Rives read gothic fiction from her grandfather's extensive library remains obscure. She was, however, as Welford Taylor indicates, most certainly exposed to the literature that provided the foundation for gothic fiction: medieval legend and Elizabethan drama. These works, as well as a keen awareness of social attitudes influenced her fiction. Her lower characters, for example, are "always portrayed sympathetically and with brilliant perception" (22-23). Her protagonists often reflect not only her social ideology but her physical characteristics as well:

> Most of her stories concern a young woman, usually with blonde hair, who is quite vivacious. She cuts a daring figure through a series of adventures and usually dominates the action; but she always possesses a compassionate side and is willing to make unlimited sacrifices for the good of others. The beauty of young Amélie and her social attitudes both indicate a strong sense of security. It is only natural to assume that such security promotes an assertion of the ego and she asserted hers. That she channeled this assertion in the direction of literature has proved the gain of posterity. (24-25)

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[1] William Cabell Rives had served as Congressman, Senator, and Minister to France.

[2] After the Civil War, Colonel Rives became chief superintendent and general manager of the Mobile and Ohio Railway in Mobile, Alabama (Taylor 21).

Barbara Pomfret, the heroine of Rives's The Quick or the Dead?, is one such character. Despite her physical resemblance to her creator, however, her morbid insistence on complete fidelity to her dead husband runs counter to Rives's own assertiveness. Four years later, however, Rives would publish a sequel to The Quick or the Dead? entitled Barbara Dering. The same protagonist--strengthened by experience and maturity--manages to overcome her crippling morbidity and social conscience thus enabling her to live an authentic life, although not without its challenges. Because Barbara is no longer threatened by the past and because she has successfully broken out of her prescribed social role, Rives uses few gothic conventions in Barbara Dering. This chapter, therefore, will focus on The Quick or the Dead? A Study. Rives's first novel not only brought its author wide recognition, but clearly employs the gothic tradition in its nightmarish figuration of feminine experience within the home.[3]

The Quick or the Dead? was presumably written sometime prior to Rives's engagement to prominent attorney John Armstrong Chanler. Rives had met Chanler, a great-grandson of John Jacob Astor and a grandson of Sam Ward, in Newport during the summer of 1887; she accepted his proposal of marriage in the spring of 1888. Taylor maintains that during the late winter months of 1888, Rives was entertaining Chanler's courtship and preparing her first novel for publication (35). Rives's own views concerning the institution of marriage are unknown. In the aristocratic circles in which she traveled, it was understood that the young debutante would eventually marry someone of her social standing. As a daughter of the South, Rives probably accepted this event as a natural, inevitable, unavoidable rite of passage. Like many women of the period, however, Rives was undoubtedly aware of the traditional, social parameters within which women were conscribed.[4] In any case, Rives's own marriage proved

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[3] The Quick or the Dead? A Study has been named by Clarence Gohdes as a significant example of the "semierotic" genre which gave impetus to the Realistic Movement. The scandal concerning the novel's immorality (at that time, grieving widows did not contemplate either passion or marriage) probably added to its popularity; over three hundred thousand copies were sold (Taylor Preface).

[4] Awareness of the limitations of social roles for women in the South in the nineteenth century was fairly widespread. In 1820 and 1821, first Sarah and then Angelina Grimké of Charleston moved North. From that "refuge," the sisters addressed the white women at home, directly attacking the "assumptions upon which southern society based its image of women," including, of course, slavery. According to Anne Firor Scott, Sarah Grimké's Letters on the Equality of the Sexes was "the earliest systematic expression in America of the whole set of ideas constituting the ideology of "women's rights." Following the

unsuccessful. Her assertive nature, coupled with Chanler's privileged upbringing, created an intolerable relationship for both. After living apart for most of their seven-year marriage, the Chanlers divorced in 1895. The following year, she married Prince Pierre Troubetzskoy, a distinguished Russian artist whose mother was an American. Their marriage lasted for forty years.

Although Rives did not set out to write a novel in the female gothic tradition, The Quick or the Dead? nonetheless follows closely the paradigm set forth by Juliann Fleenor in chapter one of this study. Fleenor sees the female gothic as:

> essentially formless, except as a quest; it uses the traditional spatial symbolism of the ruined castle or an enclosed room to symbolize both the culture and the heroine; as a psychological form, it provokes various feelings of terror, anger, awe, and sometimes self-fear and self-disgust directed toward the female role, female sexuality, female physiology, and procreation; and it frequently uses a narrative form which questions the validity of the narration itself. It reflects a patriarchal paradigm that women are motherless yet fathered and that women are defective because they are not males. (15)

Fleenor goes on to say that the female gothic is historically defined by the androcentric culture in which it exists. In this culture, women have been subordinate to men and have existed in the private world of the family while men have existed in the public world; women have gained their identities though whom they marry, not through what they do (16). Fleenor holds the patriarchal system responsible for the social division of women into either those who are pure and chaste, or those who are impure and corrupt. This basic dichotomy of "good woman"/"bad woman" creates the tensions and contradictions within the female gothic. It also suggests concretely how the moral ambiguities of the gothic novel have evolved. Both good and evil are located within the female self, and identity is both fixed and shifting as the heroine attempts to establish her selfhood (15-16). Rives graphically illustrates literary forms of female subversion in The Quick or the Dead? through the use of gothic themes and techniques. Her twenty-six-year-old protagonist is relentlessly pursued by the memory of her dead husband--to the point that she relinquishes her own identity and life in favor of a death-in-life existence.

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abolition of slavery, many women in America saw the connection between racial and sexual oppression and were beginning to question their own roles within the domestic sphere (Wilson 441).

As the novel opens, a grief-stricken Barbara Pomfret returns to the family's remote Virginia estate primarily to succumb to the memories of her late husband and of their first three months of marriage spent there. In the female gothic, the "large, lonely, brooding *House* [is] . . . always named . . . and [is] set in exotic, vivid, and/or isolated *Country*" (Fleenor 32). As her carriage nears the estate, appropriately named Rosemary,[5] Barbara's inner turmoil is reflected in typically gothic fashion by a storm:

> There was a soughing rain asweep that night, with no wind to drive it, yet it ceased and fell, sighed and was hushed incessantly, as by some changing gale. Barbara was a good deal unnerved by the lanternless drive from the station. The shelving road, seamed with abrupt gullies, lay through murk fields and stony hollows, that she well remembered; in the glimpsing lightning she saw scurrying trees against the suave autumn sky, like etchings on bluish paper; the dry, white-brown grasses swirled about the horses' feet in that windless rain; and after what thunderous fashion those horses pounded stableward! They hurled through narrow gate-ways like stones from a catapult, rushed past ragged trees whose boles seemed leaping to meet them, spun over large stones as though they had been mere fallen leaves . . . The black driver urged his smoking team, as though dissatisfied with their prowess, by sharp, whistling inward breaths, and upward gestures of his bowed elbows. He was a grotesque figure against the pennons of lightning. (433)

Barbara finds the familial house seemingly deserted with the exception of Miss Fridiswig, Barbara's maiden aunt, and Martha Ellen, a devoted Negro servant. These two characters suggest the grim fate of women in a male-dominated society: they become either spinsters or domestic slaves. Miss Fridiswig's desperate cry in response to Barbara's anguish over Val's death is sadly indicative of the spinster's restricted social role and of a desire to become more: "Ah, let me be of use! let me be of use!" (437).

Alison Milbank maintains that the ruin in gothic fiction has become disengaged from its social moorings and that the reclusive tendencies of its inhabitants indicate a complete lack of social function (19). Rosemary reflects the isolation and celibacy of its inhabitants:

> There was a suggestion of loneliness even about its vegetable life which seemed depressing. Its trees, with the exception of the tulip-poplars and acacias, were all mateless, not two of any kind. Its flowers did not grow socially in beds, but here and there throughout the tangled grass. The very stalks of corn in the kitchen garden leaned away from each other. There was one dog, one cat, one horse, one vehicle which Miss Fridiswig called a carry-all, and one aged black to drive it. (440)

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[5] The herb symbolizes remembrance (cf. Hamlet IV. v. 175).

Rives's southern equivalent of a gothic ruin is

> . . . one of those old Virginia houses which have not been desecrated with modern furniture, as gray hair with hair-dye. Its rooms were gloomy in contour and atmosphere, but cheered by bright hangings and flowers, like an old face with smiles. The house of deep-red brick showed in sanguine streaks through tangled vines . . . There were many old portraits in the large hall, as darkly ruddy in color as the outer walls of the mansion which they adorned. An old spinet stood in the music-room, from which instrument Miss Fridiswig used to coax forth ghastly jinkings. (439)

It is, moreover, "a most lovely old place to die in, but not, assuredly, one in which to live."

As mentioned in chapter two, the gothic ruin serves as a symbol of the past in the present. The subterranean passages, vaults, and labyrinths contained within these ruins are frequently associated with inexorable constriction by the forces of evil, death, and anti-life. These spaces, symbolic of the buried recesses of the human mind, represent dark and frightening regions beneath relationships and ordinary characters. Eugenia DeLamotte argues that in the female gothic, such ruins often indicate the symbolic burial alive of the protagonist in domestic entrapment and concealed suffering (153). For Rives's protagonist, Rosemary serves as a tomb in which she is immured with memories of her husband and her wedded self: "She did not wish to forget [the scene of her former happiness], and she could not better remember in a place so fraught with memories" (436).

Architecture, in particular the "remote and ruined castle," is of central importance in gothic narratives, often acting as a character (Summers 191). Rosemary, itself a "feminine" entity, functions in many ways as a double for Barbara Pomfret. It literally "houses" Barbara's memories of Val. Because Val died prior to the novel's action, however, he cannot be known in any context other than as a spiritual presence in the novel; the exact nature of his and Barbara's relationship remains ambiguous. Primarily, Rives conveys some aspects of the dead man's life to the reader through Barbara's recollections of him; these recollections, in turn, transform Val into an active participant in the narrative.

Some of the memories surrounding Rosemary and Val are pleasant, even idyllic. Initially, in fact, this eidetic Val assumes the role of an attentive and caring husband. Barbara recalls the long walks they had taken together in the surrounding countryside, his making tea for her when she was ill, and his

warming her slippers by the fire. These idealized memories, however, soon become oppressive. Barbara's nervous exhaustion is amplified by constant reminders of her first three months of wedded bliss at Rosemary. Her first encounter with the ghostly presence of her husband suggests a repressive, constricting atmosphere of terror in which she feels mortally endangered. Val is transformed into a silent yet palpable presence in the novel:

> As vanished scenes swept across her inner sight, there came with them words and looks and tones innumerable. His arms held her, his breath warmed her, his voice was in her ear, vibrating, actual. She leaped to her feet, stumbling over her heavy gown; her fascinated, dreading eyes sought the vague gloom behind her, as she hurried to the door. The room was full of his voice, of his sighing, of his laughter. She breathed gaspingly, and caught at the key to unlock the door. It was stiff with long disusage, and refused to turn. There again! his laughter about her, above her, and his lips at her ear. She could hear the words, loving, reckless, impassioned words, not meet for a ghost to utter . . . Now his very lips were on her: they drew her breath, her life." (436)

Throughout the novel, a latent sexuality informs Barbara's encounters with Val's spiritual presence. Her Victorian, feminine sensibility is paradoxically attracted to Val and repelled by him. Juliann Fleenor sees this paradoxical relationship of the heroine to the villain as characteristic of the female gothic (32). Barbara wants to immure herself in Rosemary, a nightmarish image of the home and of her domestic role in it. At the same time, however, she desperately longs to escape from it and its constricting, life-draining hold.

In the female gothic, enclosed rooms assume an even greater significance, conveying the oppression and frustration of the heroine or the repressive society in which the heroine lives (Fleenor 12). In Rives's novel, Rosemary's bridal suite conveys both: it reflects Barbara's own haunting--a self-destructive imprisonment in a dead past; moreover, it suggests the oppressive nature of the social institution of marriage. Overcome with fear over Val's almost tangible presence, Barbara panics and, with great difficulty, forces open the bridal suite door. When Miss Fridiswig and Martha Ellen find her, Barbara is "half in and half out of her room." Rives describes Barbara as "tall, and her figure in its silverish dressing-gown of white silk gleamed like a streak of moonlight in the rich dusk" (438). She is literally a ghost of her former "wedded" self--not entirely dead yet not entirely alive.

Unable to sleep in her bridal bed, Barbara decides to have the brass bed that she slept in as a little girl moved into the bridal suite. She follows Martha Ellen's blue, sputtering light "down a narrow corridor that turned abruptly several times" to the nursery of her childhood. The labyrinthine passage to her childhood room, symbolically leads Barbara back to her "maiden" self. She hardly recognizes who she is: "There is nothing that makes us seem so unreal, so unfamiliar to ourselves, as some pleasant child-possession seen unexpectedly in unhappy womanhood" (438).

Presumably, a return to Barbara's pre-adolescent, androgynous, developmental stage would discourage Val's presence and the underlying sexuality associated with his spirit. Martha Ellen installs the brass bed in the bridal suite, and Barbara struggles to "imagine herself once more a child." Her morbid imagination, however, intrudes and she is once more swept away as ". . . vast waves of passionate regret, and longing, and rebellion, surged over her, each one, as it swelled and formed, more vast and annihilating than the other."

According to feminist critics Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, the female gothic is animated by a double voice of both rebellion and acquiescence to convention. The subversive nature of the text dominates this passage, however, in its dark and confining images of feminine experience within domesticity and in its representation of terror caused by women's imprisonment by male authority figures (86). Barbara's conflicting desire to remember Val and her desire to escape from him transform her into something akin to the Brontëan mad wife:

> The undertow seemed dragging her down, down. God's imagined face took on a horrible grinning. The ministering angels seemed deformed creatures who writhed, and twisted, and uttered wanton gigglings as they circled about the Throne after the fashion of the witches in "Macbeth" about the caldron. Nothing seemed good; nothing seemed kind. She could not even think of her husband as having existed. He was a mere mass of repulsive formlessness in a slimy wedge of earth; perhaps he was not even that. She imagined his ghastly skeleton tricked out in all the mockery of fashionable attire. What delightful, smart, of-the-world-worldly coats he had worn! Why if he were a skeleton now, one could see his tailor's name in gilt letters through his spinal column! Ha! ha! ha! Ha! ha! ha! She had laughed silently at first, then in a choking whisper, then in a ringing peal of sound that clashed through the silent house, chilling the blood in Martha Ellen's rigid black body.
>
> [Martha Ellen] sat up on the pallet where she was sleeping for the night, folded herself in her own embrace, and muttered between her clacking teeth,--
>
> "Miss Barb'ra done gone mad! she done gone mad! I dunno what tuh do! Gord knows I dunno what tuh do!" Then all as suddenly the laughter ceased. (439)

Exhausted, Barbara finally succumbs to Val's haunting presence:

> There seemed to Barbara to be some glowing, resplendent presence about her, lifting up her heart as it were with both hands. She took down her palms from her strained eyes, and stared into the almost absolute gloom. She even reached out her arms into it . . . The presence of a warm, curly, head against her breast was with her as an actuality . . . . (439)

Rives emphasizes the division in her protagonist's soul between her "wedded self" and "maiden self" as Barbara flings herself "half out of her childhood's bed upon the large one of carved mahogany" and finally sleeps.

Rives's Radcliffean use of landscape emphasizes further the divided nature of her protagonist's soul. Indeed, as Alison Milbank points out in chapter one, the female gothic originates in the novels of Radcliffe and her followers

> [whose] novels often begin with a pastoral idyll in convent, forest, or family retreat, followed by a period of imprisonment in which the heroine finds herself under the authority of a male tyrant . . . The great house in which the heroine is confined is labyrinthine and pursuit often takes place within the building itself, with chases through its maze of passages as the heroine seeks to preserve her honour and her life, both of which are compromised by the encircling walls. (10)

Although Rives deviates from the Radcliffean narrative pattern somewhat, the edenic Virginia countryside still provides stark contrast to Rosemary's haunted interior. Significantly, outside the confines of the house, and particularly of her bedroom, Barbara learns to control her morbid thoughts:

> She found that by a tremendous effort she could whistle them to fist and keep them hooded there, so that, although they fretted and shook their bells, they did not soar away into the open and bring down unsavory winged things which she would rather remained a-wing. Those first horrible imaginings haunted her no more. Her husband was with her now as the glad-eyed lover of her young wifehood. (443-44)

She leaves her "wedded self at Rosemary, and pursue[s] her maiden self with all of the sweet if sad persistency of a Dryad seeking her forsaken tree" (440).

