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**The spectacle of suffering: Repetition and closure in  
the eighteenth-century gothic novel**

Martin, Rebecca Ellen, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1994

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THE SPECTACLE OF SUFFERING:  
REPETITION AND CLOSURE  
IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY GOTHIC NOVEL  
by  
REBECCA E. MARTIN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Abstract

THE SPECTACLE OF SUFFERING:  
REPETITION AND CLOSURE  
IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY GOTHIC NOVEL

by

Rebecca E. Martin

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Since the publication of The Castle of Otranto in 1764 initiated the genre of the gothic novel, critics have claimed that gothic endings are bland, inadequate, or otherwise unsatisfying. Analyzing works written in the period 1764 to 1820 by Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, Charlotte Dacre, Mary-Anne Radcliffe, Mary and Percy Shelley and Charles Robert Maturin, this dissertation demonstrates that the focus on endings has blinded critics to the reader's source of pleasure in the gothic. I have drawn upon a representative sampling of novels to present a model of the interaction of reader and gothic text focused on the reader's engagement with spectacle, defined here as insistently visual scenes of suffering framed and set apart from the text. This engagement is shown to be the controlling factor in the reader's reaction to closure.

The theoretical framework of this discussion is provided by current feminist film theory, based in the psychoanalytic

work of Freud and Lacan, which shares with the gothic an interest in the act of looking as an expression of the desire to know. Evidence from the texts, viewed from this perspective, suggests that the encounter with spectacle acts as a switchpoint for an exchange of roles between reader and text. This engagement stimulates the reader's desire to continue reading while simultaneously promising the fulfillment of that desire. The intermittent but frequent repetition of the spectacle of suffering involves the reader in a paradoxical, seemingly endless pursuit of the satisfaction, through spectacle, of a desire whose stimulus lies within spectacle. The intense engagement with spectacle, in which the reader is both aggressor and victim, relegates a novel's ending to the level of secondary interest. The reader's enjoyment is based on the repeated experience of spectacle within the text and across the genre; the end of one novel promises the beginning of another. The dynamic created by spectacle produces in the reader a desire to continue that is stronger than the desire for the end. Models of closure which focus on endings misinterpret both the gothic and its readers.

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## INTRODUCTION

With few exceptions, critics of the gothic from Coleridge to our contemporaries have identified the endings of gothic novels as problematic. In a 1794 review of Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho, Coleridge states, "Curiosity is raised oftener than it is gratified; or rather, it is raised so high that no adequate gratification can be given it; the interest is completely dissolved when once the adventure is finished, and the reader, when he is got to the end of the work looks about in vain for the spell which had bound him so strongly to it" (357). Current criticism refers to this as a problem of closure, focusing not on the final acts and scenes of plot but on that general feeling of interpretive insufficiency the gothic leaves its readers. Nearly two centuries later, critics sound variations on the theme initiated by Coleridge: gothic novels raise expectations that are not sufficiently satisfied by the endings provided. This study will argue that this insufficiency is the effect of what I will call the "spectacle of suffering." In the process of demonstrating this idea, I will interrogate the "failure" of closure as it is identified in the gothic. It will become clear that any model of narrative that gives primacy to closure as an organizing principle is not best-calculated to explain the gothic's appeal for readers. The focus on endings renders their reading experience invisible and does not account for their pleasure in such narratives.

Repeated spectacle is the controlling feature in the reader's response to closure in the gothic and it is in spectacle that the contradictions in and the contradictory appeal of the gothic for its readers are foregrounded. The characteristic difficulty in concluding that has been so widely commented upon is inherent in the genre for a number of reasons; most pertinent to this study is that those heightened points of suffering that are presented not only temporarily arrest the reader's experience of the narrative, but also entice the reader to experience the whole novel as an endless repetition of such spectacular scenes of suffering. This quality is repeated across the genre enabling the reader to move with ease from one novel to the next. The idea of spectacle, its background and its specific configuration in the gothic, is the topic of Chapter Two.

The novels discussed in this study are a representative sampling of work that falls within boundaries marked by the publication of Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto in 1764 and Charles Robert Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer in 1820 and within a rather narrow definition of the gothic. Many of the novels treated are well-known to students of the genre, but I have also chosen to discuss in detail several novels that have not received much critical attention. My choice of these novels does not imply that they are all of equal value; some are more sustained imaginative efforts than others. It is not my intention to prove the relative worth of these works, either among themselves or in comparison with other sorts of

novels. All of the works in my study are characterized by several or all of the following characteristics: the real or rationalized presence of the supernatural; a larger-than-life villain, sometimes associated with the supernatural or the metanatural; dark, forbidding architectural settings whose labyrinthine aspects are exploited; an interest in landscape in its sublime manifestations; a Mediterranean setting and an anti-Roman Catholic bias; foregrounding of the iconography of death and decay; emphasis on the irrational in human affairs, e.g., extreme passions, fear, the human response to pain, a sense of the presence of evil, violence, especially as expressed in the sexual violence of rape and incest. Subsuming all of these qualities is a pervading feeling of anxiety attached, especially, to the protagonists' passivity and tendency to be acted upon, rather than to act. The purpose of this study is to show that the genre is characterized by a particular kind of appeal to the reader, an interaction with the reader built on repetition of the spectacle of suffering.

I have excluded from detailed treatment many novels that are sometimes discussed with the mainstream of gothic novels but in which the emphasis is on effects other than gothic, though they share some of the qualities mentioned above or exhibit a somewhat gothic sensibility. Novels such as William Godwin's Caleb Williams and Sophia Lee's The Recess seem to me to be outside the gothic mainstream. In the case of Godwin's novel, the motivating concern is with issues of morality and

social justice; in The Recess there is a dedication to an historico-romantic depiction of actual historical personages. The authors use some gothic paraphernalia, for instance, horrific effects, types of the monstrous, or enclosed spaces, but in a context in which gothic qualities are subordinated to other artistic and moral ends. While Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is not, strictly speaking, a gothic novel, it is treated here to test whether the relationship I describe between the reader/spectator and the text shows any disruption at the boundary of the genre.

A detailed consideration of the predecessors of the gothic novel is beyond the scope of this dissertation; this territory has been covered by early scholars of the gothic, such as Edith Birkhead, Eino Railo, J.M.S. Tompkins, Montague Summers and Devendra Varma.<sup>1</sup> None of the characteristics of the gothic novel can be traced to a single source. The literary historians named here point to the influence of the German Schauerroman, the long and extravagant French romances of the latter half of the seventeenth century, the revenge tragedies of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods and, quite specifically, Milton's Satan.<sup>2</sup> Walpole himself, in his Preface to the Second Edition of The Castle of Otranto (1765), defends the novelty of his "attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" (7) and claims Shakespeare as his model (8). These varied sources are probably the gothic novel's most important predecessors, but one can go farther back, to the medieval romance, and point to

elaborate episodic plots, the recurrence of stock characters, an emphasis on the extraordinary rather than the prosaic, and, more interestingly for our purposes, the lack of closure occasioned by multiple endings, and the tendency of the meandering plot to continue indefinitely.

Modern critics offer a variety of explanations for the problem of closure in the gothic, all founded upon the notion of disjunction between two aspects of the narrative: the reliance on affective stimulation, essentially the appeal to the irrational, and the normative, orthodox morality usually offered in the novels' endings. Thematics have been examined many times over as the key to the gothic's "failure," with studies by Coral Ann Howells and Elizabeth Napier being recent thoughtful examples. Approaching the same question from very different perspectives (the gothic as social/psychological/cultural expression and the gothic as parody of realism and romance, respectively) David Punter and William Patrick Day see a lack of closure but treat this not as a fault or failure but as an inevitable consequence of the genre's attempt to come to terms with difficult, perhaps insoluble, thematic problems. They celebrate the integrity of the genre rather than pointing to failure. Other writers, like Terry Heller in The Delights of Terror, see in the gothic's resistance to closure the effects of the mind's difficulty in reconciling the fantastic or unreal with the everyday or the real. But the problem of gothic closure is not just a function of the acceptance or denial of the

supernatural, nor is the difficulty simply in the careless intertwining of contradictory themes.