For these "autumnal rambles," Barbara rejects her heavy crape bonnet and somber widow's gown in favor of a "boyish costume consist[ing] of a dark-blue flannel shirt, a short, clay-stained corduroy skirt, a leather belt, a pair of chamois-skin shooting-gaiters, and a pair of stout-laced boots' (440). Accompanied on these walks by an impish, young Negro, she is "the heroine of a witch-tale . . . a bright-eyed, wild-

haired brownie." In employing the Renaissance motif of cross-dressing, Rives seems to be attempting to reverse gender roles in an attempt to create, instead of a passive romantic heroine, a powerful, romantic female *hero* who can successfully overthrow the patriarchy that imprisons her and achieve full selfhood. Rives compares her protagonist to an "enchanting Danaë" to emphasize further her live burial within the confines of Rosemary. In classical mythology, King Acrisius of Argos, fearful of the Delphic oracle's prophecy that the princess Danaë would bear a son who would kill him, imprisons his daughter in an underground bronze vault which opens only partially to the sky. In divesting Barbara of her sexuality on these walks, Rives creates an androgynous figure that cannot be assaulted by the patriarchal system. In the countryside, Rives describes Barbara variously as "an elf-queen," a "water-kelpie," a "war goddess" "a witch-thing--uncanny,--all eyes and a blowse of red-gold hair," "a merry boy," and "a beautiful forlorn Peri" (461). This break from control or the past, as Alison Milbank theorizes in chapter one, often implies a reworking of the previous identity or self to an androgynous relationship. Barbara is transformed into "a shadow-woman."

Barbara assumes and can maintain this identity in the Virginia countryside because she is outside the bounds of social propriety: "the walks which she took [were] of too wild and secluded a nature to subject her to remark from any of the neighbors" (443). She cannot, however, pursue this natural, new-found androgyny within Rosemary. The house, representative of an obsolete social system, is haunted by a patriarchal order that dominates the lives of its inmates (Milbank 19). Consequently, like many self-divided gothic protagonists, Barbara constantly vacillates between two incompatible extremes throughout the novel. Her wedded (feminine) self insists on complete fidelity to the memory of her dead husband--in constant opposition to her maiden (androgynous) self which insists on complete fidelity to its own natural identity apart from the constraints imposed by social convention.

These two selves closely parallel the typically gothic archetype of "good woman" and "bad woman," the source of tension and moral ambiguity within the female gothic tradition (Fleenor 16). Barbara's wedded (feminine) self, the socially acceptable "good woman" at home within the confines and

conventions of Rosemary, devotes the remainder of her life mourning her husband's death. An "apprehensive, backward glance [follows] any mention of her husband" (472), and "on the Sabbath [she becomes] a sad, unspeaking woman, with demure dark lids over eyes yet more demure and dark" (443). The patriarchal church, represented by Rector Trehune, nourishes the "good woman" archetype by its inability to recognize or to minister to her needs. On the other hand, Barbara's maiden (androgynous) self, the "bad woman" (from society's perspective), must realistically continue with her life, on her terms, apart from the issue of her sex and apart from social convention. Because both of these extremes are situated within the female self, identity is both static and shifting as the female hero attempts to establish her selfhood apart from patriarchal dictates (Milbank 16).

The protagonist's conflict and the novel's plot are both intensified and complicated with the introduction of Jock Dering, Val's "identical" cousin:

> The extraordinary likeness which John Dering bore to his dead cousin Valentine Pomfret was one of those rare but not fictitious freaks in which heredity sometimes indulges. Twin brothers are often less alike than had been these two young men, and the fact that Dering was Pomfret's junior by a few years was overcome by the further fact that for a few years poor Pomfret had been dead; Barbara therefore beheld in the Dering of to-day the exact reproduction of her husband of three years ago. Voice, gesture, figure, and face were all identical. (446)

Elizabeth MacAndrew sees the reflected self as an important aspect of the gothic tradition: "Actual mirrors or works of art . . . throw back an image of at least the outer person . . . From fairly simple reflectors they become mirrors in which tormented characters catch glimpses of that inner self they struggle with but do not understand" (214). Val is not only reflected in Jock's appearance but also appears as a dominating presence in Barbara's soul--so much so that her own self is almost completely overwhelmed.

This physical reincarnation of her late husband in Jock proves problematic for Barbara. She now has a love object on which to focus. As a "good woman," Barbara desperately wants to remain faithful to the memory of her dead husband, a memory made all the more real (and all the more difficult) by Jock's physical presence. Simultaneously, as a "bad woman," she is attracted to Jock but feels as if she is being unfaithful to Val's memory, a feeling supported by thoughts of Val's disapproval at her behavior.

As her relationship with and attraction to Jock grows, intrusive thoughts insist that she give herself entirely up to Val, to Rosemary, and to contemplation of the past. Pleasant memories of Val, usually provoked by Jock's presence, gradually give way to memories that are more threatening and that are indicative of a larger and more oppressive social force. A chance encounter in a sudden storm illustrates the passion that Barbara and Jock have for each other--and another unnatural, violent force which reacts angrily to it:

> The wind blew in volumes bulging with fierce sound. It hurled Barbara and Dering against each other, and tore away her hat, next enveloped them in a sudden eddy of whirling sticks and leaves . . . Together they looked at the western sky. It was one vast, ragged confusion of cloud and glare. The naked branches of the trees along the road knotted and unknotted themselves angrily, and through them the wind slithered and hissed like a winged serpent. (449-50)

This force also permeates Barbara's consciousness. For example, as she finally acknowledges her attraction to Jock, she feels "light-hearted and gay." However, as Jock swings her from her perch in the tree to the ground with a "light, easy gesture, full of restrained power," Val insinuates himself into her consciousness:

> To see the power that could crush transformed into the power that befriends is in both cases blood-stirring. And then his strong shoulders beneath her hands were so like Val's shoulders, and the glint of his smile Val's own, and his impetuous way of piloting her over rough places,--all Val's. She stopped suddenly and put up her hands to her throat with a wild gesture . . .

When Jock asks her if she feels faint, Barbara replies, "No, no: just stifled for a minute" (449).

As their relationship progresses, Barbara finds herself increasingly influenced, even dominated, not only by Val but by his double; Jock pulls her out of and back toward her oppressive relationship with a male authority figure. She, in turn, slips back into her sexuality and into Rosemary's oppressive, interior spaces. Her clothing indicates the tentative state of her selfhood. At this point in their courtship, Barbara meets Jock outside dressed, not in her androgynous flannels and corduroy, but in very feminine "Naiad-like attire," an unmournful, unwidow-like garment which transforms her into "a pale cloud, in the shape of a woman." Dering's response to this metamorphosis calls attention to Barbara's past confinement within Rosemary and her subjugation to male authority. Concerned that she is getting chilled, Dering insists that she go into the house. She allows him to "guide her into the dark drawing-room and unfasten

her cloak" (458). Once inside, he requests that she don a white gown. She does as he asks but "[feels] rather too big in her loose gown of white China crape." His thoughts about Barbara are not especially complementary: "In reality, Barbara would have been handsomer if there had been less of her and her good looks more concentrated"(459); but later, he congratulates himself on having found a woman who corresponds "to his rather exalted ideal of womanhood." The clothing of Barbara's maiden (androgynous) self has now been completely rejected in favor of the more feminine white gown associated with her wedded self. She, however, reacts uneasily to Jock's attentions and to being restrained and governed. Rives compares Barbara to a caged cat, calling attention to her peculiar gait--again in connection with interior space:

> Barbara was almost used now to [Jock's] resemblance to her husband, and the dissimilarity of his spiritual self was beginning to impress her . . . .
> She rose and began to move up and down the room with the long padding gait peculiar to her. "You move like a panther," said Dering. "I can't keep my eyes off you." (461)

Torn between her social and marital obligation to her dead husband and the possibility of a future with Jock, Barbara fights her sentimental morbidity and seems to be successfully overcoming it. She and Jock are "both bewitched by that sense of unworldliness which possesses men and women of the world when alone together in the country, and it seemed to them as though they could have voluntarily mured themselves in labyrinths of brick and stone during these late autumn days, now discovered to be the most desirable of the year" (461-62). Although Barbara is now able to discern the dissimilarity of Jock's spiritual self to that of her late husband's, Val still remains a threatening presence within Rosemary's walls.

Alison Milbank's comments, discussed earlier in connection with Radcliffean female gothic, seem particularly appropriate at this point in the novel. In Radcliffe's fiction, "[t]he great house in which the heroine is confined is labyrinthine and pursuit often takes place within the building itself, with chases through its maze of passages as the heroine seeks to preserve her honour and her life, both of which are compromised by the encircling walls" (10). Indeed, a chase scene soon follows in Rives's narrative, and Val appears to Barbara not in Jock's mirrored image but in a much different form. While engaged in a

lively game of "graces" in the large central hall at Rosemary, Barbara playfully seizes a locket that Jock carries, intent on discovering the identity of his sweetheart. In reality the locket contains an "absurd photograph of Valentine Pomfret, taken when the two were in college together." The "deformed [caricature,] . . . consisting of a Brobdingnagian head on a Liliputian body," visually suggests Val's spiritual metamorphosis into a twisted and tyrannical patriarch. Knowing her tendency toward morbidity, Jock attempts to dissuade Barbara from opening the locket and pursues her down "an almost absolutely dark hall, impelled by a delightful feeling of scared uncertainty which precipitates children down a long staircase, past darkling coignes where clutched fingers are waiting to grasp a loitering ankle . . . She dashed into the as yet lampless dining room . . . and fled into a dark little closet to the left, mistaking it . . . for a corresponding door of exit" (463). Her flight into the dark recesses of the house, into the dark recesses of her consciousness, results in direct confrontation with Val's presence in the form of the miniature. The meeting is enough to sever relations between the two lovers. As Barbara tells Jock, "[t]here is a grave between us--there is an open grave between us" (466).

That evening, within the confines of her bridal suite, Barbara undresses mechanically before her mirror in one of the most telling scenes in the entire novel, one in which Val's spiritual and physical possession of Barbara is most graphically illustrated. As a strange smile breaks the stillness of her face, Val's spiritual presence addresses Barbara's mirrored self:

> "Um--we know each other," she said, addressing her mirrored self,--"we know each other, you and I, but only we two. You really have a good face,--yes, really a good face,--yes, a pure face. It's pure, I say. Look at your eyes,--and such a clear, dark brown,--honest, deep, truthful,--real dog-eyes. And then your mouth's very fine,--such little, deep, cool, high-bred corners. I like to look at you; yes, you're very nice to look at, my good girl. Um--you smile so complacently, I don't think I'll pay you any more compliments. I think I will tell you what you really are,--what I see behind all that,--what your--husband sees! Oh, I know your name. You are called Barbara Pomfret,--Barbara Pomfret,--Barbara Pomfret. Your husband's name was Valentine Pomfret. You married Valentine Pomfret. He is dead, but his name is not dead: it is alive in you. Your name is Barbara Pomfret." She leaned forward here until her breath made a little triangular blur in the clear glass. "There's another name for you, too," she said. "It is--Wanton!" The word seemed to stab her as though some one else had uttered it . . .

At this point, Barbara becomes herself again:

> She fell upon the floor and writhed and sobbed until the boards vibrated beneath her agonized movements. Her feverish breath enveloped her face in a steam from her tear-drenched hair . . .

> and her face and lips were smarting and scalded by the hot drips ever gushing. In the midst of all this torture, she put out one of her burning hands and began to stroke her own half-bare shoulders, with soothing, gentle movements.
>
> "Oh, you poor thing," she sobbed, strangling, "if I could only comfort you!--if one could only comfort one's self!" (468-69)

The extent of Val's influence over Barbara's self is reinforced further by her zombie-like progression down the "dark and draughty hall" to a chest which contains her wedding dress and veil. She carries these items to the bridal suite, spreads them on the bed along with her own miniature of Val, and kneels in supplication. Atmospheric effects reflect her frozen soul:

> Now one heard the clash of ice-coated twigs in the fitful gusts, now the crisp sound of some hoofed thing as it broke through the frost-rime matting the dead grass. Now a shutter clapped forward and then back again, startling the house-dog to dismal barkings, or an owl screamed its desolate tremolo, first close at hand, then flying farther off, as though to imitate an echo. (469-70)

Val's spiritual dominance of Barbara and consequently, her own diminished sense of self, is further indicated in her response to Jock's announcement that he will go to New York to avoid causing her any more pain. In her written reply, she offers to drive him to the station at Charlottesville but experiences a moment of indecision at how to sign her name. Significantly, her first inclination is to use her married initials, B. R. P.. However, after trying "merely 'B.', she writes "a rather infinitesimal 'Barbara,"--as though she were trying to express a whisper in writing by the smallness of her chirography" (475). Completely consumed by Val's spiritual presence, Barbara immerses herself in "that richly sombre second movement of Chopin's Thirteenth Nocturne . . . chords that had been the delight of her husband" (497).

Letters from Jock, however, prevent her to succumbing entirely to Val's spiritual influence. She opens her Bible for comfort and reads: "An end is come: the end is come. It watcheth for thee: behold, it is come." The ensuing monologue indicates her separation from her self as well as her desire to integrate:

> "It watches for me," she said, whisperingly. "An end is come: it watches for me,--it watches. He watches me; he looks at me. He smiles to himself. I wonder if I'm going crazy? I seem to be watching myself; I am as apart from myself as my gown is. Oh! if I had only one soul to speak to, to help me!--no, not to help me,--only to be sorry with me! . . . I can't get away from it,--from myself,--from the memories--Oh, the memories! This place is haunted. I will go away. No: what am I saying?--I came here for that; I came here to be haunted . . . I will go out into the air." (498-99)

Barbara visits the recently widowed Episcopal rector in an attempt to gain some answers. The social institution of the church, however, itself formed and supported by the patriarchal system, provides little comfort. The rector tells Barbara that she must follow her own heart concerning remarriage. However, he announces that he will never marry again and fully expects to be reunited with his late wife after death.

After this meeting with the rector, Barbara writes and sends a letter in which she rejects Jock's advances. Before he can reply, however, she reads a newspaper account of a serious accident in which Jock is reportedly injured. When she discovers that it was not he but a cousin, she realizes her love for him and implores him to come to her at once. After initial excitement over her impetuous action, she plays a wild waltz of Chopin's, reflecting her joy and passion. Then, remembering her own private haunting, she attempts to banish the memory of Val. Barbara "seem[s] to grow into marble" (like the living corpse she has been) and moves into her childhood room in an attempt to regain her "maiden" (androgynous) self. She burns her wedding dress, letters from Val, and the miniature. Then she unlocks the door to the bridal suite, passes through it, and relocks it on the other side--symbolically moving out of her morbid preoccupation with the past and its ghosts and into the present and a relationship with Jock. "I feel like a little girl" Barbara tells Martha Ellen in anticipation of Jock's arrival. Barbara's natural, maiden identity, liberated from the past and from Val's emotional and sexual hold over her, finally surfaces, much to Jock's delight:

> "Dering who had wooed one woman, found that he had won twenty. To-day she was a girl in her teens hanging her head beneath the first kisses of her first lover, to-morrow she was a laughing witch who wanted neither kisses nor lover, only a sympathetic comrade who would appreciate her vagaries, which were sometimes most unexpected, but always charming." (511)

All goes well until a heavy thunderstorm overtakes them one afternoon at the gothic church where Barbara had been married. Although Barbara has successfully eradicated the memories of Val at Rosemary, memories of her wedding remain in the church. While Jock returns to Rosemary for a carriage, Barbara wanders innocently into the sanctuary. The church doors slam shut, barring escape, and

"a cold horror, as strong as it was unreasoning, [crept] up within her." Memories of her wedding in this church "came huddling about her, whimpering for admittance, and which when refused, threatened with ugly grins and cries of rage" (515). Gothic effects--heavy rain, lightning, the sound of wind rousing itself, and low thunder--intensify Barbara's fear and reflect her inner turmoil. Hearing rattling at the door, she thinks that Jock has returned but is dismayed only to hear the "beseeching and heart-broken howl from the lonely dog" outside. The dog startles her by leaping at the window. Its presence precipitates yet another horrible memory:

> The sight of that dark head and those clutching paws horrified her inexpressibly, and she rushed and crouched down on the altar steps, trembling in every fibre. The next lightning-flare that swept the church fixed the great letters on the white tablets upon her inner lids, and thrust upon her a memory against which she had been fighting ever since finding herself locked in and which coursed backward through her veins as though ice-water had been injected into them. (516)

Frequently in gothic literature, the role of religion (usually Catholicism) assumes a repressive aspect. As discussed in chapter two, ecclesiastical laws are associated with everything anti-life and, as such, these laws are usually portrayed as monstrous and inhuman. Images of constraint and restraint used in connection with the Church indicate the presence of evil. In Barbara's case, the presence of evil is synonymous with Val. To heighten the oppressive atmosphere, Rives juxtaposes Barbara's happy memories of the wedding ceremony with the uncomfortable pressure of Val's body on hers as they step into the carriage. When they are "out of sight and hearing of all others," Barbara feels "the very breath of his words against her cheek: 'Death will not part us, Barbara. We will laugh in his face, *my* Barbara,--*my* wife,--*my* Barbara,--*my* brave girl. What is Death to Love? It will be only a little, lonely waiting for whichever of us goes first. He cannot part us, sweetheart; he cannot part us'"[italics mine]. Val's words echo again and again through the storm: "Death cannot part us, Barbara" (516-17). When Dering returns with the carriage, he finds Barbara unconscious.

Back at Rosemary, Barbara assumes her ghost-like appearance, once more in a feminine dressing gown of white silk. She has recapitulated to her wedded self; she is a romantic heroine who is unable to overthrow the patriarchy that imprisons her. "Her face was very pale, her eyes dark, wide, with

unflickering lids spread above them as though held in place by the slightly lifted eyebrows". She insists that Jock replace her wedding ring:

> "I told you how he haunted me, I told you we could never be happy. Women cannot forget, even if they want to,--at least, not women like me. I think I must be an awful thing,--an unnatural thing." (519)

Dering unsuccessfully attempts to convince her to leave the past behind her, but he "might as well have tried to rouse response in a corpse" (521). Indeed, Barbara is as much a corpse as her late husband, devoid of her own identity--"an unnatural thing"--and buried alive in Rosemary with his memory. She retrieves her wedding ring from the fireplace where it had accidentally fallen. She blows the ashes from it and slips it on her finger, renewing and confirming her love for the dead. She chooses death over life, the past over the present in her life-in-death existence.

As Juliann Fleenor observes, transcendence in the female gothic is rarely achieved (16). Rives's protagonist in this novel chooses to remain faithful to the memory of her dead husband, indicating perhaps the strong influence of the patriarchy and the social institutions which supported it on women's choices in the nineteenth century. Certainly, the novel's milieu is that of an era and social class which, in the name of proper etiquette, rarely permitted the truth to be voiced. If Rives's novel were a whisper, then twelve years later, Kate Chopin's The Awakening was a shout. Like Rives, Chopin uses gothic themes and techniques to illustrate much the same issues. Her female protagonist, however, successfully transcends her prescribed social role and achieves selfhood.

CHAPTER V

TRANSCENDING THE FEMALE GOTHIC: KATE CHOPIN'S THE AWAKENING

Kate Chopin's interest in gothic literature began at an early age. She was born Kate O'Flaherty on February 8, 1850,[1] in Saint Louis, Missouri. Her father, Thomas, had immigrated from Ireland in 1825 and became a successful merchant. Her mother, Eliza Faris, was of aristocratic French descent. After Thomas O'Flaherty's sudden death in 1855, Kate's maternal grandmother and great-grandmother moved into the O'Flaherty house. The strong maternal influence affected the rest of Kate's life. Madame Victoire Verdon Charleville took an active interest in her great-granddaughter's education, teaching her the French language, literature, and history. She also instructed her in music and told stories that gave Kate "unusual insight into human peculiarities and possibilities" (Toth 35). Kate received her formal education at the Saint Louis Academy of the Sacred Heart where her fluency in both French and English widely expanded her literary choices. She began reading Walter Scott's novels when she was only six years old (53). She also read gothic and adventure novels in her youth, parodying them in her own work (50). Schoolgirl compositions like "The Early Dead," reflect the influence of gothic fiction in their preoccupation with death and use of gothic and sentimental phrases (79). Chopin's literary influences include Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, William Shakespeare, Gustave Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant, and Emile Zola just to name a few.

In accordance with the convention of the day, Kate participated in Saint Louis social functions and eventually married a distantly-related cousin on June 9, 1870. At that time, Oscar Chopin was in the process of establishing himself as a cotton factor in New Orleans. The young couple and their growing family resided in New Orleans until 1879. As a result of some business reverses, however, Oscar Chopin moved his family to the small town of Cloutierville in Natchitoches Parish where he managed some land

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[1] Most biographers record Kate Chopin's birthdate as February 8, 1851. The United States Census taken in August 1850, however, lists husband, wife, sons George and Thomas, and a seven-month-old baby named "Cath" (Toth 24).

that he owned and operated a general store. Only three years later, he died of malaria. After settling her husband's affairs in Louisiana, Kate and her children returned to Saint Louis.

When her mother died in 1885, a grief-stricken Chopin was faced with the reality of supporting her family. Chopin's obstetrician and family friend Dr. Frederick Kolbenheyer began "bringing letters descriptive of Louisiana that she had written from Cloutierville or Grand Isle, and read them to her . . . to persuade and encourage her to write for publication." At the encouragement of Kolbenheyer and other friends, Kate Chopin began drawing upon the years spent in Louisiana as inspiration for her "local color" sketches (Toth 175). As Kenneth Eble has pointed out, Chopin's professional writing career was unusually brief but prolific, beginning in 1889 and ending with her death in 1904 (262). She wrote over one hundred short stories, novels, plays, reviews, essays, and poems--most of which are set in Louisiana.

Kate Chopin's best-known novel, The Awakening, was officially issued by Herbert S. Stone & Company on August 22, 1899, only five years before the writer's death on August 22, 1904. Chopin's portrayal of a woman awakening, despite social restrictions and expectations, to life on her own terms, met with an astonishing amount of negative criticism from reviewers. In Saint Louis, the book was taken from circulation at the Mercantile Library; the *Saint Louis Republic* commented that the novel was "too strong drink for moral babes and should be labeled 'poison'"; the *Nation* acknowledged its "fine workmanship and pellucid style," but could not "see that literature or the criticism of life is helped by the detailed history of the manifold and contemporary love affairs of a wife and mother" (Eble 261).

The author's previous literary success was obscured by public outrage at The Awakening. For almost half a century, Chopin's fiction was marginalized and dismissed as "local color" or "regional" writing--until Kenneth Eble's article entitled "A Forgotten Novel" appeared in the Western Humanities Review in 1956. Other critics soon sprang to the controversial novel's defense. In Patriotic Gore, published in 1962, Edmund Wilson made it clear that The Awakening's obscurity was unjustified. Chopin's novel was "quite uninhibited and beautifully written;" it was, moreover, "a very odd book to have been written in America at the end of the nineteenth century." The novel's appearance in paperback

form in 1964 probably contributed to its resurgence in academic popularity. In The Ferment of Realism (1965), Warner Berthoff called it a "remarkable novel," and in The American 1890s (1966) Larzer Ziff terms it a "novel of the first rank," "a superb creative work." Similarly, literary journalist Stanley Kaufmann's review of Ziff's book in New Republic maintained that "this long-overlooked novel deserves a place in the line of major American fiction" (Spangler 249). Per Seyersted's The Complete Works of Kate Chopin, along with Kate Chopin: A Critical Biography (1969) propelled The Awakening into the critical and popular mainstream. The novel's feminist concerns, which many contemporary readers have found especially relevant in tone and content, have been largely responsible for the novel's recent revaluation.

The Awakening lends itself to a rich and diverse variety of literary interpretations, making this novel as relevant today as it was around the turn of the century. While Chopin's novel manifests many of the characteristics associated with the sentimental and domestic novels so popular during the nineteenth century, it also adheres to the realism characteristic of local color fiction. As critics like Ottavio Casale have pointed out, however, The Awakening also contains elements of dark romanticism fully within the American Gothic tradition and reminiscent of the work of Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Indeed, themes and techniques derived from the gothic tradition illustrate Edna Pontellier's quest for experience and knowledge as well as her escape from limitation.

Bette B. Roberts discusses the differences between the domestic novel and the gothic romance:

> By the end of the eighteenth century, the writer of gothic novels could assume both the premium placed upon female propriety and the female legal and financial dependence upon men, within a social context characterized by the emergence of the tenets and practices of economic and social individualism. Unlike the domestic novel, which allowed for the parallel reinforcement and idealization of the female status quo in the domestic sphere, the gothic novel provided an outlet for the literary expression of repressed female wishes and fears resultant from a restrictive milieu. In a general sense, the ambivalence in the genre reflects Simon Lesser's contention that the central conflict of all fiction represents a struggle between impulse and inhibition (Fiction and the Unconscious, p. 78); in a more particular way, this ambivalence reflects Hazel Mew's view that behind the novel was women's "growing need to explore their own position in society" (Frail Vessels, p. 25). Under the guise of gothic conventions, women writers conveyed personal uncertainties appealing to their readers. (225-26)

Indeed, gothic romances tell, again and again, the story of women trapped in domestic space (DeLamotte 157). In Kate Chopin's The Awakening, Edna Pontellier finds herself similarly trapped not only in domestic space, but within the parameters of her social class. The strength of Chopin's novel resides primarily in the fusion of a series of independent gothic strains in her depiction of her female hero.

Most female gothic narratives, according to Eugenia DeLamotte, employ the flight/pursuit narrative pattern, which typically offers its protagonists either transcendence or death as its end. The Awakening, however, combines the flight/pursuit and quest patterns in Edna Pontellier's attempt to escape the confining atmosphere of a patriarchal system and her spiritual quest for knowledge and being. Her awareness of the repressive nature of that system, and her awareness of her own identity apart from it, takes place on the islands of Grand Isle and Chêniére Caminada, off the Louisiana Gulf Coast. In this paradisical environment (a prelapsarian Garden of Eden), Edna experiences a typically gothic descent from innocence/ignorance of self to experience/knowledge of self--an awakening to an inner life larger than that of New Orleans society. The second part of the novel takes place in New Orleans. Here, Edna desperately tries to "bring into being the primitive natural order she had tasted on Grand Isle" (Casale 79). In this repressive atmosphere, Edna finds herself fully within the gothic realm of experience as she searches for the knowledge that will enable her to transcend the social constrictions which prevent her own self-realization and fulfillment.

In separating herself from the community and its ordinary moral anchors in this realm of experience, Chopin's protagonist recalls the typically gothic Byronic Hero-Villain described in chapter two of this study. In her relentless search for knowledge and power, Edna manifests much the same recklessness, moodiness, and promiscuity associated with this character. Indeed, Chopin reverses gender roles in an attempt to create a romantic female hero who can overthrow the social status quo and achieve full selfhood. Toward this end, the gothic dichotomy of good woman (Adèle Ratignolle) and bad woman (Mademoiselle Reisz) creates narrative tension and assists the protagonist in defining her own identity. As Robert LeTellier has observed, the journey/quest is more than movement from one place to another. It

is a spiritual experience that provides the characters an opportunity to experience life and to vindicate their moral values (139-40).

The female gothic typically employs the traditional spatial symbolism of the ruined castle or an enclosed room to symbolize both the heroine and the patriarchal culture in which she is confined. These narrative spaces often reflect deeper, psychological feelings of terror, anger, and awe (and, occasionally, of self-fear and self-disgust) directed toward the female role, female sexuality, female physiology, and procreation (Fleenor 15). At the outset (independent of the protagonist's own awareness of the extent of her imprisonment), Chopin's spatial imagery provides the reader a less-than-subtle commentary on the oppressiveness of Edna Pontellier's social role within the patriarchal system. Madame LeBrun's caged birds mirror Edna's unnatural restriction in "man-made" space:

> A green and yellow parrot, which hung in a cage outside the door, kept repeating over and over:
> "Allez vous-en! Allez vous-en! Sapristi![2] That's all right!"
> He could speak a little Spanish, and also a language which nobody understood, unless it was the mockingbird that hung on the other side of the door, whistling his fluty notes out upon the breeze with maddening persistence. (171)

Completely dependent upon their owners for food, shelter, and affection, the birds "parrot" the appropriately conditioned responses in much the same way that Edna has conformed to social convention.

The spatial symbolism of the narrow bridges that connect the cottages at Grand Isle further illustrates Edna's enmeshment in French Creole society. She is, as are most of the Creole women, solely defined by her marriage. As Ottavio Casale has observed, this society "seems to signify safety, established social-moral relationships--conformity with which is spiritual death to the individual." Léonce Pontellier personifies these conservative, conformist values in his strict adherence to social propriety and in his "roles" as husband and father and in his expectation of Edna's adherence to the "roles" of wife and mother. While on Grand Isle, he avoids the water and the sun. He reads New Orleans newspapers and plays billiards with his city associates. In effect, he re-creates New Orleans on Grand Isle (79).

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[2] "Go away! Go away! For God's sake!"

Similarly, Edna's conformity and lack of individuation is evident early in the novel. Often in the gothic, as Eugenia DeLamotte observes, veils separate the "inquisitive mind from its object of speculation" (49). The object of speculation is, in this case, Edna's own selfhood. Despite an instinctive apprehension "[a]t an early period . . . [of a] . . . dual life--that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions," Edna has been unnaturally confined in the social, patriarchal tradition. Like her conservative husband, Edna is not a swimmer; she avoids the sea and carries a sunshade to protect herself from the sun (79). Léonce's annoyance at Edna's exposure to the elements calls attention to his own fear that she will be somehow changed by them, thereby altering her prescribed role as his social accessory: "You are burned beyond recognition," he comments upon her return from the beach, critically regarding her as "a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage" (173).

Léonce's fears are justified, however, as the primal elements of sun and sea awaken the passion in Edna's body and soul. Influenced in part by the attentions of the young bachelor, Robert LeBrun, she gradually becomes aware of the oppressive nature of her marriage and its demands in her narrowly prescribed social role. Following Léonce's blistering criticism of her inadequacies as a mother and wife, "[a]n indescribable oppression, which seemed to generate in some unfamiliar part of her consciousness, filled her whole being with a vague anguish. It was like a shadow, like a mist passing across her soul's summer day" (178-79).

Often in the gothic tradition, the narrative spaces that the protagonist inhabits reflect deeper, psychological concerns. The dark interior of the Pontellier cottage serves as the metaphorical site of Edna Pontellier's gradually waking soul; Edna's occupation of the cottage, enforced by mosquitoes that "made merry over her, biting her firm, round arms and nipping at her bare insteps, mirrors the "indescribable oppression" she feels in her marriage and the irritation she feels at observing *les convenances*. At this point in the novel, a single faint light shining from the hallway indicates the early stages of Edna's awakening. Chopin gradually extends the light imagery to illustrate Edna's growing awareness of her selfhood:

> A certain light was beginning to dawn dimly within her--the light which, showing the way, forbids it.
>
> At that early period it served to bewilder her. It moved her to dreams, to thoughtfulness, to the shadowy anguish which had overcome her the midnight when she had abandoned herself to tears.
>
> In short, Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and around her. (189-90)

As Edna becomes more aware of the repressive nature of her marriage and of her own identity apart from it, her rather passive reaction to her husband's insensitive treatment of her ("such experiences . . . were not uncommon in her married life") turns to rebellion on the evening of her night swim. Chopin again uses spatial relation within the house along with light and dark imagery to indicate the extent of her protagonist's self-awareness. Edna's detachment from Grand Isle society is evident in her physical location in the LeBrun's cottage. She is seated by a "low window sill." Margot Northey notes that "[t]he view from the window in which a captive being (usually a woman) looks out from her 'prison' is a repeated motif in gothic literature . . . [The] captive spirit [is] often symbolically . . . cut off from participation in the larger, outside world" (85). Edna is still within the bounds of Creole society, but is now in a position to view "the larger, outside world." Unlike her previous vantage point from the cottage's porch, which emits only a single, faint light from the hallway in the darkness, Edna can now see into the darkness. She actively "[commands] a view of all that went on in the hall and could look out toward the Gulf. There was a soft effulgence in the east. The moon was coming up, and its mystic shimmer was casting a million lights across the distant, restless water." More importantly, perhaps, Edna sees the connection between the "distant, restless water" illuminated by the moonlight and her soul, magically illuminated by Mademoiselle Reisz's music:

> The very first chords which Mademoiselle Reisz struck upon the piano sent a keen tremor down Mrs. Pontellier's spinal column. It was not the first time she had heard an artist at the piano. Perhaps it was the first time she was ready, perhaps the first time her being was tempered to take an impress of the abiding truth . . . [The] very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily beat upon her splendid body. (209-10)

The larger, outside world of self, the world beyond patriarchal society, beckons to Edna for a second time in her life.