In his Delights of Terror Terry Heller explores minute distinctions among the modes of presentation of terror and horror in literature. His work is valuable because he surveys a large body of literature, but for the purpose of my study it is more interesting because he tries to account for the reader's response to these varied modes. In looking at the reader's response, he gives primacy to the desire for closure, and appeals to Roman Ingarden's concept of "concretion" as the basis for his focus:

Although many implications of this conception will prove valuable, none is more important than the idea that we expect literary works to be wholes; we expect a feeling of completeness in our concretion of a work. One of the features of literary work that makes it seem whole is closure. (1-2)

Heller portrays the process of reading as an interaction between a reader desiring more than anything closure, and texts that to various degrees, depending upon their mode--fantastic/uncanny, fantastic/marvelous, pure fantastic, etc.--facilitate closure, resist closure or actively assert anti-closure. In a practical sense, Heller's project is very different from mine. He does a masterful job of treating a broad body of work covering more than two centuries and two continents while I address a far more homogeneous group of novels. Additionally, my study locates the pleasure of the text in continuation rather than closure. The emphasis I give to spectacle and, even more importantly, repetition, is missing from Heller's work. A study focused on closure may be

quite blind to a different kind of pleasure.

Of particular importance to my study is the tendency of what Barbara Herrnstein Smith in Poetic Closure calls "systematic repetition" to "function as a force for continuation that must be overcome if closure is to occur" (48). Smith's statement that "a failure of closure is not always a local defect. . . . If the total design is ill-wrought, incoherent or self-divided, closure may be not only inadequate but impossible" (220) points in the same direction as the thematic criticism of Howells and Napier. A variety of critics, including Frank Kermode, Alan Friedman, J. Hillis Miller, David Richter, Robert Adams and others generally agree that a lack of closure or problematic closure in a novel is a sign of instability or some other flaw in the text or in the social milieu that produces the text. The relationship between repetition and closure specific to the gothic will be thoroughly explored in Chapters Three and Four.

Robert Kiely notes that the Romantic novel, the category in which he places the gothic, "resists conclusion" (252); it flees from goals. Ending is not the point; the point is the buildup toward a conclusion resisted by readers like Catherine Morland in Austen's Northanger Abbey who says of Udolpho, "I should like to spend my whole life in reading it" (23). Readers like Catherine wish their texts not to end. In the gothic, it is the journey, not the goal, on which the narrative invites the reader to focus. Martin Price in "The Fictional Contract" (1973) makes a similar point when he

compares novel-reading with game-playing. He asserts that "the forming process rather than the achieved form tends to be the primary interest of the game-player and the novel-reader. The completion of the form is an acceptable resting point, a sufficient resolution, not a total extinction of accident" (155). This interest in the gamelike process tends to be most apparent in generic reading, i.e., reading pursued because of the known appeal of certain formulaic approaches to situation, character, and story development. Detective fiction, the western and the gothic romance are all characterized by the repeated use of particular characters, devices and events that readers find appealing and repeatedly turn to for pleasure.

Other recent critics have questioned the insistent critical focus on endings as, in itself, misguided. In his Narrative and Its Discontents, D.A. Miller points out that the focus on endings limits inquiry, keeps us from asking certain questions, and blinds us to alternative approaches to narrative in which endings might perform a different role (xiii). One alternative is proposed by Barbara Herrnstein Smith. Writing in 1968, well before these critics, she turns the question about closure on its head, saying "the success or failure of closure will become crucial in our evaluation of a poem when it is truly crucial in our response to it" (220). More recently, writing about fiction, Susan Winnett proposes the idea that an alternative model of narrative, one not "tied to an ideology of representation derivable only from the dynamics of male sexuality" (506) that invests endings with

the power to give meaning to beginnings and middles, might be more adequate to explain the pleasures of certain narratives. Summarizing the model proposed by Peter Brooks in "Freud's Masterplot"--"'awakening, an arousal, the birth of an appetency, ambition, desire or intention' on the one hand and 'significant discharge' on the other"--Winnett suggests that a model based on the "trajectory of male arousal" (506) may reveal more about the assumptions of critics than about the novels they critique. All of these approaches point to possibly fruitful avenues of inquiry. Winnett shows that we must look very carefully and critically at the appropriateness of the traditional model, and at the assumptions inherent in any new model, for beginnings, middles and endings. The focus on endings is itself a seductive one with its own set of subtle assumptions. It may also be true that the lack of detailed, sustained attention to the assumptions about gothic endings and the iterative and closural characteristics that set gothic apart from the larger category of romance and the novel in general is an unconscious recognition that endings simply are not very important to the pleasure associated with gothic novels. If repetition is the principal attraction for readers, as studies by Howells, Janice Radway and Tania Modleski claim, it may be that readers do not expect to derive primary satisfaction from a work's ending.

Many types of endings are represented in the group of novels that will be examined here: The Mysteries of Udolpho and The Italian close with marriages and bland moralizing

about the horrors that came before; The Monk concludes with a spectacular scene of punishment, and is also interesting for the author's chronological manipulations that make this focus possible; the violent and mysterious ending of Melmoth the Wanderer reinforces the profoundly ambiguous depiction of the Wanderer; Zofloya's ending combines spectacular punishment with brief moralizing that does little to mitigate the horrors that precede it. Some of these endings represent attempts at full textual closure, attempts to leave the reader with a satisfying sense that all the issues raised have been appropriately resolved, the narrative threads tied up. Others provide an end to character and action, but make no overt effort to resolve thematic complications introduced by the narratives. Some endings seem more "sufficient" than others; they allow the reader more of a sense of interpretive fulfillment. These and other variations will be explored in light of their relationship to the repeated use of spectacle and the depiction of suffering in the individual works. Examined in this context, it will become clear that any effort to query closure in the gothic confronts the larger question of exactly what constitutes the appeal of these novels, that is, how the reader's desire is constituted, and how readers engage the texts.

The concept of desire, the reader's desire, is very much at the heart of the present inquiry, and it may be that for this particular genre, we can only begin to ask the right questions. To search the texts for clues to their appeal is

to ignore or at least slight the complex inter-relationship of reader and text. I chose the designation "devourer" to evoke two aspects of the gothic reader's role. Gothic novels were and are read with a voracious appetite.<sup>3</sup> The novels do not invite slow, close reading; the reader speeds along from one thrill to the next, like Henry Tilney of Northanger Abbey who says, "The Mysteries of Udolpho, when I had once begun it, I could not lay down again; - I remember finishing it in two days - my hair standing on end the whole time" (82). Or like the readers of Udolpho described by Scott who "rushed upon it with all the eagerness of curiosity [and] rose from it with unsated appetite. . . . the volumes always flew, and were sometimes torn, from hand to hand. . ." (555). There is a delight in this kind of unfettered reading, a desire that it not end, the desire expressed by Catherine Morland in the same novel. The gothic reader is an aggressive reader, the devourer of the text, rather than a passive object of the structure the gothic text offers for the reading experience. But to an equal degree, that reader is the object of the text, a willing victim of the frights and chills that are offered. In Melmoth the Wanderer, Maturin's Spaniard notes that the "drama of terror has the irresistible power of converting its audience into its victims" (197). That "drama" is spectacle, the vehicle is repetition, and the allure of the text is "irresistible," all of which suggests that any inquiry into gothic closure would be well-advised to examine the relationship of repeated spectacle to the "irresistible"

nature of the gothic text. What are the components of the "irresistible" power of the text? What quality in the gothic reader renders that reader unable or, more pertinently, unwilling, to resist the power of the text? If we accept that it is "desire," suggestively represented by Jacques Lacan and his commentators as the drive to satisfy a lack that is not based in reality, that gives momentum to the reader's reading, can we develop any helpful definition or model of the desire of gothic readers?<sup>4</sup> Finally, does this line of inquiry suggest any solution to the problem of gothic closure? Does it suggest perhaps that to look for closure in the gothic is to misread the text and misinterpret or mistake the reader? The spectacle of suffering is the site of the convergence of these issues.

Central to my argument is the concept of spectacle which, in the gothic, is closely linked to suffering. It is the nature of "spectacle" (from Latin spectare = to see or behold) to arrest, to capture the gaze, to introduce a point of high-emotional stasis to an experience. The spectacle, the dramatic event that arrests our gaze and our experience of the narrative, is extravagant; it is an event that stands apart from our experience of the rest of the narrative. In my examination of spectacle it will be obvious that I am particularly indebted to the insights of modern film theory. This theoretical approach has helped me to read the gothic with new eyes, eyes that are open to what the texts have to show.