Years before, Edna had previously experienced another such moment following an oppressive "Presbyterian service, read in a spirit of gloom by [her] father." She walked, "unthinking and unguided," through undulating waves of high, Kentucky bluegrass in a seemingly endless field. As a child, however, Edna was unable to escape the influence of an oppressive patriarchy represented by her father and religion. She retreated, instead, into the safety of a romanticized world populated by unattainable men: a "sad-eyed cavalry officer," a neighbor's fiancé, and a "great tragedian." Significantly, her father's opposition to her marriage to Léonce ultimately provided Edna a means for rebellion against the patriarchy as well as liberation from it. Marriage, however, proved not an escape into a "childhood illusion of perfect security," but rather "the final protection being one of total seclusion in domestic space" (DeLamotte 186). The marriage was "purely an accident." Edna had "fancied there was a sympathy of thought and taste between them, in which fancy she was mistaken." As an adult, she is still not permitted to grow up to be an autonomous individual in an adult world; nor is she acknowledged to be the equal of the patriarchs who rule it. Ironically, the "happy bounded world of home, the heroine's compensation for the loss of selfhood, is the same prison from which she [seeks] to escape" (DeLamotte 188).

In the gothic tradition, setting is frequently representative of a character's spiritual life and carries heavy symbolic resonance. The Awakening's island setting both reflects and reinforces Edna's physical and spiritual limitations, while the sea that surrounds it provides the medium through which her physical and spiritual freedom can be realized. In this novel, setting represents essentially a conflict between civilization and nature. This conflict, according to David Mogen, shapes the American Gothic experience and is historically "violent, consuming, intrinsically metaphysical, and charged with paradox and emotional ambivalence" (15). As Roderick Nash explains, the wilderness is an intrinsically gothic symbol in American literature, evoking supernatural terror:

> While inability to control or use wilderness was the basic factor in man's hostility, the terror of the wild had other roots as well. One was the tendency of folk traditions of many cultures to associate wilderness with the supernatural and monstrous. There was a quality of mystery about the wilderness, particularly at night, that triggered the imagination . . . . (Mogen 15)

Chopin's sea-wilderness is similarly surrounded by a sense of mystery and expectation in Robert LeBrun's account of the legend of the Gulf spirit:

> On the twenty-eighth of August, at the hour of midnight, and if the moon is shining . . . a spirit that has haunted these shores for ages rises up from the Gulf . . . [seeking] some . . . mortal worthy to hold him company, worthy of being exalted for a few hours into realms of the semi-celestials. His search has always hitherto been fruitless, and he has sunk back, disheartened, into the sea. But tonight he found Mrs. Pontellier. Perhaps he will never wholly release her from the spell. Perhaps she will never again suffer a poor, unworthy earthling to walk in the shadow of her divine presence. (215)

According to Martin Buber, the wilderness, thus transformed, produces "strange lyric and dramatic episodes, seductive and magical . . . " (Mogen 15). Indeed, Edna seems irrevocably drawn to the Gulf's "sonorous murmur [which] reached her like a loving but imperious entreaty" (189). Implicit in this siren song, however, is what Buber calls a "[a] tearing us away to dangerous extremes, [a] loosening [of] the well-tried context, leaving more questions than satisfactions behind them, shattering security" (Mogen 15). A variation of the gothic forest, the sea both intrigues "whispering, clamoring, murmuring" and frightens with "foamy crests that [coil] back like slow, white serpents" (212). It is simultaneously seductive and dangerous:

> But the beginning of things, of a world especially, is necessarily vague, tangled, chaotic, and exceedingly disturbing. How few of us ever emerge from such a beginning! How many souls perish in its tumult!
>
> The voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in abysses of solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation.
>
> The voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace. (190)

The nature of Chopin's sea-wilderness coincides closely with what Stephen Mainville has called the "frontier of the unconscious, the unknown, the limit of consciousness, a frontier that is experienced rather than located." These frontiers are situated beyond the bounds of civilized, cultured man; they are interior frontiers (Mogen 187).

Chopin's use of gothic setting defines those "vague, incomprehensible, untranslatable regions of human experience" (Dyer 225). In this respect, she resembles writers like Brown, Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe who have all used the wilderness as a central symbol for the unconscious or the psyche.

In The Awakening, sensual, natural images associated with Chopin's sea-wilderness access "unknown, hidden, or repressed aspirations and desires" in the protagonist (Dyer 226):

> There were strange rare odors . . . a tangle of sea smell and of weeds and damp, new-plowed earth, mingled with the heavy perfume of a field of white blossoms somewhere near. But the night sat lightly upon the sea and the land. There was no weight of darkness; there were no shadows. The white light of the moon had fallen upon the world like the mystery and the softness of sleep. (211)

"[At] that mystic hour and under that mystic moon," Edna answers the call of selfhood and swims alone for the first time in the wide expanse of the warm, Gulf waters:

> But that night she was like the little tottering, stumbling, clutching child, who of a sudden realizes its powers, and walks for the first time alone, boldly and with over-confidence.
> A feeling of exaltation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul . . . She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before. (212)

Edna's night swim follows the typically gothic *deinitiation* discussed previously in connection with Mary Noailles Murfree's divided protagonist. In her struggle to achieve knowledge, Chopin's protagonist, like Hiram Kelsey, undertakes a journey away from society and toward the darker regions of the self. This movement roughly parallels the Christian archetypes which inform the gothic tradition: the wandering soul moves--of its own free will--out of a state of innocence and descends into experience. Apart from the Creole society of Grand Isle and New Orleans, Edna's buried life (her soul and her selfhood), illuminated by moonlight, becomes one with the sea-wilderness. As she swims farther, Edna turns her face seaward to "gather in an impression of space and solitude, which the vast expanse of water, meeting and melting with the moonlit sky, conveyed to her excited fancy. As she swam out she seemed to be reaching out for the unlimited in which to lose herself" (213).

"[R]eaching out for the unlimited" in the moonlit waters of the Gulf, Edna joyously apprehends the immensity of her inner self, a self which demands its "own way" apart from the "lives, the hearts, the prejudices of others." As she swims toward self-knowledge, however, Edna looks "toward the shore, toward the people she had left there." At this point, Edna is aware of, but not completely given over to, her selfhood. Her social self is still intact enough to discourage a complete break with the constricting

hold of society. The stretch of water separating her from the others assumes "the aspect of a barrier which her unaided strength would never be able to overcome" and "a quick vision of death smote her soul" (213). Stifling her terror, she manages with great effort to regain the shoreline. That evening, Edna arrives at an important realization: the "gulf" that separates her social and her spiritual (inner) selves is immense.

Despite the barrier that separates these selves, Edna attempts to reconcile the two extremes by openly defying her husband in freedom of movement and in freedom of thought. Throughout The Awakening, Chopin repeatedly contrasts Edna's immobility with Léonce Pontellier's mobility in and out of the domestic sphere. In the novel's opening scene, exasperated with the parrot's chatter, "Mr. Pontellier [has] the privilege of quitting their society [the birds] when they [cease] to be entertaining" (171). Similarly, on Grand Isle, Léonce quits Edna's company in favor of Klein's hotel for a game of billiards with the New Orleans "club" men. During the summer week-days, while his family remains at Grand Isle, he travels to and from New Orleans on business. When in New Orleans, he frequents his "club." Léonce's constant movement from the domestic "inside" space to the outside "social" space emphasizes even more Edna's own confinement in the domestic sphere. Following her night swim in the wide expanse of the Gulf, however, Edna openly rebels against her husband's suggestion that she go inside:

> Another time she would have gone in at his request. She would, through habit, have yielded to his desire; not with any sense of submission or obedience to his compelling wishes, but unthinkingly, as we walk, move, sit, stand, go through the daily treadmill of the life which as been portioned out to us. (218)

She openly and abruptly refutes his assertion that it is too cold and that the mosquitoes will devour her:

> "It isn't cold . . . ."
>
> "There are no mosquitoes."

Léonce orders her to come in:

> With a writhing motion she settled herself more securely in the hammock. She perceived that her will had blazed up, stubborn and resistant. She could not at that moment have done other than denied and resisted. She wondered if her husband had ever spoken to her like that before,

> and if she had submitted to his command. Of course she had; she remembered that she had. But she could not realize why or how she should have yielded, feeling as she then did. (218)

Her subsequent response echoes the parrot's "Allez vous-en!" in the novel's opening scene:

> "Léonce, go to bed," she said. "I mean to stay out here. I don't wish to go in, and I don't intend to. Don't speak to me like that again; I shall not answer you." (218)

Significantly, Edna has moved outside--in contrast with her previous occupation of interior space--and remains outside until daybreak. She is in a typically gothic dream-state in which "order often breaks down: chronology is confused, identity is blurred . . . the buried life erupts" (Malin 9).

As daylight breaks, however, this dream-state yields to reality:

> Edna began to feel like one who awakens gradually out of a dream, a delicious, grotesque, impossible dream, to feel again the realities pressing into her soul. The physical need for sleep began to overtake her; the exuberance which had sustained and exalted her spirit left her helpless and yielding to the conditions which crowded her in. (219)

Edna is not "a semi-celestial being after all, but a woman chained by limitations. She does not live on the realm of the Gulf Spirit, but on a very imperfect Earth" (Dyer 227). Images of despair illustrate Edna's psychological alienation and insulation from her self. "The stillest hour of the night had come, the hour before dawn, when the world seems to hold its breath. The moon hung low, and had turned from silver to copper in the sleeping sky. The old owl no longer hooted, and the water-oaks had ceased to moan as they bent their heads" (219).

As mentioned previously, the gothic tradition contains Christian archetypes that reinforce humanity's moral position: the inevitability of the Fall, the subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and a compulsion to seek knowledge (LeTellier 183). Chopin's novel roughly follows this Christian archetype in Edna's primitive, paradisical experience on Chênière Caminada. Edna, however, turns the gothic tradition against itself in a typically romantic revaluation of conventional morality. The knowledge that she gains in her Fall results not in a fall from grace, but rather, ensures her salvation. In an effort to regain the same communion of spirit the next day, Edna impulsively sails across the bay with Robert to mass at the Chênière Caminada. As they leave Grand Isle and its Creole community behind, she feels "as if she were being borne away from some anchorage which had held her fast, whose chains

had been loosening--had snapped the night before when the mystic spirit was abroad, leaving her free to drift whithersoever she chose to set her sails"(223). As in her childhood, orthodox religion does not agree with Edna. Feelings of oppression and drowsiness overcome Edna in the stifling atmosphere of the "quaint little Gothic church," representative of social convention and of the patriarchy that supports it. As Mark Casale points out, Edna craves a more primal communion. Robert takes Edna to Madame Antoine's rustic, yet immaculate, cottage where a "big, four-posted bed, snow-white, invited one to repose." Edna loosens her hair, removes most of her clothes, and falls into a deep, day-long sleep. She awakes completely rested and eats and drinks the bread and wine that Madame Antoine has left for her in a sort of primitive sacrament. In a symbolic reenactment of the Fall, she then plucks an orange from the tree and tosses it to Robert. The "transfiguring release from the temporal order" is evident in her first question to Robert : "How many years have I slept? . . . The whole island seems changed" (Casale 80).

As G. R. Thompson has pointed out, the centrality of the Fall in the gothic vision is essentially "the breakdown of a stable Medieval world order, paralleling the mythic expulsion of man from Eden" (3). Similarly, Edna's awakening on Chênière Caminada ultimately results in a breakdown of the stable, patriarchal order of French Creole society. This fusion of romantic myth with overt social protest results in an internalized revolutionary social vision for Edna--and secures her gothic descent from innocence into experience, a descent begun originally on the evening of her night swim.[3] In this descent, her relentless desire for knowledge, echoed in the refrains of Robert's song "Si tu savais,"[4] creates experiences that ideally lead to wisdom. As Rollo May has pointed out, this desire is not simply sexual lust, but is rather a more universal longing for freedom (1032). More profoundly perhaps, Edna's quest suggests the romantic desire for knowledge and being. Because this quest is centered primarily around her self (rather than centered around a love object), Chopin allows her protagonist the possibility of a more optimistic gothic outcome described in chapter two. In the happy gothic, the soul experiences an intense, sensuous,

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[3] George Washington Cable's fusion of romantic myth with overt social protest in The Grandissimes, on the other hand, results in an externalized and urgent call for social change.

[4] "If you only knew."

reasonable, emotional apprehension of life thus securing its transcendence into Paradise, the source of spiritual life.

On the way back to Grand Isle, Robert proposes an outing to Grand Terre the following day to watch "the slimy lizards writhe in and out among the ruins of the old fort." In the gothic tradition, structures in various stages of decay often serve as symbols of the past and often represent a character's spiritual life. The image of the old fort suggests Edna's former self, imprisoned by convention. Significantly, Robert's proposal follows Edna's primal communion and descent into the realm of knowledge. The sexual connotation of the lizards is unmistakable; in the ruins of the old fort (symbolic of Edna's rejection of social convention) consummation of their desire is now possible. Robert, however, unable to defy social convention in the consummation of his passion, suddenly decides to depart for Mexico the next day. Robert's departure presents a problem for Chopin's protagonist. Having no love object on which to focus, Edna turns inward and attempts to free herself from the social restrictions that bind her spiritual self.

Upon her return to New Orleans, Edna seeks an enduring version of the state experienced on the island. In the city, Edna finds herself again bound by social convention within the domestic sphere in the Pontellier mansion. The house solely reflects Léonce Pontellier's wealth and taste. Chopin emphasizes that "Mr. Pontellier was very fond of walking about his house examining its various appointments and details, to see that nothing was amiss. He greatly valued his possessions, chiefly because they were his, and derived genuine pleasure from contemplating a painting, a statuette, a rare lace curtain--no matter what--after he had bought it and placed it among his household gods [sic]" (247-48). Edna, presumably another of Léonce's possessions, finds herself stifled in this environment. Chopin again positions her protagonist before an open window at night to illustrate her imprisonment within social parameters. Similar to her experience in the sea-wilderness, is Edna's contemplation of Nature that is both seductive and dangerous:

> All the mystery and witchery of the night seemed to have gathered there amid the perfumes and the dusky and torturous outlines of flowers and foliage. She was seeking herself and finding herself in just such sweet, half-darkness which met her moods. But the voices were not soothing

> that came to her from the darkness and the sky above and the stars. They jeered and sounded mournful notes without promise, devoid even of hope. (252)

Significantly, Chopin switches from the caged bird imagery so prevalent in the first half of the novel to cat imagery in the remaining chapters to illustrate further Edna's awakening--in much the same way that Amélie Rives employs cat imagery in connection with her female protagonist's entrapment within domestic space. Instead of passively accepting her social situation, Edna actively resists her imprisonment within the system. She paces back and forth in front of the window like a caged animal: "She turn[s] and walk[s] back into the room and began to walk to and from down its whole length, without stopping, without resting"(252). As Edna gains her independence and freedom, this imagery occurs more frequently in the novel. Dr. Mandelet, for example, notices the "subtle change . . . from the listless woman he had known into a being, who, for the moment, seemed palpitant with the forces of life . . . She reminded him of some beautiful, sleek animal waking up in the sun" (279). Similarly, preoccupied with her new sense of self-discovery, Edna "like[s] . . . to wander alone into strange and unfamiliar places. She discover[s] many a sunny, sleepy corner, fashioned to dream in. And she [finds] it good to dream and to be alone and unmolested" (261).