Chapter One will use a close analysis of The Castle of Otranto (1764) to define and delimit critical terms and to suggest a typical pattern of presentation and interaction of reader and text. Later chapters will examine the characteristic constituent parts, spectacle and repetition, which militate against achieving what is, in the terms of critics and theorists, satisfactory closure. My argument will make it clear that the critics of gothic closure are asking the genre to do what it cannot do.

Though I have tried to distance this study from "thematic" considerations and differentiate my concerns from those of critics who identify themes and emphasize thematic development in gothic texts, undeniably it, too, will be a thematic interpretation. By downplaying the importance of thematic resolution in the reading experience, I am offering my own thematic interpretation, privileging particular ideas and establishing alternative themes. As Jane Gallop remarks of Jacques Lacan's insistent focus on "the letter, on the concrete utterance" of the text, "Interpretation finally must be . . . thematic" (Reading Lacan 27). My alternative themes are "lack," "substitution" and their companion "desire." They are examined in their relationship to the "gap," a theme within the larger enactment of "spectacle."

I am a late twentieth-century reader influenced not only by the study of literature and literary theory, but also by films and film theory. I cannot know how the pre-cinematic eighteenth-century reader read the novels under consideration

here. I have offered a limited amount of evidence about those readers drawn from descriptions in novels and the criticism of the time. That evidence strongly supports the description of the reading experience that is offered in the chapters to follow. The importance of film theory to this study is that it offers a theoretical model that elucidates the effect of spectacle in the gothic novel. We will not look at these novels as if they were films; we will be, in a very real sense, looking at novels that prefigure an important quality that shows itself in later genres, such as horror fiction and the non-fiction genre of "true crime." The modern reader looks with very different eyes than did the reader for whom these novels were written. It is also true that the modern reader is better prepared, by the distance in time and by the experience of films, to extract from the novels the essence of the reading experience and to make the connection between appeal of spectacle and two hundred years worth of comment on the "failure" of closure in the gothic.

It is the goal of this study to be suggestive, not definitive, and I intend to provide a theoretical framework that acknowledges unanswered questions and other lines of inquiry. The reader/spectator of whom I write is a generalized figure. This reader of the gothic is not distinguished as to class, gender, race or specific historical period though common knowledge and common sense can readily dictate certain limits in each of those categories. The film theory upon which I rely, and the psychoanalytic theory of

Freud and Lacan upon which much film theory is based, is strongly influenced by questions about gender and gender roles. Particularly in film theory, feminists have grappled with these questions. Some of these questions will be raised in this study but definitive answers will not be offered. The categories of gender and class are potentially rich areas for exploration but any effort to do justice to them is impossible within the confines of the current project.<sup>5</sup>

## NOTES

1. Tompkins's study, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 (1932), is particularly interesting for its attempt to place the gothic in the broader context of the other "popular" literatures of the time and for its serious and sympathetic examination of women writers.

2. Even as the gothic novels of the late eighteenth century were being written, a complex process of cross-fertilization was occurring among the literary and dramatic productions of England, France and Germany. This issue is discussed in some detail in Chapter Two.

3. See for instance the evidence offered by Janice Radway and Tania Modleski. For a study that offers a striking parallel to gothic reading see Carol J. Clover's study of modern horror movies and their spectators.

4. Even those presumably best qualified to illuminate Lacan's pronouncements are better able to define desire by what it is not than by what it is. Hence, the following from Laplanche and Pontalis in their Language of Psycho-Analysis: "Jacques Lacan has attempted to re-orientate Freud's doctrine around the notion of desire, and to replace this notion in the forefront of analytic theory. This perspective has led Lacan to distinguish desire from concepts with which it is often confused, such as need and demand. Need is directed towards a specific object and is satisfied by it. Demands are formulated and addressed to others; where they are still aimed at an object, this is not essential to them, since the articulated demand is essentially a demand for love.

"Desire appears in the rift which separates need and demand; it cannot be reduced to need since, by definition, it is not a relation to a real object independent of the subject but a relation to phantasy; nor can it be reduced to demand, in that it seeks to impose itself without taking the language or the unconscious of the other into account, and insists upon absolute recognition from him" (482-3).

The "what" of desire is unnameable.

5. Some work has been done on eighteenth-century gothic readers. Bette B. Roberts' The Gothic Romance: Its Appeal to Women Writers and Readers in Late Eighteenth-Century England (New York: Arno P, 1980) explores the relationship between gothic fiction and its middle-class female readers and writers from the perspective of contemporary sex roles. David Richter has applied Jaussian reception theory to the question of gothic popularity in "The Reception of the Gothic Novels in the 1790s," The Idea of the Novel in the Eighteenth Century, ed. Robert W. Uphaus (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues P, 1988).

## CHAPTER 1

The Castle of Otranto:

## The Spectacle of Suffering

In the Preface to the First Edition of The Castle of Otranto (1764), Walpole, posing as William Marshall, translator of an old Italian manuscript, remarks of the supposed fifteen- or sixteenth-century author that, "It is a pity that he did not apply his talents to what they were evidently proper for, the theatre" (5). And in his commentary on the tale he applauds the author on the basis that "the rules of the drama are almost observed throughout the conduct of the piece" (4). He drops the mask of Marshall in the Preface to the Second Edition (1765) and speaks directly to the question of the tradition in which he writes, making the now-famous assertion that his book is "an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" (7). And the "master of nature" he follows is Shakespeare (8). Comparison with Corneille and references to Voltaire and Racine make it clear that he places his work in the tradition of drama, not narrative prose. The theatrical quality of the work, its five-act structure, for example, and its reliance on dialogue to advance the plot, has not gone unremarked by modern critics (e.g., Kallich 93, Hogan 238). Charles Beecher Hogan in "The 'Theatre of Geo. 3'" (1967) goes so far as to suggest adding Otranto to the list of "authentic plays" written by Walpole. Indeed, he says, "Far more than The

Mysterious Mother or Nature Will Prevail its form is dramatic; so is its theme; so are its characters" (237). The novel was, in fact, turned into a very successful play, The Count of Narbonne, presented at Covent Garden in 1781 and frequently revived in the following years (Ketton-Cremer 272, Hogan 239-40).

All of this is to suggest that we will find in Walpole's use of spectacle an emphasis on showing rather than on feeling. Spectacle is present, but suffering is underdrawn and lacking in the physical details that convey concreteness and urgency. The introspective psychological emphasis of a Richardson or even the narcissistic brooding of a "Monk" Lewis is missing and in its place is conscious theatricality and an attention to plot that binds the reader in a head-long rush that does not encourage analysis or attention to detail. Of this "frenetic activity" Elizabeth Napier points out that "detailed exploration of a character's mind would tend to slow Walpole's narrative and interrupt the momentum of his plot; only by acting in expected, or formulaic, ways can Walpole's characters keep pace with the story he wants to tell" (92). The supernatural incidents and all-too-human horrors characteristic of the gothic are present in Walpole's story but he does not exploit them for maximum psychological impact; thus, the suffering that is depicted does not engage the reader with the psychological urgency that later authors, like Lewis and Maturin, will generate. All gothic authors capture their readers with what Walpole modestly calls a story that

never "languish[es]" (4) and Otranto has the added appeal of originality, but Otranto is different from other gothics in the conscious theatricality that inspires its author to make statements like "the reader will be pleased with a sight of this performance" (5). Leigh Ehlers has described the characters as actors on a "providential stage," (26) a remark that captures not only the theatrical nature of the depiction but also the uncanny feeling generated by action that has its inception in a prophecy; the action is a repetition. Though this quality of "performance" encourages the reader/spectator<sup>1</sup> to "watch," a property required for the full exploitation of spectacle, Walpole does not stage most of his scenes of suffering to concentrate their visual and psychological appeal. Even the climactic scene of Manfred's fatal stabbing of his daughter, Matilda, "is not carried through with conviction . . ." (Kallich 95).

One could say of this scene, and of others, that Walpole does not show the reader/spectator enough to make the scene as effective as it might be; he does not stage the scene to maximize its dramatic visual possibilities; he does not tell the reader/spectator enough through the narrative or the dialogue to enhance what he does show; and he does not adequately link the vivid spectacular detail to the psychological implications of the plot. It is as if he visualized the plot as a staged drama, an hypothesis supported by the tale's inception in a dream (Otranto ix), and then left out some of the emotion-laden details in transferring his

vision to the page. Having "seen" the details himself, he took them for granted. And, in most cases, the feelings with which such a dream would be imbued are lacking. (It is also interesting that the gothic is born in an act of repetition. Walpole writes down his dream, making it reality and placing it at the head of all the gothic dreams that are, horribly, true when the dreamer awakens). The detailed analysis of scenes from The Castle of Otranto which follows will clarify this curious omission in Walpole's technique and will particularize both the success of Walpole's method and its limitations.

The Castle of Otranto opens with preparations for a wedding interrupted by the sudden appearance of a gigantic helmet in the courtyard. The movement of events from this scene through a series of supernatural manifestations and human horrors toward a melancholy ending that offers hope through a marriage sets the pattern for development of the gothic novel. This novel moves quickly from one chilling incident to the next toward an act of climactic violence that deprives the novel's hero, Theodore, of his rightful bride, resulting in the uncomfortable feeling of incompleteness at the text's end. This feeling of incompleteness exemplifies the problem of closure noted by so many critics of the gothic.

The rational, everyday world of life in the Castle of Otranto is established by a matter-of-fact recitation of circumstances and events in the opening paragraph and the introduction of characters described in stock terms and with

off-hand brevity. Matilda is "a most beautiful virgin," her brother Conrad, "a homely youth, sickly," and their mother Hippolita, "an amiable lady" (15). Notes of complication are introduced in references to the character of Manfred, husband, father and prince, for instance his strange "impatience" to see his young son married and the "severity" of his "disposition" (15) that keeps his family from voicing their doubts about the marriage. Introduced in emphatic italics is the prophecy that the local populace take to be the explanation for their Prince's precipitous behavior: "That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it" (15-6). The "mysteries, or contradictions" (16) of the prophecy are of a piece with the Prince's mysterious and contradictory behavior, which becomes more notable in the novel's second paragraph.

Compared to later developments in the genre, the use of spectacle is very primitive in Otranto. This is not to say that Walpole is an unsophisticated author. He juggles devices in a knowing, nearly mocking manner, e.g., the false "Preface to the First Edition" introducing the "black letter" (3) manuscript, or the flippant attribution of a "proportionable quantity of black feathers" (17) to the giant helmet. Even the uniformly dry, rational tone of the tale conveys a blasé air or, viewed differently, an awareness that naturalizing the unnatural has its own peculiar horror, often as great as that conveyed by over-wrought language and jumping punctuation.

What is less satisfying in this narrative, compared to some later works, is that events are handled clumsily, drawn inconsistently, and are not exploited for their full emotional impact.

The initial spectacular event, whose effects begin to be depicted in the novel's second paragraph, is a formative gesture toward the genre's defining use of spectacle and display of suffering. The supernatural spectacle intrudes into the wedding festivities indirectly, from off-stage, as family and friends wait for the service to begin in the chapel in a castle given no particularity by description. Manfred, displaying his trademark impatience, sends a servant to find the tardy bridegroom. The servant quickly returns "breathless, in a frantic manner, his eyes staring, and foaming at the mouth" (16). Stamped in his frightened face is the terror of countless spectators to follow. He carries the initial infection of terror that spreads through this gothic in particular and the gothic as a genre.

The focus of this scene, which develops over a few paragraphs, is dual. As Manfred goes to the courtyard, directed not by the pointing servant but by his own impatience and the rising noise there, he enters a scene that is quickly crisscrossed with other lines of vision. The mysterious helmet that has dropped from the sky first engages the spectators' attention, but soon they are more interested in the strange behavior of Manfred, whose gaze is locked, not on the crushed body of his only son, but in contemplation of the

helmet; he seems to all "buried in meditation on the stupendous object . . ." (17). Walpole's emphasis in the heart of the scene, which follows, is on Manfred's visual engagement with the sights there. Readers are linked to the scene via Manfred's vision. He touches the helmet but mostly he looks at it. There is a sense of strangeness in the fact that even his son's "bleeding mangled remains" (17) do not distract him. The sense of strangeness is occasioned by his "insensibility" to the corpse and his singleminded engagement with the helmet. The scene is invested with his silence: "the horror of the spectacle . . . took away the prince's speech" (17). First Manfred's, then the spectators' and finally the reader's lines of vision converge on the "stupendous object," the "tremendous phenomenon." Manfred has remained still and silent "gazing on the ominous casque" (18) and his fascination is contagious. Two paragraphs later those internal spectators, briefly distracted by attention to Conrad's body and the sorrowing ladies of the castle, are themselves caught up in the uncanny fascination of the helmet. The spectators soon cease to be diverted by the other excitement and they too focus on the helmet; "as it seemed to be the sole object of [Manfred's] curiosity, it soon became so to the rest of the spectators" (18). For the moment, the scene is emptied of other objects and of sound for Manfred, the spectators and, at last, the reader. In an enclosed, silent courtyard, a single strange object holds the gaze of all.

The qualities present in this scene will be repeated in every representative of the gothic genre, with increasing artistry and emotional impact as the genre develops in sophistication: the framing or enclosing of a scene; the convergence of lines of sight on a single point of fascination; emotional intensity held, paradoxically, as the action freezes before the narrative flow starts again; and finally the particular representation of emotional intensity bound up in suffering. It is a scene of death and blood that introduces a series of horrors culminating in the last act in a bloody family history.

This is an intense scene, filled with crisscrossing lines of sight. Momentarily, lines of sight converge and the scene is still. It is a mark of Walpole's rather unsophisticated use of this particular narrative technique that he breaks the intensity of Manfred's fascination with the helmet into two paragraphs separated by a paragraph that speaks of the servants, Matilda and her mother (17-18). The most intense moment of the account, the point in the narrative when all attention is focused on the helmet, is buried in the middle of a paragraph. When the gazes focus on the helmet, Walpole does not paint a new picture of the object; its staggering size and that "proportionable quantity of black feathers" must be held over in the mind from earlier report. The frightening presence is not as present in this scene as it might be in a scene more effectively drawn or focused.

Reliance on what I have called the spectacle of suffering

sets the gothic apart from the realistic novel of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. With its concentration on the irrational in human affairs--physical violence, extreme passions, fear, pain, the overwhelming sense of the presence of evil--the gothic emphasizes extreme situations and extreme emotions. Events such as the spectacular and horrific example described above objectify the scene of intense suffering by framing it and setting it apart from the surrounding narrative: it makes pain and suffering visible. While the reader and a spectator within the text are often joint witnesses to suffering of another object, as in the reader's viewing, with Manfred, of Conrad's corpse, it is the witness within the text whose suffering the reader focuses on and shares. Much has been written about the role of the supernatural in the gothic, but the scenes highlighted by this study are as likely to rely on very human physical pain and mental suffering for their horrific impact. The term "suffering" is meant to convey a broad range of emotional response, from melancholy to wrenching horror, from sentimental tears to physical torture. The most effective scenes of horror in Otranto share these characteristics; the less effective scenes of horror, like the moving portrait and the bleeding statue, fail to sustain the peak of emotional impact because they rely for the most part on the amazement inspired in the characters and reader that the thing is done at all. Without an insistent focus on the extreme emotion that is the reaction to the spectacle of terror, their power

dissipates. The variable success of Walpole's scenes of spectacular horror is to be contrasted with the more consistent exploitation of these effects by a number of later gothic authors. The variability within Walpole's own text will be clear in two scenes that feature supernatural manifestations.

As Manfred declares to a shocked Isabella his intention to become her husband, the role vacated by Conrad upon his death, "the portrait of his grandfather, which hung over the bench where they had been sitting, uttered a deep sigh and heaved its breast" (23). Isabella escapes through the gallery door as Manfred's attention is drawn to the painted figure that comes to life, steps from its frame and walks "sedately, but dejected" (24) to a chamber off the gallery. The door is slammed and Manfred's entry barred.

The scene has the advantage of an enclosed, gloomy setting with a number of doors and windows, windows through which the huge helmet's agitated plumes previously have been seen, but Walpole does not fully exploit the opportunities for emotional intensity presented by the circumstances. The movement of the spectre is described but beyond the imputation of a "grave and melancholy air" (24), it is a cipher and lacking even in implied threat. The ghost moves in stately fashion off the wall and down the gallery while the Prince "accompa[n]ie[s] him" asking questions and speculating on the ghost's possible meaning. The movement of the ghost and his nearly neutral, rather pitiful character lend a matter-of-fact

feeling to the scene and when readers are told, finally, of Manfred's "anxiety and horror" the words are not backed by any visual evidence or details that would lend intensity to the supernatural manifestation. The reader's expectations are aroused, then left unsatisfied by the portrayal, though a certain amount of unease is generated by the ghost's surprising animation. George Haggerty, writing of Maturin's success in conveying suffering, succinctly describes the lack in Walpole's portrayal of pain; he notes, "Objective detail . . . heightens our sense of the subjective reality . . . . Physicality itself becomes a source of Gothic power" (Gothic Fiction 29). The spectre's appearance is under-drawn and lacking in the horror generated by either shocking specificity or vague threat rendered real by "vivid and palpable" details (Haggerty 28).