In New Orleans, Edna has no choice but to reject the social and cultural forces that restrict her from her freedom and selfhood. Chopin's female protagonist first rejects her social obligations: she refuses to receive visitors on her reception day, a program she had *religiously* followed during the course of her marriage; she refuses to return the visits of those who had called on her; she makes no effort "to conduct her household *en bonne mènagérie*"; she leaves her children almost exclusively to the care of the quadroon and her mother-in-law; she refuses to allow Léonce to intimidate her; she refuses to shop for new fixtures for the library with Léonce; she refuses to attend her sister's wedding. In short, "[s]he began to do as she liked and to feel as she liked . . . going and coming as it suited her fancy, and, so far as she was able, lending herself to any passing caprice" (259). When Léonce questions her behavior, she again echoes the parrot's phrase in the opening chapter: "Let me alone; you bother me" (259). He cannot see

that "she [is] becoming herself and daily casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which to appear before the world" (260).

In her search for selfhood, the self-divided Edna Pontellier vacillates widely between two extreme, but socially acceptable, images of womanhood represented by Adèle Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz. Edna is attracted to Madame Ratignolle's voluptuous, Madonna-like sensuality. She is the "embodiment of every womanly grace and charm." She is a "mother-woman":

> It was easy to know them, fluttering about with extended, protecting wings when any harm, real or imaginary, threatened their precious brood. They were women who idolized their children, worshiped their husbands, and esteemed it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels." (181)

She also recalls, as Emily Toth has suggested, Scott's blue-eyed heroines (331) and closely parallels the "good woman" of the gothic romance:

> There are no words to describe her save the old ones that have served so often to picture the bygone heroine of romance and the fair lady of our dreams. There was nothing subtle or hidden about her charms; her beauty was all there, flaming and apparent: the spun-gold hair that comb nor confining pin could restrain; the blue eyes that were like nothing but sapphires; two lips that pouted, that were so red one could only think of cherries or some other delicious crimson fruit in looking at them. She was growing a little stout, but it did not seem to detract an iota from the grace of every step, pose, gesture. One would not have wanted her white neck a mite less full or her beautiful arms more slender. Never were hands more exquisite than hers, and it was a joy to look at them when she threaded her needle or adjusted her gold thimble to her taper middle finger as she sewed away on the little night-drawers or fashioned a bodice or a bib. (182)

Unlike Edna, Adèle finds complete fulfillment in her marriage: "If the fusion of two human beings into one has been accomplished on this sphere it was surely in [the Ratignolles'] union" (257). The domestic harmony that she observes between the Ratignolles, however, "[gives] her no regret, no longing. It was not a condition of life which fitted her, and she could see in it but an appalling and hopeless ennui. She was moved by a kind of commiseration for Madame Ratignolle--a pity for that colorless existence which never uplifted its possessor beyond the region of blind contentment . . . " (258).

Although Edna is a wife and the mother of two boys, she is not a mother-woman. She is "fond" of her husband and sons, but increasingly comes to view them as "antagonists." Motherhood is, for Edna "a responsibility which she had blindly assumed and for which Fate had not fitted her." As she explains

to Adèle, "I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself . . . " (244). Moreover, she is unhappy in her marriage to Léonce Pontellier, and there is every indication that she would be as unhappy in marriage with either Alcée Arobin or Robert LeBrun, both being as firmly locked in Creole convention as her husband. A wedding, she tells Léonce, "is one of the most lamentable spectacles on earth."

Eugenia DeLamotte maintains that the only course of action for the gothic heroine in domestic entrapment, other than suffering, is either transcendence or death:

> The one escape route of which the gothic heroine may avail herself while still confined within "the cold, the rigid rules of propriety" is transcendence through an appreciation of the sublime . . . [The] heroine's experience of the sublime affords a psychological escape, placing the villain in a perspective that reveals his powerlessness in the larger scheme of things . . . This kind of transcendence has its limits. It is merely a substitute for the physical escape the heroine is powerless to achieve; in addition, it reinforces the heroine's ability to "bear" her suffering "with equanimity" rather than giving her strength or inspiration to end it. (181-82)

This idea of transcending temporal reality through an appreciation of the sublime corresponds closely with the idea underlying gothic creation. Linda Bayer-Berenbaum observes that gothic art uses "every technique possible to minimize its physical restrictions" (52). It "spreads out from itself at will and goes where the forces of chance or fate may take it . . . The process of life for the [g]othic soul is beyond reason, and contact with life takes place beyond the confines of orderly illusions or restrictive limitations . . . The goal is the process itself, an intensified perception of limitless reality" (71). Bette B. Roberts further sees a connection between this "process" of gothic art and literature and the sociological predicament of women: "What is needed for these women is an artistic outlet that both reinforces their limited cultural and social positions upon which they are emotionally and economically so dependent and offers them escape at the same time, a flight from the 'pains' resultant from subordination in a patriarchal society" (27-28). Indeed, Edna's own effort to reshape her soul through art is similar to the creation of (and the subtle message underlying) gothic fiction: through their work, artists and writers achieve "a greater single reality in which the spiritual and physical merge" in an exaltation of the soul and senses (Bayer-Berenbaum 52).

Edna's role-model in this endeavor is the artist Mademoiselle Reisz, who provides sharp contrast to Adèle Ratignolle's "grace and majesty." A "disagreeable little woman, no longer young, she had quarreled with almost everyone, owing to a temper which was self-assertive and a disposition to trample upon the rights of others." In contrast to Adèle Ratignolle's feminine perfection, the pianist is "homely . . . with a small wizened face and body and eyes that glowed. She [has] absolutely no taste in dress, and [wears] a batch of rusty black lace with a bunch of artificial violets pinned to the side of her hair" (208). She corresponds closely to the "bad woman" of the gothic romance.

Edna, however, admires the eccentric pianist's skill, dedication, freedom, and independence. Mademosielle Reisz cautions her that her artistic path will not be easy: "the bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings. It is a sad spectacle to see the weaklings bruised, exhausted, fluttering back to earth" (300). Edna, determined to pursue her own art, establishes an "atelier" in the top of the Pontellier mansion and spends her days painting. She is, however, still confined within the patriarchal realm--with Léonce, her children, and her father. After this succession of males departs the Pontellier mansion, Chopin's Byronic protagonist finally finds herself alone--and although moody at times, is happy with her solitary existence.[5]

Like Amélie Rives, Kate Chopin also attempts to reverse her protagonist's gender role to create, instead of a romantic heroine, a romantic female hero who can successfully overcome patriarchal and social constraints. Toward this end, both Rives and Chopin describe their female protagonists in androgynous, rather than feminine, terms.[6] Chopin keeps Edna's character development consistent with the Byronic personality. She is attractive, charming, and charismatic. She is promiscuous in her association with the roué Alcée Arobin. At the Jockey Club, she proves a reckless, yet highly competent gambler, regarded by those around her as an authority on horseflesh. Her condescending attitude regarding Mrs. Highcamp further gestures toward a reversal in gender role:

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[5] Kate Chopin had originally entitled this novel A Solitary Soul.

[6] The concept was not unprecedented; Shakespeare employed it in the Elizabethan period. Lady Macbeth implores the spirits to "unsex" her so that she can murder Duncan in another *coup d'état* of the patriarchy (cf. Macbeth, I. v. 41).

> There were possibly few track men out there who knew the race horse as well as Edna, but there was certainly none who knew it better. She sat between her two companions as one having authority to speak. She laughed at Arobin's pretensions, and deplored Mrs. Highcamp's ignorance. The race horse was a friend and intimate associate of her childhood. The atmosphere of the stables and the breath of the blue grass paddock revived in her memory and lingered in her nostrils. She did not perceive that she was talking like her father as the sleek geldings ambled in review before them. She played for very high stakes, and fortune favored her. The fever of the game flamed in her cheeks and eyes, and it got into her blood and into her brain like an intoxicant. People turned their heads to look at her, and more than one lent an attentive ear to her utterances, hoping thereby to secure the elusive but ever-desired "tip." (286)

Chopin links these androgynous aspects of Edna's Byronic personality to her decision to establish a home of her own, a privilege usually reserved for males in the patriarchal system. Edna's announcement of the move to Mademoiselle Reisz is accompanied by decidedly masculine behavior. She drinks "liquor from [a] glass as a man would have done. Then flinging herself upon the uncomfortable sofa," announces her decision to move from the Pontellier mansion on Esplanade Street into the pigeon-house around the corner. Significantly, she completely excludes the patriarchy from this overt act of rebellion: she finances the move with money from her mother's estate and from the sale of her art.

The dinner party that she hosts in the Pontellier mansion prior to her move is a further indication of Edna's transformation into a romantic female hero. She has, at this point in the novel, successfully flouted social convention and has begun to live her life authentically on her terms. Her regal bearing in the dining room, is indicative of Edna's victory over the patriarchy. Significantly, Alcée Arobin calls it Edna's *coup d'état*.[7] She has taken over the Pontellier mansion as its head: "There was something in her attitude, in her whole appearance when she leaned her head against the high-backed chair and spread her arms, which suggested the regal woman, the one who rules, who looks on, who stands alone" (309).

Despite her *coup d'état* over the immediate patriarchy, Edna lacks the inner strength to take on the entire social system that supports it. Her move to the "pigeon-house" proves as confining as the mansion; she is unable to transcend "the cold, rigid rules of propriety" through her art. She cannot give herself entirely over to "the solitary spinsterhood of a woman who is devoted to her art or career" (Christ 28). She lacks, as Mademosielle Reisz suspects, the "courageous soul that dares and defies."

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[7] "Overthrow of a government."

Because Edna's struggle is an internal one, the external world cannot offer Edna assistance in achieving total selfhood within this existing social structure. Neither her lover Alcée Arobin, or Robert LeBrun can assist her in surmounting the "barrier which her unaided strength would never be able to overcome." They, like Léonce and her children, function solely within the confines of Creole society. Simone de Beauvoir describes Edna's final realization: "The sphere to which she belongs is everywhere enclosed, limited, dominated, by the male universe: high as she may raise herself, far as she may venture, there will always be a ceiling over her head, walls that block her way" (334-35). Further, and perhaps more profoundly, Edna's witnessing of Adèle Ratignolle's *accouchment* explodes the remainder of her romantic illusions as basically "a provision of Nature, a decoy to secure mothers for the race" (344).

As on the evening of her night swim, Edna spends another sleepless night contemplating her options: "Today it is Arobin; tomorrow it will be someone else. It makes no difference to me, it doesn't matter about Léonce Pontellier--but Raoul and Étienne! (349)." Edna realizes that she cannot nurture her selfhood within the bounds of social convention without also destroying her children: "Her children appeared before her like antagonists who sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days . . . " (350). Hence, she cannot "sacrifice herself for her children." As Carol Christ has suggested, a reconciliation of Edna's social and spiritual quests cannot be realized (39). The best that she can hope for is a realistic knowledge and acceptance of self apart from her youthful, romantic illusions. The only remaining option for Chopin's alienated protagonist in the gothic paradigm is transcendence through death. In this respect, Chopin's protagonist in The Awakening has much in common with Murfree's protagonist in The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains. Both are searching for an inner truth, a self-awareness apart from society. In their quest for this authentic selfhood, both experience a *deinitiation* away from society. Finally, unable to reconcile their social and individual-spiritual selves, both experience spiritual transcendence in a regenerative death-by-drowning scenario fraught with ambiguity.

Significantly Edna returns to the seashore at Grand Isle not at night, but in broad daylight, fully aware of the irreconcilability of these selves. Her knowledge is symbolized by the sea-wilderness which

"stretche[s] out before her, gleaming with the million lights of the sun." Conflicting images of triumph and defeat ebb and flow through the concluding paragraphs of the novel, indicating the seemingly endless conflict between these two extremes. The sea-wilderness, for example, appeals to Edna's triumphant, spiritual self, "whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander in abysses of solitude." On the other hand, however, the "bird with a broken wing," a central image of social defeat, circles "disabled down, down to the water" (350). At the seashore, Edna courageously affirms her selfhood. She symbolically rejects the social constrictions that cripple her in casting off her "unpleasant, pricking garments." Standing on the seashore, naked and exposed to the sun, Edna feels "like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known" (350). Per Seyersted views this symbolic act as "a victory of self-knowledge and authenticity as she fully becomes herself" (CW 385-86). As Edna swims out toward the horizon, various images of defeat and triumph only intensify her self-affirmation through freedom of individual choice. She remembers her terror at being unable to regain the shore (society), and continues swimming. She remembers her husband and children, and continues swimming. She imagines Mademoiselle Reisz's condescension at her lack of courage and defiance, and continues swimming. She remembers Robert's lack of understanding, and continues swimming. She remembers Dr. Mandelet's understanding, and continues swimming. She remembers the bluegrass meadow and its spirit-affirming vastness, and continues swimming. The series of images that Edna sees just prior to her death--the cavalry officer, the chained dog, her father's voice--are a variation of a gothic convention pointed out by Eugenia DeLamotte, "a series of prophetic images that, in the form of a dream, sometimes prefigure the horrors in store for the [g]othic protagonist." DeLamotte's comments concerning Jane Eyre seem particularly relevant for Edna Pontellier as well: "These images set forth the perils to which [the protagonist] is already subject . . . But paradoxically, they also offer release from her restricted world--escape, through seclusion, into wide spaces and distant lands" (194).

In The Awakening, as in The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains, Nature becomes a force for change within and without the individual. Despite its awesome majesty, it nonetheless ministers to the

human spirit. Consequently, Edna's death becomes life-affirming--justifying a purpose higher than the individual self. The closing images of "the hum of bees, and the musky odor of pinks," along with the regenerative image of the water, indicate her metaphysical and spiritual rebirth, coincidental with the moment of socio-cultural and physical death. Self-awareness and self-destruction are the one and the same as Edna experiences an intense, sensuous, emotional, and reasonable apprehension of life and secures her transcendence into Paradise, the source of spiritual life. In the tradition of the gothic romance, Chopin's last novel, "despite its despairing fixation on the 'littleness' of the individual, also asserts the triumph of the soul 'in its immensity'" (DeLamotte 119).

CHAPTER VI

GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE'S GRANDISSIME SAGA: SOCIO-GOTHIC REGENERATION

Like Kate Chopin, George Washington Cable was intimately connected to Louisiana. He was born in New Orleans on October 12, 1844 to George Washington Cable and Rebecca Boardman. His father, of Dutch and German extraction, was originally from Virginia, where his ancestors had settled prior to the Revolution. His mother was born in Indiana and was descended from ancestors who had lived in Connecticut and Massachusetts since the seventeenth century. Married in Indiana, the Cables moved to New Orleans in 1837. With the exception of several years spent with relatives in Indiana, Cable spent most of his childhood in that city. In 1859, his father died and fourteen-year-old George left school to work in a customs-house. When New Orleans fell to the Union forces, he was expelled from the city along with the rest of family for refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the federal government. He subsequently enlisted in the Fourth Mississippi Cavalry on October 9, 1863. After distinguished service in the Confederate Army, Cable returned to New Orleans and began work as a clerk and bookkeeper. In 1869, Cable married Louise Stewart Bartlett and soon became a newspaper columnist and reporter for the *New Orleans Picayune*. His professional connections afforded him access to historical records dating back to 1718 and stored in the Cabildo (the government house built under Spanish rule) and in St. Louis Cathedral. These archives, in addition to his own experiences in Louisiana, provided Cable the basis for his fiction (Turner, George W. Cable 2-4).

Edward King's visit to New Orleans in 1873 marked the beginning of Cable's literary career. King, who had come to New Orleans to write "The Great South" papers, returned to *Scribner*'s with several of Cable's stories about old New Orleans (4). Despite the rejection of several of these stories, "Bibi" among them, Cable experienced meteoric success as a Louisiana local colorist; in 1879, these stories were collected in one volume entitled Old Creole Days. *Scribner* editors, however, suggested to Cable in 1877 that it was time for him to write a novel if he expected to make his way as a writer (Stephens, "Cable's Grandissime Saga" 6).

What literature Cable had in mind as models for his Grandissime saga is not a direct matter of record. He was, according to Arlin Turner, certainly not a wide reader, but he was dedicated to self-discipline and self-education (10). Years later Cable told Fred Pattee that "before he began to write," he had read Hugo, Mérimée, About, Dickens, Thackeray, Poe, and Irving (Stephens, "Cable and Mérimée" 398). Moreover, there are references in the *Picayune*'s "Drop Shot" column to Scott, Kingsley, Hawthorne, Twain, and Harte. He also read Turgenev in an effort to learn dramatic method in the novel and technique for handling large social problems (Turner, George W. Cable 10). Generally considered Cable's greatest novel, The Grandissimes' scope and depth has earned it impressive, if at times, sparse critical acclaim. Some admirers have called it "a novel better than all of Faulkner's greatest" (Brooks 1074-75).