What Walpole does employ to good effect here, as in the helmet incident, is crisscrossing lines of sight. The reader looking on at the escalating violence of the encounter of Manfred and Isabella is startled to realize that another is witnessing the action. Like a voyeur suddenly aware of another looker-on, the reader is momentarily thrown off-balance by the knowledge that he or she is part of a web of gazes. The spectral spectator, clearly motivated by the scene taking place before him, steps from his portrait, moving from the role of spectator to spectacle. The statement that "Isabella, whose back was turned to the picture, saw not the motion" emphasizes who sees and who does not (25). The reader

is told near the scene's end that Manfred is "full of anxiety and horror, but resolved" (24), though the scene conveys only his cool, singleminded resolve and rational curiosity. It is Manfred's anxious and puzzled response that we should share. The incident stands as an example of spectacle that is crippled by lack of specificity to support the suffering it tries to show and by unearned emotion. The reader is exhorted to react to horror, but is left with a less extreme feeling of vague unease.

Compare to the incident of the ghost the stark image of the cowled skeleton that confronts Frederic when he seeks Hippolita in her oratory in order to intimidate her into the divorce that will win Manfred's daughter in exchange for Isabella. In the confines of Hippolita's private oratory Frederic sees the back of a black-clad figure in prayer at the altar. Finally the figure rises but remains still, "fixed in meditation" (102). This hushed scene is interrupted as Frederic speaks. The figure speaks: "Hippolita! replied a hollow voice: camest thou to this castle to seek Hippolita?-- And then the figure, turning slowly round, discovered to Frederic the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl" (102). Frederic's attention and that of the reader are focused on the mysterious figure. No intermediary spectators add their responses or break the reader's gaze upon the figure. The reader, alone with Frederic, looks over his shoulder, as it were. This is a compact scene in which Walpole effectively emphasizes the

strangeness of the figure: A woman? No. A man? In "long woolen weed"? Who? The sudden spectacular revelation of the skeleton is far more frightening than the ghost rambling in the gallery because the attention of both Frederic and the reader has been focused solely on this figure, invested with menace and mystery. Movement in the scene is slow and deliberate, even as the figure "turns slowly round" to reveal itself. At this moment, the lines of sight of Frederic and the reader come together like oblique lines suddenly meeting, locking on the "empty sockets," a point invested with intensity and power; the figure is looking back. Where the earlier ghost was a vaguely-drawn cipher and not especially threatening, this apparition is suddenly, chillingly, concrete. The death's head carries an iconic burden of instantly communicable meaning. And this spectre delivers a clear message. A rather talky, frantic dénouement is capped with "Forget Matilda!" (102), as the spectre vanishes.

When the apparition reveals itself, Frederic "recoil[s]," and "fall[s] to his knees" trembling; when the vision vanishes, however, Frederic's response does not end. The gaze of the figure has transformed this active and demanding man into a passive victim. The reader too is momentarily transformed into a victim, but just as suddenly switches back to the role of spectator, now witness to Frederic's suffering. The constant, unsettling shifting and switching arouses the reader's expectation that what-is-shown and what-is-not-shown are being manipulated to an end: revelation or the

concealment that implies revelation to come. In the following paragraph, "Frederic's blood froze in his veins. For some minutes he remained motionless. Then falling prostrate on his face before the altar, he besought the intercession of every saint for pardon. A flood of tears succeeded to this transport; . . . he lay on the ground in a conflict of penitence and passion" (103). Into this scene walks Hippolita who, "seeing a man without motion on the floor, . . . shriek[s], concluding him dead" (103). Frederic mimics the death-sign he confronted earlier, as if the spectacle of death has infected him and has leaked from one scene to the next. Motionless before the altar, he seems a dead man, but as he rises to meet Hippolita's startled questions, he does not perform the monitory function of the hermit's skeleton. In his "agony," confusion and shame, he "burst[s]" from Hippolita, saying "I cannot speak . . . Oh! Matilda!" (103). He thus repeats the spectral watchword, but gives Hippolita no context in which to interpret it. This scene mirrors the previous one but not fully, because the reader does not share Hippolita's terror at seeing an unknown, possibly dead, man before the altar. Hippolita enters as did Frederic in the previous scene, but while she stands in for Frederic here, the reader stands in a different place. The reader can perhaps appreciate Hippolita's fright, but not share in her momentary terror. The scene is a tableau of suffering, both Frederic's and Hippolita's, but the reader's experience of the scene lacks intensity because the reader brings to the scene a broad

perspective that cannot effectively be narrowed.

Spectacular scenes vary in intensity and effectiveness. The shifting and switching, though, remain constant. In the incident in the gallery, it is startling that a ghost should appear at all and that the reader should feel strangely observed, but the scene is not designed to focus the reader's attention on the image or on Manfred's emotional response and to load the moment with intense emotion, in other words, to fill the reader's visual experience with emotional impact. In the description of Manfred with the helmet and Frederic's encounter with the spectre, two incidents more effectively drawn, there is a moment in which the description of the scene becomes overloaded, overburdened with emotion and image. This is the moment of intense exchange between viewer and viewed, a moment in itself static and set apart from the surrounding narrative flow. In the courtyard scene it is the moment when all eyes are fixed on the helmet and the reader is suddenly aware that the object has transfixed all spectators, the reader included, rendering them passive. In the second, it is the moment when the eyes of Frederic and the reader are fixed on the "empty sockets" and the figure's power as subject is felt by the reader in Frederic's recoil. Each moment is followed by another switch in roles: the reader is again transformed to spectator and returns to observing the scene. The power and attraction of such scenes of spectacle lies in the reader/spectator's sudden awareness that someone, something, is looking back, reversing their roles, then the

roles are reversed again.

This double transformation occurs repeatedly in the reader's interaction with the spectacle of suffering and there is pleasure in the exchange. Such incidents impress upon the reader an awareness of manipulation by the text. Like the cut between shots in a film, requiring "suture" to bring them together with the appearance of seamlessness, a cut or a gap is exposed to the reader in this act of manipulation. These ideas formulated in the theories of Freud and Lacan and elaborated by later commentators, many of them in the area of film theory, will be fully explored in subsequent chapters, but at this point the reader's experience of the text can be briefly summarized.

To the act of reading the reader brings a desire to know, or to see, or to know by seeing, to fill in a gap in experience. And the gothic with its content based on acts of violation and transgression and the fear of those acts is perfectly positioned to promise that experience. Through the repetition of spectacle the gothic draws the reader on by continually promising the experience the reader desires. We need not and cannot give it a definitive name. The revelation is continually promised and continually withheld but the powerful combination of repetition and desire keeps readers reading in expectation that, the next time, they will see. The spectacle of suffering in gothic narrative keeps the reader continually off balance, a participant in an unconscious discourse of shifts that encourages the reader,

whom I characterize both as the devourer and victim of the text, to acquiesce in his or her own victimization, to experience repeatedly the movement from active reader to passive victim of terror. The conclusion of the text does not and cannot fulfill this desire, so the reader goes on to the next text, ready to continue the pleasure of the search.

The action that continues after Manfred's encounter with the ambling ghost is discussed in detail for two reasons. First, it perfectly demonstrates the variant rhythm that can be established in the text by the use of quickly repeated spectacular events of less magnitude than, say, a helmet dropping from the sky. The series of events occurs in the middle of the novel and therefore represents, not a surge toward the climax, but a complication and elaboration of the middle. Second, this sequence of events is presented here not to discuss the thematics of inside/outside or depth/surface,<sup>2</sup> but to show a relationship between the reader/spectator and the text that might at first appear to be very different from examples already discussed. Isabella is alone through much of the action, with no internal spectators to her fears. This does not mean, however, that the spectacle of her suffering goes unobserved.

Manfred's desire to follow the ghost is foiled by a door that will not open and this closed door is the figurative opening to or threshold of a scene in which the spectacle of gothic suffering takes a form rather different from that of the helmet or ambling ghost scenes. The other scenes analyzed

thus far have been simple, concentrating on one action and having one focal point. The scene after Manfred's encounter with the ghost, which traces a series of actions in Isabella's flight from the room with Manfred into the subterranean passages of the castle, is much more complex. The action involves steady spatial movement downward from an upper chamber, down the stairs into the "intricate cloisters" that connect the lower part of the castle to an even deeper "subterraneous passage" (25) leading to the Church of Saint Nicholas. The scene is characterized by the expressive use of light and dark contrast assisted by lamplight, moonshine and torchlight. The action is framed, or more precisely, enclosed, by the locked gates of the castle and Manfred's presence in the chamber above. Isabella moves also from one liminal marker to another--a stairway, a partially open door, a trapdoor with a hidden lock (27)--all the while experiencing a wildly divergent series of emotions, ranging from relief, regret and resolution to panic, despair and horror. The series of emotions moving from high to low and back again with each moment, is an exhausting and painful rollercoaster ride. While Isabella's flight is the action that carries the narrative thread for several pages, this action reaches not one peak but several and the focus on Isabella is not without disruptions. Emotional states that are described are not visually depicted; rather the visual focus is diverted elsewhere (a half-opened door, a suddenly illuminated brass lock set in a pavement stone) to concrete items that are the

focus for the emotions. The power of this series of events is not dissipated, however, by the movement, disruption of focus, and diversion of emotional response. The repeated events do not lead at the chapter's end to any obvious stopping point. The pleasures of the passage reside in the repeated stimulation of emotions.

While Manfred is distracted by the ghost, Isabella, whose back is turned to the moving portrait, escapes down the stairs. Though her "resolution had given way to terror the moment she had quitted Manfred" (24), Isabella has the presence of mind to remember that the vaults of the castle are connected to the Church of Saint Nicholas, and its altar that promises safety from Manfred, through an underground passage. She takes up a lamp and heads toward sanctuary. At this point in the scene of Isabella's flight, the reader has experienced the emphasis on movement through space, especially downward; the disruptive quality of the scene shifting as it does from the confrontation between Manfred and Isabella, to Manfred's walk with the ghost, to Isabella's retirement and flight alone from the gallery; and the rollercoaster quality of the emotions, moving in a moment from "fright and horror" (23) at the Prince's proposal, to courageous resolution, and again to terror (24). The reader is the sole spectator to each of these permutations. Until she discovers Theodore several pages into this sequence, no other spectators share Isabella's emotional response to her adventures underground and, thus, the reader/spectator experiences Isabella's intense emotional

response to each sensory impression. This experience binds the reader in a close identification with Isabella in which the roles of reader/spectator and victim are entwined. The distance between spectator and spectacle, a distance that is traversed as roles shift and switch in earlier scenes, is elided and the reader shares Isabella's immediacy of sensory experience. The shifting and switching is stilled and the awareness of imbalance that comes with them is exchanged for Isabella's felt horror.

As the scene continues, the manner of that experience, though, is varied in effectiveness because of Walpole's vacillation between describing the source of the effect, say, "some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which grating on the rusty hinges were re-echoed through that long labyrinth of darkness" (25) and describing only the effect of a stimulus on Isabella, for instance, "she thought she heard a sigh. She shuddered, and recoiled a few paces. . . . she thought she heard the step of some person. Her blood curdled. . . . Every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind" (25). For the reader the intensity of the emotional experience of the scene is dampened by the diffusion of effect inherent in the descriptive method Walpole uses here. To confine the reader's experience to that of Isabella would enhance the intensity of the emotional experience and increase the sense of physical compression and claustrophobia that this subterranean environment is capable of inducing. But another effect of the variation is that the

reader is again placed off-balance by being separated from Isabella and moved back into the position of spectator to her actions. The reader repeats the switch of roles that arouses expectation and energizes reading.

Isabella enters the "intricate cloisters" (25) below the castle by way of a secret passage. In this "long labyrinth of darkness" illuminated only by her lamp, she seeks another door, the entrance to the cavern that connects with the church and safety. These subterranean passages are a dark repetition of the snares of the castle; though the concealment and escape she seeks are available here, the lonely privacy offered by the passages is itself a danger. Her courage gives way to terror as the overwhelming "awful silence" is broken by gusts of winds, the creaking of doors and, perhaps, the sighs and steps of a concealed person; as her emotions plunge to despair "she condemned her rash flight, which thus exposed her to [Manfred's] rage in a place where her cries were not likely to draw any body to her assistance." The silence of the scene serves to exaggerate the atmospheric noises and echoes and to highlight the threat of those sounds that seem to have a human source. Level-headed young woman that she is, Isabella rationalizes the threat presented by these sounds. The sounds come from ahead of her, not behind, and as she approaches a half-opened door, the door closes as if the person fears discovery. This cannot be Manfred, so Isabella's courage is renewed. Relying on the good will she has found in her dealings with the castle servants, she approaches the closed

door. Such doors have a way of not doing the expected. When Manfred approached the door in the castle, it would not open. When Isabella braces herself and approaches the door in the cloister, a gust of wind "extinguished her lamp, and left her in total darkness"(26).

In contrast with the other scenes analyzed thus far, this sequence relies on a broad appeal to the senses, for instance, hearing and touch, not just the visual sense; however, each of the key spectacular moments in this sequence relies on a visual effect and emphasizes the act of seeing. At this first spectacular moment, Isabella nears the door with heightened visual acuteness because of her expectation of seeing a person who can help her, but instead of this revelation, she is plunged into the absence of sight and the reader is plunged into Isabella's terrified thoughts:

Words cannot paint the horror of the princess's situation. Alone in so dismal a place, her mind imprinted with all the terrible events of the day, hopeless of escaping, expecting every moment the arrival of Manfred, and far from tranquil on knowing she was within reach of somebody . . . all these thoughts crowded on her distracted mind, and she was ready to sink under her apprehensions. . . . she remained in an agony of despair. (26)

The lack of external visual stimulation is replaced by the horrors of the imagination. After a moment of visual acuity, she is left still and silent in utter darkness, alone with internal agony. The darkness, extinguisher of the visible, throws into sharp relief Isabella's mental suffering. The princess acts decisively, though, opening the door and fearfully entering the vault; she crosses a threshold filled

with threat and promise. An "imperfect ray of clouded moonshine" (26) provides an emotional lift and the restoration of sight. Her restored vision shows her a vault with its ceiling broken or crushed inward by a fragment unidentifiable in the dim light and the figure of a human. Just as quickly as her safe entry into light gives her "momentary joy," the presence of the figure inspires terror and she screams, thinking it Conrad's ghost. Her fear is brief, as the figure steps forward and speaks in soothing tones. This is Theodore, apparently a young peasant, but actually the heir to the seat of Otranto and the man who will fulfill the prophecy that threatens Manfred's rule. He is unrecognized by Isabella as he offers his help. She eagerly accepts and instructs him to help her find yet another door in this sequence of entrances, this one a trap-door leading further down from the cloisters into the cavern. The dim light is insufficient for visual identification so they kneel and feel the paving stones, searching for a brass keyplate. As the young man continues to pledge his assistance, suddenly the plate is revealed: "a ray of moonshine streaming through a cranny of the ruin above shone directly on the lock they sought--Oh, transport! said Isabella, here is the trap-door!" (27). This segment emphasizes first the visual, a human figure, then the audible, his soothing words, then touch in the absence of visual clarity. But the climactic moment is one of startling visibility, a discovery scene lit with the drama of a spotlight. In the semi-darkness, a ray of light focuses the

attention of Isabella, Theodore and the reader, on an object inspiring "transport," not fear. As yet another liminal instant, however, the moment is imbued with the ambivalence associated with such events. The "dark and dismal" entrance (27) promises escape but is also a descent into uncertainty. Theodore, hearing Manfred's approach and hastening to follow Isabella into the cavern below, drops the door, trapping himself and accidentally abandoning the princess. The sound of the slamming door brings Manfred, who discovers Theodore in a scene illuminated by torchlight. Isabella disappears and is not heard from again for many pages.

A helmet that drops from the sky, a figure that steps from a portrait and a cowled skeleton are all major disruptions to the Otranto narrative. The peaks of excitement held together by Isabella's flight are disruptions of less magnitude and have slight emotional impact. They have in common with the other more spectacular scenes that they are dependent upon visual clarity for their effect, they focus intense emotion for a long moment in which all else is shaded from the reader/spectator's sight. Isabella's flight is bound up with suffering and the event is to a degree framed for maximum impact. This particular sequence of events is offered, however, with a different point in view.