Like the gothic novel, The Grandissimes emerged from a period of revolutionary ferment--and reflected another such period in its narrative:

> Arlin Turner has noted the relevance of the novel to the problems of post-Civil War New Orleans, and the probability that Cable was well aware of this. The Creoles of Louisiana, at the time of its acquisition by the United States, faced the necessity of coming to terms with a government imposed upon them and not of their own choosing, and they saw in that government a threat to their own institutions and rights. Similarly the New Orleans of the years following the Civil War had a government imposed upon it by force, and pledged, in theory at least, to political and social principles very much at odds with those of the society thus subjected. In both instances, what was being forced upon New Orleans from the outside was, as Cable saw it, a government based upon ideals of liberty and attitudes of progress which ran counter to established prejudices and which demanded new and more enlightened responses. And in making the problems of race and caste the central theme of his novel of the Louisiana of 1803, Cable was dealing with the single most controversial and inflammatory issue of post-Civil War Louisiana life. (Rubin 199)

The influence of such nineteenth-century American Gothicists as Scott, Irving, Hawthorne, and Poe is evident in what H. H. Boyeson termed Cable's "'Kulturroman,' a novel in which the struggling forces of two opposing civilizations crystalize & in which they find their enduring moment" (Stephens, "Cable and Mérimée" 404). Indeed, Fred Pattee sees The Grandissimes as "The House of Seven Gables transferred to the barbarous swamps of the Achafalaya." The "shadow of the Ethiopian" in The Grandissimes recalls

the curse of the Pyncheons inherited from Matthew Maule in Hawthorne's 1851 romance (Stephens, "Cable's Grandissime Saga" 6).

In this novel, Cable is chiefly concerned with social problems and, like many local colorists, employs realistic devices of dialect, locale, and character to convey an accurate representation of the complex community of life in New Orleans during the first half of the nineteenth-century. Where the other local colorists in this study used the gothic to explore ways in which society limits the individual, Cable uses gothic themes and techniques to depict a society in transition, to expose the social injustices underlying the institution of slavery and the caste-system which supports it, and to call into question the extent of Creole "civilization." Moreover, the gothic legacy in The Grandissimes suggests a violent upheaval in the external social order and not, as we have seen previously in Murfree and Chopin, an upheaval in the internal perception of self apart from social dictates.

Cable's views regarding racial oppression were radical for a nineteenth-century son of the South. Although Cable fought with the confederacy during the Civil War, he later began to question the South's views concerning secession and slavery. He tackled these doubts by collecting information and re-examining his own opinions. He read both local and national history and discussed the problems of secession and slavery in a debating society that he and his wife had joined. He studied certain Biblical passages which had been used to justify slavery and became increasingly dissatisfied with pro-slavery arguments (Tipping 64). "Even before such polemical essays as he put into The Silent South and, five years later, into his book The Negro Question, . . . his fiction had begun to reflect his growing feeling against racial injustice. Indeed, The Grandissimes . . . 'is recognized as a pioneer among fictional studies of the decadence resulting from slavery in the Old South'" (Webb 101).

The character of Honoré Grandissime is central to Cable's socio-gothic objective. Implicit in the aristocratic Creole is the "unavoidable duality of existence" that generally underlies gothic fiction and "attempts to shock the reader into a recognition of the dark or evil side of life which people try to ignore or to explain away" (Northey 91). The darker side of his character is depicted, figuratively and literally,

in his elder half-brother--also named Honoré. In the novel's present action, the constant confusion surrounding the two Grandissime brothers, one white and the other a free man of color, serves as an omnipresent reminder of the Grandissimes' displaced inheritance. Although the elder Honoré f.m.c. [1] holds the bulk of his father's wealth, his ancestral rights have been ignored by the Grandissimes. The younger Honoré, charged by his father to "right the wrongs which he had not quite dared to uproot," must reconcile these two identities during the course of the novel. Toward this end, Honoré counters his villainous uncle, Agricola Fusilier who, even on his deathbed, espouses the virtues of the caste system. As Robert Stephens argues, not until the two brothers are reunited in recognition and fortune can the inheritance be reclaimed ("Cable's Grandissime Saga" 10).

In response to Scribner's request, and at the encouragement of writer and mentor H. H. Boyeson, Cable turned to his former work as the material he would develop into a full-sized novel. In the early 1870s, Cable had been unable to publish a short story entitled "Bibi" because editors thought it "too distressful" for their family magazines. "Bibi" transfigured, however, became the centerpiece of The Grandissimes, which began its serial run in Scribner's Monthly in 1879. Intricately tied to the fortunes of the Grandissimes, the Fusiliers, and the De Grapions, the story of Bras Coupé haunts the novel's various narratives. It provides a basis in the past for the racial and cultural conflict that divides and weakens the Grandissime dynasty (represented by the division of the two Honorés), in the novel's present action.

The Bras Coupé and "Bibi" narratives have basis in fact. Cable had first encountered mention of a peculiar African tribe in researching the *Code Noir* of old Louisiana, which detailed punishments used in the old days for the control of slaves. In M. L. E. Moreau Saint-Mèry's Description topographique, physique, civile, politique, et la historique de la partie française de l'ille Saint Dominique (Philadelphia, 1797-98), Cable found an account of a tribe so "distinguished by the untamable self-regard of its men" that they practiced self-poisoning and self-mutilation rather than submit to slavery. "[T]he tribe was

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[1] Free man of color.

known as the Aradas" (Stephens, "Cable and Merimée" 389). Cable then heard the story of Bras Coupé from a porter in the counting room where he worked as a bookkeeper:

> Bras Coupé, he said, was one of those Aradas (let us say),--an imported African chief. As such he disdained to work, and true to his tribal pride, he seized a hatchet and struck off his right hand. He was saved by prompt surgery and on still finding himself required to work, escaped to the swamp. Here he lived for years, through the negligence of the police, the terror of hunters and woodcutters and the hero of terror-stories among children and slaves. He was finally captured and, the supposition is, executed. (Ekström 100)

Variations of the legend abound, but literary historians generally recognize some degree of truth behind Cable's version of the black slave's life and death.[2]

The Bras Coupé story in The Grandissimes relies on gothic themes and techniques to emphasize the inhumanity underlying the slave's imprisonment, persecution, and escape--all of which are, as we have said previously in this study, characteristic themes in gothic literature. In typically gothic fashion, Cable's casual, narrative voice distances the reader from the grisly details in the story, yet effectively brings home its terrible import. As Bernice Webb has argued, Cable's use of understatement and irony in the Bras Coupé tale communicates strong anti-slavery sentiment. Moreover, when Cable carefully positions the Bras Coupé chapters alongside the chapter describing the fête de Grandpère, the annual gathering of the Grandissime clan, he emphasizes even further the theatrical, picturesque, artificiality of the Creole way of life--and its dangerous precariousness (Tipping 72).

The significance of Bras Coupé's name alone attests to the real horror of slavery, the figurative maiming of the human spirit:

> His name, he replied to an inquiry touching that subject, was ----- -----, something in the Jaloff tongue, which he by and by condescended to render into Congo: Mioko-Koanga, in French Bras Coupé, the Arm Cut Off. Truly it would have been easy to admit, had this been his meaning, that his tribe, in losing him, had lost its strong right arm close off at the shoulder; not so easy for his high-paying purchaser to allow, if this other was his intent; that the arm which might no longer shake the spear or swing the wooden sword, was no better than a useless stump never to be lifted for aught else. But whether easy to allow or not that was his meaning. He made himself a type of all Slavery, turning into flesh and blood the truth that all Slavery is maiming. (171)

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[2] For additional information concerning the origins of the Bras Coupé story, see Robert Stephen's article published in Mississippi Quarterly entitled, "Cable's Bras Coupé and Merrimée's Tamango: The Case of the Missing Arm."

More profoundly, perhaps, Bras Coupé is a synthesis of several gothic types. In his aristocratic bearing, his mysterious origins, and his disdain for conventional morality, the African prince recalls the Byronic Villain-Hero. At the same time, however, he also has much in common with the ancient archetype of the scapegoat or *pharmakos* which informs gothic fiction. Like Mary Noailles Murfree's Hiram Kelsey, the African prince is neither innocent or guilty but represents human nature under the sentence of death. Bras Coupé's sentence is slavery, and it leads to victimization. He can only achieve reintegration into society through the terrifying reality of death.

Captured on the "dark continent" and "attired as a true son of Adam," Bras Coupé is put aboard a slaving ship Cable ironically calls the *Egalité*. Cable delays Bras Coupé's own awareness of the extent of this sentence, heightening the horror of slavery through a detached narrative voice as he describes the ship's passage to Louisiana. As a result of inhumane crowding and stormy weather, "part of the living merchandise [fails] to keep" and the captain, discovering room over the side "[jettisons] the unmerchantable" (169). When Bras Coupé finally comprehends his enslavement at the Martinez plantation, his first reaction is one of disbelief:

> When one day he had come to be quite himself, he was invited out into the sunshine, and escorted by the driver (a sort of foreman to the overseer), went forth dimly wondering. They reached a field where some men and women were hoeing. He had seen men and women--subjects of his--labor--a little--in Africa. The driver handed him a hoe; he examined it with silent interest--until by signs he was requested to join the pastime . . . This invitation was a cataract of lightning leaping down an ink-black sky. In one instant of all-pervading clearness he read his sentence--WORK. (171)

As Cable describes Bras Coupé's subsequent rebellion against the other workers and driver, he manipulates the narrative pace for understated gothic effect, concluding casually that "[a] plaster or two made everything even in a short time, except in the driver's case--for the driver died" (172). Palmyre Philosophe, Mademoiselle Grandissime's maid, is summoned to explain his sentence to him. From the perspective of a cultural outsider, Bras Coupé's incredulity and disdain for the concept of slavery emphasizes further the absurdity and inhumanity of the system:

> [When Palmyre] made bold to approach the actual issue, and finally uttered the loathed word, *Work*, he rose up, six feet five, a statue of indignation in black marble . . . And then Palmyre . . . went to explain to master and overseer. Bras-Coupé understood, she said, that he was a slave--it

> was the fortune of war, and he was a warrior; but, according to a generally recognized principle in African international law, he could not reasonably be expected to work. (174)

The unnatural aspects of slavery intensify with Agricola Fusilier's capricious and vindictive arrangement (for he dislikes Palmyre intensely) of marriage between Bras Coupé and Palmyre.

Designed primarily as an amusement to coincide with the marriage of Bras Coupé's master, Don José Martinez, and Palmyre's mistress, the sister of Honoré Grandissime, the double marriage takes place at the Grandissime mansion. Like its gothic predecessors, the mansion represents a feudal past and a decadent aristocracy. In The Grandissimes, the Creole aristocracy supports the caste-system and, along with it, the institution of slavery. The caste system simultaneously isolates and imprisons its inhabitants, master and slave alike. The mansion's architectural style holds it, and the society it represents, apart from the "reeking ground" of reality (the caste-system and slavery) in which its foundations are so firmly set. Richard Chase views the elevation of the mansion as representative of the fastidious and neurotic isolation of the Creole culture (171):

> The house itself, situated on Esplanade Street, displays "architectural features which identify [it] with an irrevocable past . . . The round, white-plastered brick pillars which held the house fifteen feet up from the reeking ground and rose on loftily to sustain the great over-spreading roof, or clustered in the cool, paved basement; the lofty halls with their multitudinous glitter of gilded brass and twinkle of sweet-smelling candles; the immense encircling veranda, where twenty Creole girls might walk abreast; the great front stairs, descending from the veranda to the garden, with a lofty palm on either side, on whose broad steps forty Grandissimes could gather on a birthday afternoon; and the belvedere, whence you could see the cathedral, the Ursulines', the governor's mansion, and the river, far away, shining between the villas of Tchoupitoulas Coast . . . ." (157-58)

Significantly, Don José's marriage takes place in the upper level of the mansion, while Bras Coupé's marriage takes place on the lower, paved basement--in observance of the appropriate social hierarchy.

Cable, like Kate Chopin, uses clothing to further indicate the repressive nature of Creole society. Throughout the Bras Coupé story, Cable describes the powerfully-built African prince in animalistic terms: "a rhinoceros," "an African buffalo," and "a zebra." For his wedding, Bras Coupé paints himself "all rings and stripes, antelope fashion" in serious anticipation of his marriage--and in opposition to the Creole culture. Discouraged from wearing his ceremonial paint, Bras Coupé dons, instead, "ridiculous

red and blue regimentals" for the wedding. The Confederate uniform conceals his animalistic and primitive nature, but also symbolically imprisons Bras Coupé in Creole (Southern) social convention. Moreover, Cable indirectly implies that the uniform has also previously concealed the animalistic and primitive nature underlying the supposedly civilized Grandissimes.

In true gothic fashion, Cable employs atmospheric disturbances which indicate the Creole subversion of the natural and religious order. As the marriage of Don José takes place, "there was coming up as villainous a night as ever cast black looks in through snug windows." The weather worsens considerably, however, when the old French priest marries Bras Coupé and Palmyre. Nature seemingly revolts at the unnatural spectacle, and a fierce hurricane blows ashore. Ecclesiastical laws in the gothic novel, like the narrative spaces that the protagonists inhabit, are aligned with a decadent and dying order. Usually portrayed as monstrous and inhuman, these laws are a sure indication of the presence of evil. The violent storm that follows the farcical marriage of Bras Coupé and Palmyre emphasizes that the society which condones slavery is, at its center, in violation of both God and Nature.

Palmyre's empathetic mistress, sensing her maid's unwillingness to be given to Bras Coupé, evokes the right to withhold the bride from her husband for a time. Bras Coupé reluctantly acquiesces to Madame Martinez, whom he respects, but threatens Voudou-Mangnan, a regional variation of the gothic curse, to the Grandissimes if deceived. The storm outside and the "fierce black cloud" mirrors his internal rage:

> The crowd retreated and the storm fell like a burst of infernal applause. A whiff like fifty witches flouted up the canvas curtain of the gallery and a fierce black cloud, drawing the moon under its cloak, belched forth a stream of fire that seemed to flood the ground; a peal of thunder followed as if the sky had fallen in, the house quivered, the great oaks groaned, and every lesser thing bowed down before that awful blast. Every lip held its breath for a minute--or an hour, no one knew--there was a sudden lull of the winds and the floods came down. Have you heard it thunder and rain in those Louisiana lowlands? Every clap seems to crack the world. It has rained a moment; you peer through the black pane--your house is an island, all the land is sea. (180)

Indeed, the Grandissime mansion, bordered by swampland, is as remote as an island. Here, a decadent, antiquated and slowly dying régime, entraps men and women within this carceral environment.

The Grandissimes, however, ignore the destructive implications inherent in the Creole "way of life," and the wedding party resumes. Bras Coupé's first encounter with wine proves disastrous:

> Bras Coupé, throwing his heels about with the joyous carelessness of a smutted Mercury, for the first time in his life tasted the blood of the grape. A second, a fifth, a tenth time he tasted it, drinking more deeply each time . . . The moment quickly came when he wanted his eleventh bumper . . . splitting the table with his fist by way of punctuation--there ensued a hustling up the staircase . . . that left him alone at the banquet. (180)

Bras Coupé heads up the staircase and demands "More!" from his fellow-bridegroom. Offended, the aristocratic Don José attempts to strike the slave into submission, but "[falls, instead], beneath the terrific fist of his slave with a bang that jingled the candelabras" (180).

Following a "voudou malediction" over the body of his fallen master, Bras Coupé escapes, "his gaudy regimentals [making] a red and blue streak down the hall." The Grandissimes' own impotence is indicated by the rush of frilled and powdered gentlemen to the rear veranda." As Bras Coupé heads for the swamp, Cable inserts an appropriately gothic "avalanche of lightning with Bras-Coupé in the midst" and then plunges the entire landscape into the "blackness of darkness" (181).

> While the wet lanterns swung crazily in the trees . . . while the Spaniard bathed his eye and the blue gash on his cheek-bone . . . and the guests splashed home after the storm as best they could, Bras-Coupé was . . . declaring his independence on a slight rise of ground . . . in the inmost depths of the swamp. (181)

As *pharmakos*, Bras Coupé becomes the "natural prey of dark forces at large in the world and in the hearts of men."