The section depicting Isabella's flight stands out for its quick succession of exciting events, though they are not peaks of excitement equal to the spectacular scenes mentioned above. From Manfred's frustrating encounter with the closed

door, to Theodore's discovery by Manfred and his minions, the reader is given a series of small shocks occurring over about five pages of narrative. The rhythm of this section is one of several small peaks in a short space, rather than the slow and careful building toward a single spectacular scene that holds the attention for a long moment of exchange between reader and text before the reader is released to move forward toward other pleasures. As Isabella focuses on a series of anxiety-producing objects--a door, a vague figure, a lock--the reader's gaze is drawn from the intense fascination of the object to the suffering of Isabella. The fascination of the object exercises a power over the reader by turning back the gaze, asserting it against Isabella, and victimizing the reader through her suffering. I do not mean to trace the variations in rhythm through the whole novel, nor will I demonstrate this sequence of role changes in every spectacular event in a novel filled with such incidents. I have analyzed this section as a model of the gothic writer's ability to entice the reader with variations in rhythm of repeated experiences and variation of the magnitude of spectacle that is portrayed. In addition, we have seen a relationship between the reader/spectator, spectator in the text, and spectacle that is refined to its most basic components and in which the inter-relationship and slippage among the three roles is nakedly apparent. Drawn into the scene in the expectation of a revelation through the spectacular object, the half-open door (a literal "gap"), for example, the

reader's gaze is still while the object turns around the active, curious gazes leveled at it and holds both Isabella and the reader/spectator in its power, transfixed. The reader's desire is excited and continues to press forward through this series of small shocks to the end of a sequence of events--Isabella's flight ends with her almost literally dropping from the scene--and the end of a chapter in which no resolution is offered to the situation that has been the focus of attention, i.e., Isabella's relationship with Manfred.

This repetition of stimulation without resolution or terminal climax is an example of what Susan Winnett has called the "different plot" of a female "erotics of reading" (507). Without claiming for this particular section any profound exemplary function in reading theory, I would note that this different, less insistent rhythm has its own appeal and, when viewed in the broad context of a novel that establishes many different rhythms as it works its way toward a cessation of action, that variation in rhythm is an integral part of what I have called the appeal of intermittent repetition in the gothic. Intermittent repetition is the most powerful of psychological inducements to desire and the gothic variation of rhythm and variation in magnitude of spectacle is the model best-calculated to entice the reader to repeat the stimulation that gives so much pleasure. If one never knows exactly when the pleasure will come and never knows exactly what form it will take or of what magnitude it will be, the reader will continue to read, or devour, the text in the expectation that,

maybe, when the next page is turned, complete satisfaction will be found. This desire, however, can never be totally satisfied and the reader is drawn toward a continuously receding horizon that promises fulfillment, but never fulfills. It should come as no surprise that when the inducement to continue reading is so strong the conclusion of a gothic novel plays such a small role in the reader's reading.

The scenes of the helmet, the ghost in the gallery and the skeleton have in common that they are supernatural manifestations. The events sketched directly above contain a hint of the supernatural: Does the sigh come from poor Conrad's restless spirit? (27) But this should not be taken as confirmation that the gothic is dependent upon the supernatural for its most spectacular effects. The supernatural has little to do with the horror of Otranto's conclusion.<sup>3</sup>

The scene of Matilda's death at the hands of Manfred follows closely upon Frederic's meeting with the cowed skeleton. His encounter with the death-sign is repeated in Hippolita's mistaking him for a corpse, and before this sequence of events is finished, death has spread throughout the castle, has overthrown the reign of the usurping prince of Otranto and has restored the line of Alfonso the Good, in the person of Theodore, to the throne.

Manfred, angered by Isabella's rejection and by insults from her father, goes to the tomb of Alfonso in St. Nicholas's

Church where a servant reports that Theodore has met an unidentified woman supposed by Manfred to be Isabella. Angry and made even more intemperate by wine, he quietly enters the Church:

Gliding softly between the aisles, and guided by an imperfect gleam of moonshine that shone faintly through the illuminated windows, he stole towards the tomb of Alfonso, to which he was directed by indistinct whispers of the persons he sought. The first sounds he could distinguish were--Does it, alas, depend on me? Manfred will never permit our union.--No, this shall prevent it! cried the tyrant, drawing his dagger, and plunging it over her shoulder into the bosom of the person that spoke--Ah me, I am slain! cried Matilda sinking: Good heaven, receive my soul! (104)

The few remaining pages of the novel chronicle Matilda's death agonies (three pages), Manfred's confession of the illegitimacy of his claim to the throne (109), revelations about Theodore's heritage and right to the throne (106-7, 109-10), and a brief statement on what the future holds for Manfred and Hippolita (retreat to the religious life, 110) and Theodore and Isabella (shared tears and possibly a melancholy union, 110). Death will be a continuing presence in their lives as its contagion lives past the novel's ending.

The scene in which Manfred fatally stabs his daughter is the third act in the continuum of death that begins with the cowled skeleton (102) and quickly progresses to Frederic's unconscious mimicry of a corpse (103). Curiously, the stabbing, which one might expect to be the novel's horrific highlight, is the least effective of these closely grouped scenes. The scene is the culmination of the novel's violence and its flirtation with incest. Manfred, in pursuit of

Isabella throughout the novel, finally succeeds in his violent assault with a phallic dagger. He intends to murder the daughter-substitute, Isabella, who has been twinned with Matilda both in her relationship with Matilda and in her parental-substitute relationship to both Hippolita (17, 87, 88) and Manfred (22, 46, 47). The horror of murder is here accompanied by the greater horror of the murder of one's own child. The spectacular possibilities of the scene are rich but are rendered only mutedly. The enclosed, quiet atmosphere of the church through which Manfred is "gliding softly" (104), the "imperfect gleam of moonshine" (104) that reveals too much and, tragically, too little to prevent Manfred's crime, and the dramatic positioning of Manfred behind his intended victim could all be exploited to focus the reader's attention and to heighten the reader's sense of the horror of the act and the multiple transgressions that it represents. What the scene lacks is visual detail and dramatic framing. Walpole draws back from the physical in a scene that could convey the horrors of intimate physical violence. While the atmosphere of the church is at least suggested, Walpole's description gives no sense of the physical presence of the scene's participants or of the physicality of the act of murder, a father's transgression of his daughter's body, or the physical expression of human pain and suffering. Even the dramatic possibilities of an ocular confrontation between Manfred and Matilda are ignored. Instead, suffering is expressed through dialogue without the kind of pointed detail that makes it

visible. In addition, the emotional reverberations of the scene's act of violence, a resonance that is attached to no affecting visual cues, is diffused by the continuation of the death scene for three pages (104-107) in which horror, which has been ineffectively cultivated, is replaced by sentimentality. Considering the group of spectacular scenes that precede it, the scene of Matilda's stabbing and death is rather like an unexpected lull. Whether this is a lapse of artistry or a conscious decision by Walpole does not matter, finally, because the logic of repeated spectacle that drives the gothic provides a final scene that closes the frame of Matilda's death but continues the momentum established by the preceding spectacular scenes.

The proliferation of substitutes in this scene deserves specific comment, though briefly, as a preface to a detailed discussion in the chapter that follows. On the level of the plot, some substitutions, the literal replacement of one character by another, are obvious. The original usurpation of the throne by Manfred's grandfather substitutes a false prince for the true; Hippolita and Manfred stand in loco parentis to Isabella; and Matilda's death results from her being mistaken for another. On this level, these substitutions imply an absence or lack: the absence of the true prince, the absence of the real parents, and the absence of the intended victim. Substitution functions in spectacle as the covering for a lack or absence. Or, to switch the focus, the occurrence of substitution signals the lack or absence that it veils.

To speak of a dagger as "phallic," as I do above, is a thematic interpretation. That designation gives the dagger a role in working out a particular theme, a Freudian drama. In those terms, the drama enacted by Manfred is one of displaced desire in which the desire for his own daughter (which is not so much a sexual desire for the specific person but is itself a displacement from another object) is displaced onto a more appropriate object, Isabella, who is like his daughter in most ways. An overtly incestuous desire is avoided, though Isabella's horrified response to his approach clarifies the incestuous context. The dagger that Manfred plunges into the woman he supposes to be Isabella gives a violent satisfaction to his desire. Manfred's horrified response to inadvertently having killed his own daughter incorporates the further horror that, like Oedipus, he has unconsciously done just what he tried so hard to avoid. Exploring the connection between love and terror in the gothic, David B. Morris suggests that incest is the gothic theme par excellence. "At the very origin of desire" in the web of relationships that define kinship is the inmost, "intensest" terror (306); through substitution and repetition that desire will work itself out.