As in most gothic narratives, the wilderness indicates the darker aspects of man's psyche. Certainly, for Bras Coupé, the swamp is a refuge--the mysterious, primitive element to which he naturally belongs. However, for the Grandissimes, the "sombre, blue vapors" of the swamp imply something more sinister:

> Endless colonnades of cypresses; long, motionless drapings of gray moss; broad sheets of noisome waters, pitchy black, resting on bottomless ooze; cypress knees studding the surface; . . . a solemn stillness and stifled air only now and then disturbed by the call or whir of the summer duck, the dismal ventriloquous note of the rain-crow, or the splash of a dead branch falling into the clear but lifeless bayou. (181-82)

The swamp that surrounds New Orleans Creole society serves as a metaphor of the "blackness of darkness," a primal reality underlying the artifices of civilization, civilization being the bridge across the abyss. Unfortunately, as Cable suggests, a corrupt social order cannot lead humanity out of the abyss; rather, it can only leave its fellowship in "a lifeless bayou." Indeed, from the outset of the novel, Cable describes the abysmal quality of life in and around New Orleans seemingly as a result of the caste system and slavery. It is "[a] land hung in mourning, darkened by gigantic cypresses, submerged, in a land of reptiles, silence, shadow and decay" (9). Through the image of the city's drainage canal and its numerous channels leading into the swamp, Cable illustrates the poisonous beliefs that lead into the center of slavery:

> Down the empty street or road, which stretched with arrow-like straightness toward the north-west, the draining-canal that gave it its name tapered away between occasional overhanging willows and beside broken ranks of rotting palisades, its foul, crawling waters blushing and gliding and purpling under the swiftly waning light, and ending suddenly in the black shadow of the swamp. [Honoré Grandissime] . . . leaned heavily on his arm, and cast his glance out along the beautified corruption of the canal. His eye seemed quickened to detect the smallest repellant details of the scene; every cypress stump that stood in or overhung the slimy water; every ruined indigo-vat or blasted tree, every broken thing, every bleached bone of ox or horse--and there were many--for roods around. As his eye passed them slowly over and swept back again around the dreary view, he sighed heavily and said: "Dissolution,' and then again--"Dissolution! order of the day--." (264)

During his inevitable reintegration into society, the archetypal *pharmakos* becomes victim. After evading escape in the swamp over the winter, Bras Coupé is captured as he dances in Congo Square and is taken "to the midst of the ancient town, in a part which is now crumbling away . . . to the Calabooza, with its humid vaults, grated cells, iron cages and its whips." The dungeon and the urban ruins surrounding it are the New World equivalent of the moldering gothic castle. Cable's limited description of Bras Coupé's ordeal suggests not only the extent of human cruelty but society's anesthetized response to those atrocities: " . . . they strapped Bras-Coupé face downward and laid on the lash. And not a sound came from the mutilated but unconquered African to annoy the ear of the sleeping city" (191). Led by Grandissime patriarch Agricola Fusilier, in accordance with the *Code Noir*, the slave's "ears [were] shorn from his head, and the tendons behind his knees severed." Bras Coupé is returned to Palmyre. His eyes are "dry,

but there [is] in them an unspeakable despair that fills the eye of the charger when, fallen in battle, he gazes with sidewise-bended neck upon the ruin wrought upon him" (191-92).

As noted in chapter two, inheritance is typically a central issue in the gothic novel; it remains so in The Grandissimes. The widow of Don José Martinez brings her child to visit a dying Bras Coupé, whose curse still rests upon the household:

> The lady came, her infant boy in her arms, knelt down beside the bed of sweet grass and set the child within the hollow of the African's arm. Bras-Coupé turned his gaze upon it; it smiled, its mother's smile, and put its hand upon the runaway's face, and the first tears of Bras-Coupé's life, the dying testimony of his humanity, gushed from his eyes and rolled down his cheek upon the infant's head. He laid his own tenderly upon the babe's forehead, then removing it, waved it abroad, inaudibly moved his lips, dropped his arm . . . The curse was lifted. (193)

The parallels of Bras Coupé's actions to the Christian myth and its *pharmakos*-Christ figure are apparent in this scene. Although Bras Coupé has removed the curse from the Martinez-Grandissimes eight years prior to the novel's present action, the "shadow of the Ethiopian," like the curse of Hawthorne's Matthew Maule, continues to haunt the other interlocking narratives and Creole culture in the present.

The novel's present action begins in New Orleans in the years 1803 and 1804, at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, when Napoleon ceded Louisiana, recently acquired from Spain, to the Americans. Creole anxiety at this time was high: previously held positions of political power along with land titles held under Spanish rule were in jeopardy. Creoles also feared that northern attitudes toward slavery, along with the recent slave insurrection in St. Domingo, would lead to an uprising of slaves in Louisiana and, consequently, to a breakdown of the caste system which had supported their belief in their own racial superiority (Tipping 65).

The novel follows the typically gothic narrative pattern of the *deepening recess*, discussed previously in chapter two. Several secondary narratives are embedded within the outermost Frowenfeld frame, and movement into the inner recess eventually exposes each narrative. From the outset, Cable intentionally obscures individual and cultural identities in his opening scene, a masquerade ball at the Théatre St. Philippe in the present action. His grotesque cast of characters wear costumes that suggest identities and relationships from the past. Cable does not immediately disclose the identity or gender of

these characters, leaving the burden of piecing together the history and complicated relationships to the reader and to the immigrant Yankee Joseph Frowenfeld.

The novel's outermost frame describes the arrival of the Frowenfeld family in New Orleans. A malaria epidemic leaves all but young Joseph Frowenfeld dead. After his recovery from the near-fatal illness, Joseph establishes himself as a pharmacist and begins to unravel the "[t]hick mist of strange names, places, and events . . . populated . . . with phantoms," the complex family relationships--past and present--of the Brahmin Mandarin de Grandissimes, the Fusiliers, the De Grapions (15). As Louis Rubin has accurately noted, Frowenfeld is a scientist, without prejudices of caste. His innocence enables him to judge the attitudes and ways of Creole society objectively. Though he is somewhat naive and too quick to view complex questions of custom, caste, and habit in terms of moral principles, it is clear that Frowenfeld's opinions are those of Cable, and that his lack of commitment to Creole society renders him able to judge it by disinterested moral standards (199).

As a cultural outsider, Frowenfeld finds that his new "book, the Community of New Orleans," is recorded "in a strange tongue . . . [It is] a volume whose displaced leaves would have to be lifted tenderly, blown free of much dust, re-arranged, some torn fragments laid together again with much painstaking, and even the purport of some pages guessed out"(103). "[M]oved by [a] frankness and ardent zeal for truth," Frowenfeld acts as a detective to piece together the complexities of Creole culture (141). As William P. Day argues, the detective is a common figure in gothic fantasy, and all gothic fantasies are mysteries to a certain extent. Developed from the tension created by the lack of an effective hero, the detective, through his own efforts, can resolve the mystery and put an end to horror. The presence of the detective, Day continues, "revises the balance and dynamics of the genre, focusing on the restoration of order and meaning rather than on the steady disintegration of identity and the absolute instability of the world in which the characters live" (50-51). Although The Grandissimes is not the story of Joseph Frowenfeld, he does play a significant part in the overall saga. The Latin derivative of the word, *detegere*, literally means to unroof, and Frowenfeld enters the private House of Grandissimes to reveal its "guilty

secrets and to show the illusory character of its boasted foundations" (Milbank 17). He enables Honoré Grandissime to resolve the cultural entanglement in which the novel's principals are trapped.

As mentioned previously in chapter two, gothic novels frequently borrow from Greek tragic structure. Indeed, several critics have commented on the similarities between Greek tragedy and The Grandissimes in theme, narrative structure, and character. An anonymous reviewer for *Atlantic Monthly* saw that Cable had conceived "with a classic sense, the immense reach of a proud family; he has constructed a House of Grandissimes . . . The very names given to the members of the family remind one of a Greek drama, and the turn of the story upon the opportunity of the head of the family to make or mar the fortunes of all is finely attended" (Turner 15). Bernice Webb observes that the, "acts of physical cruelty performed upon the runaway black . . . as if patterned on a classical Greek drama, are completed outside the reader's direct line of vision" (105). In 1880, an anonymous reviewer for the *Atlantic* similarly remarked on Joseph Frowenfeld's chorus-like function: "for though his action occasionally affects the story, his chief function is to ask questions and bring out prior conditions, and especially, as we have hinted, to be the external conscience . . . " (Turner 14).

As Fred Pattee has accurately observed, however, the strength of The Grandissimes does not lie so much in the novel's structure as in its characters, conditions, episodes, and atmosphere; its thesis is suggested rather than dominant. The novel is a "gallery rather than a single work of art" (251). As is the case in many gothic novels, Cable's "gallery" is fraught with violence:

> It is a book of lurid pictures . . . [T]he murder of the *négresse* Clemance . . . in sheer horror and brutal, unsparing realism surpasses anything in Uncle Tom's Cabin, anything indeed in the Russian realists. It is a book too with a monotone of fear: the nameless dread that comes of holding down a race by force, or as Joel C. Harris has phrased it, "that vague and mysterious danger that seemed to be forever lurking on the outskirts of slavery, ready to sound a shrill and ghostly signal in the impenetrable swamps and steal forth under the midnight stars to murder and rapine and pillage"; the superstitious thrill when at dead of night throbs up from a neighboring slave yard, 'the monotonous chant and machine-like time-beat of the African dance'; the horror of finding morning after morning on one's pillow voodoo warnings and ghastly death charms placed seemingly by supernatural hands. (Pattee 250)

Yet through such violence, Cable implies, sociological regeneration is possible. Only Honoré Grandissime, however, can effect such sweeping social change within the system. Although Joseph

Frowenfeld clearly sees the injustices at the center of the Creole caste system, he is unable--as an outsider--to alter the system from within. Spurred by Frowenfeld (and his own sense of justice), Honoré Grandissime attempts to right the wrongs of the past which are encumbered in the present by the "shadow of the Ethiopian" (the institution of slavery):

> Ah! my-de'seh, when I try sometimes to stand outside and look at it, I am ama-aze at the length, the blackness of that shadow' . . . It is the Némésis w'ich, instead of coming afteh, glides along by the side of this morhal, political, commercial, social mistake! It blanches, my-de-seh, ow whole civilization! It drhags us a centurhy behind the rhes' of the world! It rhetahds and poisons everhy industrhy we got!--mos' of all our-h immense agrhicultu'e! It brheeds a thousan' cussses that nevva leave home but jus' flutter-h up an' rhoost, my-de-seh, on ow heads an' we nevva know it!--yes, sometimes some of us know it. (156)

Honoré himself is encumbered by the "shadow of the Ethiopian" in the figure of his half-caste brother, Honoré f.m.c.: "[Y]oung Honoré . . . was like the sun's warmth wherever he went; and the other Honoré was like his shadow" (185). Cable makes it clear that this racial distinction is a social problem deeply ingrained in the Creole culture of Louisiana. In Paris, the brothers' racial heritage is not an issue; they are equals. In New Orleans, however, the blood connection that binds the two together just as certainly divides them and their family. Throughout the novel, the confusion surrounding their identities is a constant reminder of their similarities rather than of their differences.

In many ways, the two Honoré's function as the novel's Young Hero, a gothic type described in chapter two. They both carry themselves with aristocratic bearing and display admirable morality and nobility of character. They are not antagonists to each other. Rather, they are unified in their rejection of the caste system's conventional social views; they both recognize the need for change. The two Honoré's manifest the same duality associated with the typically divided protagonist of gothic fiction. This duality, as Margot Northey explains, "attempts to shock the reader into a recognition of the dark or evil side of life which people try to ignore to explain away" (91). Cable literally and figuratively blends the two brothers, one pure Creole, the other a quadroon, into one character. They are dependent on each other: Honoré requires Honoré f.m.c.'s fortune to keep Grandissime Brothers solvent, and Honoré f.m.c. needs Honoré's familial connection.

Although the confusion surrounding their identities complicates the line of succession, it is the Creole insistence on their racial difference that splits the brothers, resulting in a displaced inheritance. As mentioned in chapter two, displaced inheritance frequently informs the gothic novel. If the descendancy is damaged at its source, no genuine authority, power, or true identity can proceed from it (Day 80-81). Divided for most of the novel, the brothers must be reunited in inheritance and fortune before a pattern of succession can be re-established and before social regeneration can occur. Toward this end, Honoré is pitted against his temperamental uncle Agricola Fusilier, who fiercely and passionately believes in and upholds the caste system.

The Grandissime family patriarch epitomizes "preposterous, apathetic, fantastic, suicidal pride . . . as lethargic and ferocious as an alligator." He represents, as Louis Rubin has suggested, a primitive, unreasoned defiance of the moral imperatives of the nineteenth century in the name of the white South (200). At his worst, Agricola Fusilier resembles the diabolical, Machiavellian villains of Elizabethan drama on which the gothic's Inscrutable Tyrant is based. As described in chapter two, this type of Villain has an insatiable lust for control and power, and displays an arrogant disregard for moral and social values. Cable's "characterization of the fiery old Creole, however, is by no means unsympathetic. [He] recognizes the pathos and dignity of the proud old man, the heroic quality of his misguided loyalty to Creole tradition and his zeal in a miserable cause, the warmth of his friendship as well as his hatred" (Rubin 200-01). He is the first in a long line of characters who personify the unshakable dignity of a southern aristocracy whose patriarchal order is malignant and in need of replacement. In this sense, the novel depicts as much his tragedy as that of the South. Agricola's destructive temper, pride, and honor implicate him in the widowed Aurora De Grapion Nancanou's poverty-stricken state (he has not only "won" Fausse Rivière Plantation from her husband in a poker game, but has slain Nancanou in a duel); his temperament also involves him in the brutal murder of Bras Coupé, the lynching of Clemance, and in the denial of Honoré f.m.c.'s ancestral rights.

The widow of Bras Coupé, Palmyre Philosophe, is the catalyst that brings the "shadow of the Ethiopian" into the novel's present action. Characterized by her intelligence, dark beauty, cunning, and demonic ambition, Palmyre corresponds closely to the Demonic Woman gothic type defined in chapter two. Her "barbaric and magnetic beauty that startled the beholder like the unexpected drawing out of a jeweled sword" epitomizes "femininity without humanity,--something that made her with all her superbness, a creature that one would want to find chained" (71). Palmyre's "dark, fierce will, the expanded realization of her lifetime longing for terrible strength," had been realized in her husband. Part Creole, she harbors an incessant desire to wreak personal vengeance on those who would force her to assume an inferior position in society. Her rage is directed, in particular, to Agricola Fusilier, who supervised the torture of Bras Coupé--and who is determined to break her will and humiliate her. Agricola's extreme racist views are matched in the novel only by Palmyre's equally extreme, feline hatred of him and of the French Creole society to which he belongs.

Cultural tensions represented by Agricola and Palmyre culminate in the plight of a character representative of the black masses: Clemance is the black slave of Honoré f.m.c.. She is also the doomed confederate of Palmyre (Butcher 54). In her passionate hatred for Agricola, Palmyre places a voodoo curse on her enemy and employs the Negro cake vendor to place various talismans around the Grandissime mansion. The gothic connection of the Church (here, an African form of ancestor worship) with evil is implicit in Palmyre's two-fold use of voodoo to effect her revenge on Agricola and to keep Bras Coupé very much alive--in a gothic death-in-life existence.

The Grandissimes, led by Captain Jean-Baptiste Grandissime, set a bear trap to capture the perpetrator. Bras Coupé haunts the dark horizon as Captain Jean-Baptiste scrutinizes the landscape in an effort to discern an unfamiliar object:

> What was it? The ground, he knew; the tree, he knew; he knew there ought to be a white paling enclosure about the trunk of the tree; for there were buried--ah!--he came as near laughing at himself as ever he did in his life; the apothecary of the rue Royale had lately erected some marble head-stones there . . . . (312)

Significantly, the site marks not only the burial place of Frowenfeld's family, but of Bras Coupé as well.

At this moment, Clemance reaches the shadowy spot near the fig tree where the bear trap "lay with wide-stretched jaws under the leaves." Cable describes her animal-like agony as the steel frame snaps shut:

> She fell, a snarling, struggling, groaning heap, to the ground, wild with pain and fright, and began the hopeless effort to draw the jaws of the trap apart with her fingers . . . Hands, teeth, the free foot, the writhing body, every combination of available forces failed to spread the savage jaws, though she strove until hands and mouth were bleeding. (313)

The bear trap is perhaps the most graphic depiction in The Grandissimes of the gothic theme of enclosure and escape. Clemance is not only cruelly trapped but, like Bras Coupé, is horribly maimed by the caste system that supports slavery. The connection between his past and her present is emphasized further as Captain Jean-Baptiste unwraps the package that Clemance carries:

> He removed the lid [of the small black coffin] and saw within, resting on the cushioned bottom, the image, in myrtle-wax, moulded and painted with some rude skill, of a negro's bloody arm cut off near the shoulder--a *bras coupé*--with a dirk grasped in its hand . . . When Clemance was searched, there was found on her person an old table-knife with its end ground to a point. (314)

Incited by Honoré f.m.c.'s retaliatory stabbing of Agricola, the Grandissimes take Clemance to the swamp to mete out their own justice. Again, as in the Calabooza scene, the dense foliage surrounding the "traditional" torture/hanging site serves as yet another gothic enclosure in which both victim and victimizer are imprisoned; the lack of light in the "clearing" suggests the ignorance underlying the system itself. In Freudian terms, Cable's setting represents the darker regions of the human psyche (the id) where slavery is conceived and promulgated. A huge, misshapen tree, emblematic of the aristocratic decadence and its twisted philosophy, stands in the center of the swamp. The personification of the fallen trees around it suggests multiple lives lost in this figurative heart of darkness:

> Some rods within the edge of the swamp, which, at this season, was quite dry in many places, on a spot where the fallen dead bodies of trees overlay one another and a dense growth of willows and vines and dwarf palmetto shut out the light of the open fields, the younger and some of the harsher senior members of the Grandissime family were sitting or standing about, in an irregular circle whose centre was a big and singularly misshapen water-willow. (321)

Clemance's final pleas with her tormentors suggest the darker aspects of slavery, aspects that are understood, yet unspoken. She has nursed a generation of Grandissimes and, Cable implies as she begs for her life, has been used sexually by its patriarchy:

> . . . Oh, Mawse 'Polyte, is you gwan to let 'em kill ole Clemance? Oh, fo' de mussy o' Jesus Christ, Mawse 'Polyte, leas' of all you! You dassent help to kill me, Mawse 'Polyte! You knows why! Oh God, Mawse 'Polyte, you knows why! Leas' of all you, Mawse 'Polyte! . . . ." (322)

The Grandissimes, impervious to Clemance's appeals or perhaps simply wishing to silence the truth that she speaks, drop a rawhide noose over the terror-stricken negress. She is drawn up, "eyes starting out with horror." Cable rapidly accelerates and decelerates narrative pace, bringing the final moments of the lynching to an unbearable level. As Sylvestre and Raoul Innerarity intervene on Clemance's behalf, the negress falls to the ground in a sudden gothic decrease of tension. Her reprieve, however, is brief:

> The next word astonished everyone. It was Charlie Mandarin who spoke.
> Let her go!"
> "Let her go!" said Jean-Baptiste Grandissime; "give her a run for life. Old woman rise up. We propose to let you go. Can you run? Never mind, we shall see. Achille, put her upon her feet. Now, old woman, run!"
> She walked rapidly, but with unsteady feet, toward the fields.
> "Run! If you don't run I will shoot you this minute!"
> She ran.
> "Faster!"
> She ran faster.
> "Run!"
> "Run!"
> "Run, Clemance! Ha, ha, ha!" It was so funny to see her scuttling and tripping and stumbling. "*Courri*! *courri, Clemance*! *c'est pou' to vie*! ha, ha, ha!-----"
> A pistol-shot rang out close behind Raoul's ear; it was never told who fired it. The negress leaped into the air and fell at full length to the ground, stone dead. (323)

Like Bras Coupé, Clemance is destroyed both literally and figuratively by the caste system and its proponents. Both slaves are the victims of Creole fear and aggression. As Schölen Tipping observes, this "fear and aggression, [is] born of [the Creole's] dependence on slavery, a system which they perpetuate because of their dangerous tendency to self-deception and willful blindness, their adherence to a divisive caste-system and refusal to look squarely at either the possible causes or probable results of any events which have occurred in either the immediate or distant past" (Tipping 77). Agricola's insistence throughout the novel on the authenticity of tradition emphasizes this Creole tendency to ignore historical

truth. As a result, they can neither learn lessons from the past nor understand the significance of events in the past (71). According to Schölen Tipping, Cable's terse narrative style provides blunt commentary on the barbarity and chaos associated with the Creole way of life : "The death of Clemance takes the reader by surprise; it is ugly, untidy, confused, and irrational. It has not been organized, re-ordered, glamorised and converted into an acceptable story with a beginning, a middle, an end and a meaning. Motives and emotions are confused" (75).

In fulfillment of her role as Demonic Woman, Palmyre effectively ensures the destruction of the Creole social order. In the process, however, she damns those around her (particularly Clemance and Honoré f.m.c.) and loses her own soul. Implicated in the voodoo threats against and the subsequent stabbing of Agricola, Palmyre and Honoré f.m.c. flee to Paris. There, she refuses Honoré f.m.c.'s proposal of marriage, choosing a life apart from humanity. Honoré f.m.c. eventually commits suicide.

Following Clemance's death, Cable quickly and efficiently resolves the remaining narrative conflicts. The constant presence of Joseph Frowenfeld as a detective figure ensures the restoration of order. His influence over Honoré Grandissime creates in him an effective hero who can put an end to the novel's violence and horror. Despite family opposition, Honoré restores Fausse Rivière Plantation to Aurora De Grapion Nancanou. Moreover, he publicly recognizes Honoré f.m.c. as his brother and makes him a business partner in the mercantile house of Grandissime Brothers, formerly H. Grandissime. As Agricola slowly dies of a knife wound inflicted by Honoré f.m.c., Honoré ascends to the position of Grandissime patriarch. Presumably, by this point in the novel, the Creole aristocracy is at last able to recognize, accept, and learn from the past. In the tradition of the happy gothic described by Eugenia DeLamotte in chapter two, order is re-established with Joseph Frowenfeld's marriage to Clotilde Nancanou and Honoré Grandissime's marriage to Aurora De Grapion Nancanou. The two feuding families are thus united, re-establishing again an authentic line of succession.

Gothic themes and techniques in The Grandissimes are reflected primarily in the slave narratives of Bras Coupé and Clemance.[3] Cable's use of the gothic in The Grandissimes differs in objective from the other novels in this study by Murfree, Rives, and Chopin. Instead of redefining personal identity, Cable's gothic depictions of slavery (and of the society that supports it) are used to effect social regeneration:

> Our nights are the keys to our days. They explain them. They are also the day's correctors. Night's leisure untangles the mistakes of day's haste. We should not attempt to comprise our pasts in the phrase, "in those days"; we should rather say "in those days and nights. (93)

For Cable then, the gothic tradition provides a means of understanding and articulating the historical past and fixing its relation to the present.

The Grandissimes was greeted with much enthusiasm by the reviewers in national periodicals. "Some welcomed it as a relief from the stock plantation romances coming out of the South; others saw in it an 'escape from the tepid and perfumed atmosphere of the artificial over-refinement' common to the fiction of the time. They remarked on its fresh dramatic treatment of materials new to American literature. They applauded the care, the minute observation, and the sound research which lay back of the book, but which, most of them agreed, did not obtrude in its pages. They spoke of its captivating story, its poetic vein, its rich portraiture of characters and setting, its luxuriance of metaphor" (Turner, George W. Cable 99-100). Despite the commercial success of The Grandissimes and its sociological impact on the region, many Creoles resented Cable's unflattering portrayal of them in the novel as vain, boastful, smug, proud, sensual, impulsive, violent, backward, and racist. Their disapproval eventually precipitated his departure from New Orleans in the fall of 1885 to Northhampton, Massachusetts, where he would remain for the rest of his life. The negative cultural qualities to which the Creoles objected, however, testify both to the gothic nature of the caste system and to the power of the gothic to counter it. The gothic tradition in The Grandissimes, thus, proved a forceful medium to provoke social awareness and to effect social change.

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[3] Interestingly, Kari J. Winter locates early American Gothic in slave narratives in Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change: Women and Power in Gothic Novels and Slave Narratives, 1790-1865 published by the University of Georgia Press, 1992.

EPILOGUE

Most analyses of the gothic tradition in America before 1900 begin with the influence of Charles Brockden Brown on the genre and continue with the varied uses of the gothic in fiction by James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Henry James. There are a few exceptions, such as Kari Winter's discussion of the gothic tradition in Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change: Women and Power in Gothic Novels and Slave Narratives, 1790-1865. The majority of critics, however, have traced the gothic legacy in America through these canonical, nineteenth-century male writers. Their names are frequently mentioned in conjunction with modern Southern Gothic writers like William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, Tennessee Williams, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, and Carson McCullers, just to name a few.

It would be presumptuous, however, to assume that these modern southern writers inherited the American Gothic legacy exclusively from canonical figures. Nevertheless, there has been little critical scholarship concerning the possible influences of other non-canonical writers on the predominant use of the gothic tradition in Southern literature. As this study has attempted to show, the gothic (and its corollary, the grotesque) was a consistent form of literary expression in an increasingly hegemonic nineteenth-century America. New England local colorists Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman regularly employed aspects of the gothic tradition in their fiction, as did Willa Cather.[1] Other nineteenth-century writers, many of them southern, were also invoking the gothic tradition in their work. Indeed, as this study indicates, local color and "[r]egional literature is ostensibly realistic and sociological but can emerge with demonstrably gothic qualities" (Northey 62).

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[1] Priscilla Leder and Beth Wynne Fiskin have written, respectively, chapters which discuss the gothic elements in Sarah Orne Jewett's Country of the Pointed Firs and in Mary Wilkins Freeman's short fiction. For further information, see Haunting the House of Fiction: Feminist Perspectives on Ghost Stories by American Women, edited by Lynette Carpenter and Wendy Kolmar. Susan Rosowski's article entitled, "Willa Cather's American Gothic: Sapphira and the Slave Girl." appeared in the Fall issue of Great Plains Quarterly in 1984.

Critics have pondered reasons for the pervasiveness of the gothic tradition in southern literature. Margot Northey postulates a

> [p]ersistent, spiritual emphasis [which] may have contributed to a concentration of grotesque literature in the American South. Calvinist and fundamentalist influence of the power of religion in the Bible Belt "produced a greater awareness and fear of human evil than was felt by many of the more liberal or humanistic religious attitudes of other groups in the United States . . . [In the South], a sense of man's natural corruption or depravity remains strong. (50-51)

Moreover, the existence of slavery in the ante-bellum South and the Civil War may have further influenced the gothic's popularity in southern literature:

> When Walker Percy won the National Book Award, newsmen asked him why there were so many good southern writers and he said, "Because we lost the War." He didn't mean by that simply that a lost war makes good subject matter. What he was saying was that we have had our Fall. We have gone into the modern world with an inburnt knowledge of human limitations and with a sense of mystery which could not have developed in our first state of innocence--as it has not sufficiently developed in the rest of our country. (O'Connor 58-59)

This peculiar combination of introspection and an archetypal Fall from innocence into experience seems to be a common element, not only in the gothic tradition, but in the southern local color fiction discussed in this study. Rather than illustrating the conspicuously religious, however, the literary use of the gothic genre in the South illustrates more the mystery of being. Flannery O'Connor best articulates the significance of this movement:

> This kind of fiction will always be pushing its own limits outward toward the limits of mystery, because . . . the meaning of a story does not begin except at a depth where adequate motivation and adequate psychology and the various determinations have been exhausted. Such a writer will be interested in what we don't understand rather than what we do. He will be interested in possibility rather than in probability. He will be interested in characters who are forced out to meet evil and grace and who act on a trust beyond themselves--whether they know very clearly what is they act upon or not . . . . (41-42)

For Mary Noailles Murfree, Amélie Rives, Kate Chopin, and George Washington Cable, this mystery of being involves the relationship of the individual to society. Historically the "ultimate sovereignty that resides in the individual self" had formed the basis for the American ideology (Simpson x). That ideology was obscured, however, during the nineteenth century as the domestic institution of slavery was increasingly questioned by a new moral awareness. With the abolition of slavery, the South

closely re-examined the status of the sovereignty of self in relation to the existing social structure or, rather, what was left of it.

Indeed, southern local color literature not only reflects this self-scrutiny but uses the gothic tradition to reconcile or redefine the sovereignty of individual and cultural identities. Mary Noailles Murfree and Kate Chopin seem particularly concerned with the negative impact of society on the individual. In order to assert their individuality, these protagonists must experience a *deinitiation* away from society. In the South (and, for that matter, throughout most of the country), "established" social systems and tradition had failed to provide stability and meaning in life. For R. W. B. Lewis, the individual, in inventing personal character and in creating personal history, was therefore compelled to "confront that 'other'--the world or society,[2] the element which provides experience." The "world or society" thus became a negative, constricting force. For the American novelist, the given here is "the solitary hero and the alien tribe; 'the simple genuine self against the whole world" (111).

Indeed, accessing this "simple, genuine self" seems to be the common challenge in the novels discussed in this study. For all of these writers, the realistic aspects of local color fiction provide an objective framework--an outer definition of reality which includes social conventions and façades. Those elements of dark romanticism that undergird the genre, however, provide a subjective infrastructure--an internal definition of self that is not necessarily in agreement with the social expectations.

Local colorists found gothic themes and techniques ideally suited to their protagonists' quest for selfhood. These protagonists, like their gothic predecessors, must descend into the realm of experience in order to obtain the knowledge needed to return to the daylight world of reality. Sometimes, however, return or transcendence is not possible. The fate of Amélie Rives's female protagonist suggests the difficulties in overcoming the established social order. Despite her struggles, Barbara Pomfret is unable to surmount the powerful patriarchal and social forces that prevent self-knowledge and self-authenticity and, consequently, remains firmly enmeshed in the past.

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[2] To some extent, the individual confronts the past and tradition as well.

Mary Noailles Murfree's Hiram Kelsey and Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier, on the other hand, successfully transcend external reality and achieve self-awareness and self-realization. Although almost fifteen years separates the two novels, there are remarkable similarities in the two protagonists' quest for selfhood. Both move away from the daylight world of social reality and descend into the gothic realm of experience. Their *deinititation* from society is followed by an intense emotional and rational apprehension of life, thus securing their transcendence into Paradise, the source of spiritual life. The regenerative image of water at the end of both The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains and The Awakening implies "deeper still . . . a place of perfect beauty . . . a fulfillment of the spirit, some realization of the entire self which it [is] worth losing one's self to find" (Lewis 116). In both cases, this discovery of selfhood has redemptive, transcendent meaning but prevents return to the daylight world.

The ambiguous endings in Prophet and The Awakening suggest that self-awareness or self-realization must be coupled with self-destruction. Perhaps in these novels, the gothic, as William P. Day suggests, merely expresses fears and anxieties about the failure of social and philosophical systems to create a sense of individual integrity (10). Day implies that a refiguring of social and philosophical systems is needed in order to ensure the "ultimate sovereignty that resides in the individual self." Unlike that of Murfree and Chopin, Cable's use of the gothic paradigm in The Grandissimes more nearly resolves this problem: socio-gothic regeneration of society makes selfhood possible. Here, the redemptive knowledge gained in the gothic descent into the darker regions of the Creole experience enables the protagonist to return to the daylight world of reality. Honoré Grandissime restores order to his community and, through his marriage, establishes a regenerative precedent for the future.

This study's examination of the dark romanticism underlying local color fiction contributes an important revaluation of the movement as something more than an offshoot of realism. It also opens a new avenue of critical inquiry. It suggests that, in their use of the gothic tradition, these southern local color writers anticipate their Southern Renaissance descendants in a number of different ways: they have invoked the strange and bizarre; they have portrayed alienated and isolated individuals; they have revived

the quest hero and heroine; they have refigured conventional reality as a spiritual wasteland; they have explored the breakdown and collapse of tradition; they have confronted and expiated both the private and public guilt of the past; most importantly, they have initiated a gesture of revolt. Perhaps, as this study suggests, a deeper, more subtle connection exists between the writers of the local color movement and those of the Southern Renaissance.

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