Immediately upon Matilda's death, after Theodore's identity has been established but the means of succession has not, a supernatural manifestation is provided to seal Theodore's claim and to inspire confessional fear in recalcitrant Manfred. Indeed, the appearance of Alfonso in gigantic form, as predicted in the prophecy that Manfred

feared, and his ascension to the heavens and into the embrace of Saint Nicholas, and the apocalyptic upheaval that destroys the castle, are events of a different order than the other scenes of spectacle and suffering in the novel. In this scene, the author relies on the accoutrements of pure spectacle, e.g., awe-inspiring size, breadth of the field of action, the drama provided by darkness, and the extraordinary nature of the event, as well as the framing of the activities in the courtyard where the story's action began (108). This destructive spectacle provides the final impetus for Manfred's renunciation of his rule and Father Jerome's disclosure of Theodore's ancestry though, for Manfred, the proof offered by Jerome is unnecessary: "It needs not . . . ; the horrors of these days, the vision we have but now seen, all corroborate thy evidence beyond a thousand parchments" (110). The final paragraph gives a very compressed summary of the actions of the principals, Manfred's abdication and retreat into religion, his wife's retirement to a convent, and a rather curious description of Frederic's attempt to tie up his, and the plot's, loose ends: "Frederic offered his daughter to the new prince, which Hippolita's tenderness for Isabella concurred to promote: but Theodore's grief was too fresh to admit the thought of another love; and it was not till after frequent discourses with Isabella, of his dear Matilda, that he was persuaded he could know no happiness but in the society of one with whom he could forever indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul" (110). Walpole gestures

toward a traditional sentimental ending when he implies future marriage for Theodore and Isabella but Otranto, like most gothics, is generally conceded to have an unsatisfying conclusion (characterized by Kiely as "gloomily ever after" 35). The sense of loss pervading the ending signals for the reader a continuing absence of closure and a continuing attempt to fill a space that will be forever empty.

The excitement generated by the scene of the castle's destruction, while it is of less intensity than previous events, continues and repeats the appeal of the scenes of spectacular suffering already discussed in detail. This destructive spectacle is followed by non-dramatic concluding remarks, dialogue and third-person narration, that are, at the very least, anticlimactic. Action ends with the castle's fall and the high emotional pitch represented by a spectral appearance, an apparent death, a murder and a large-scale supernatural manifestation, falls off to a nearly-ineffectual whisper. The novel illustrates perfectly the criticism leveled by those such as Howells and Napier who note the disjunction between the gothic's explicit moral stance and its affective stylistics. Others like Terry Heller echo Coleridge in pointing out that the gothic raises expectations it does not, or cannot, satisfy. Philosophical issues raised by the plot are not resolved. Where is the explanation that can integrate such horrors with any kind of transcendent justice? Retirement to the religious life that is chosen by Manfred for his closing years is not the suffering of an Oedipus. Walpole

seems to consciously avoid explicit dramatic closure by allowing the marriage of Theodore and Isabella, a typical romance convention of closure, to exist in the future outside the text and then only by implication. The whole is subsumed in an aura of melancholy and irremediable loss. Speaking of the melancholy that pervades the gothic, Elizabeth Napier says, "The Gothic, because it extends rather than resolves the tensions between reason and imagination, fortitude and sensibility . . . contributes directly to the production of an aesthetics of loss and deprivation . . ." (101). This "aesthetics of loss and deprivation" operates on the level of plot development and theme and, I would contend, in the reader. Another recent commentator helps make this connection.

David B. Morris, like others, finds "dissonance" in Otranto's ending (313), a dissonance brought on by gothic terror's dependence on repetition for its effect. When Morris says of the gothic that "its conclusions always dissatisfy, since they can never be more than substitutes for other, unallowable, perhaps unthinkable endings" (313), he sounds little different from the many critics who have emphasized the gothic's thematic shortcomings, its inability to deal with the horrific issues it raises, but his argument contains a crucial difference. Otranto's terror, says Morris, has its basis in "a narrative principle of repetition which challenges the concept of a world where everything and everyone is unique, marked by intrinsic differences, possessing a singleness which

makes them exactly and only what they appear" (304). Otranto, and in this it stands for the entire gothic genre, takes to extremes the conventions of mistaken identity, coincidental resemblance, doubling and substitution that bring into question the existence of individual identity and self-determination. All are versions of the uncanny. Morris sees in this narrative pattern the functioning of desire, the uncontrollable, unknowable force behind the scenes of human action. This connection is made in Freud's "The Uncanny" (1919) in which repressed desires show themselves in actions which repeatedly bring the person into contact with that which is both desired and detested. Otranto maps the movement of desire with its "unremitting repetitions and hidden agenda" that subvert characters' intentions and defeat innocence (305). The originality of Morris's argument rests in its easy movement from a discussion of desire and repetition in the novel to the power of desire and repetition in the reader. His focus is on the link between the gothic sublime and the function of language, and in keeping with this focus, Morris says of the scream, the "ultimate Gothic reduction of language," that it is "less important in shattering silence than in affirming it" (313). My own argument, linked to Morris's by its insistence on the important function of repetition in the genre but focusing instead on the reader's engagement in the ongoing act of reading, would mirror his language and claim that gothic endings are more important in ensuring continuation than in establishing closure.

My contentions about spectacle and closure in Otranto are dual. Most arguments about gothic closure contain a great deal of truth. From Coleridge to Napier, it is a well-established truth that the gothic in many ways fails at closure. Some novels like Otranto make weak gestures toward closure, others like Ann Radcliffe's signal more forcefully their desire to end the action appropriately and apply an explicit moral to integrate theme and plot, but the attempts are finally foiled by the gothic's internal contradictions: the narratives plunge forward riding on emotion and instability while also wishing to point a moral and speak for moderation.<sup>4</sup> First, this contradiction on the level of plot and theme is resolved if we look to the reader's experience for guidance in what the gothic attempts and in clarifying its appeal. The interest of spectacle carries the reader beyond the novel's ending, past a deficient conclusion, and into the next available gothic. The link of spectacle and suffering in the gothic taps into the sense of "loss and deprivation," to use Napier's (40) phrase, the attraction and repulsion at work in the reader's engagement with scenes of spectacle and suffering in the text. The desire for this experience drives the reading, repetition ensures continued stimulation of the desire and the continuing hope that the desire, based in loss, will be fulfilled. It is the intention of this study to explore the nature of this desire and the manner of its engagement with the gothic text and the model for this experience. Second, if we establish that the principal

characteristics of the gothic support continuation rather than closure, is it not more useful to interrogate the question than to continue apologetics? If, as Napier claims, the energy that characterizes gothic narrative is based in the same instability that is so often deplored (48), is the purpose of gothic criticism not better served at this point in time by developing and describing a model of the gothic reader's reading, a model of that reader's desire as it is exercised, satisfied, disappointed, and driven in pursuit of the text? The narratives prick that desire and keep readers reading; the effect of the uncanny is, as Morris says, in the reader as well as the text.

## NOTES

1. The terms "reader" and "reader/spectator" will be used interchangeably throughout this study in recognition of both the visual quality of the scenes under scrutiny and the act of "looking" that is required of the gothic reader.
2. See, for examples of this kind of discussion, Nelson Lowry, "Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel," Yale Review 52 (1963): 236-57 and Jerrold E. Hogle, "The Restless Labyrinth": Cryptonomy in the Gothic Novel," Arizona Quarterly 36 (1980): 330-58.
3. Several critics have made a study of variations in the deployment of the supernatural and the fantastic in the novel though, as I have mentioned, I do not find this approach particularly helpful. Rosemary Jackson and (more eclectically) Christine Brooke-Rose, following Todorov in the tradition of formalism and structuralism, perform a valuable categorizing service with their analyses. The contributions of Terry Heller have already been considered.
4. This point is made about Radcliffe particularly forcefully by David Durant, "Ann Radcliffe and the Conservative Gothic," SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500-1900 22 (1982): 519-30.

## CHAPTER 2

## Spectacle: Shifting the Subject

A brief discussion of background will clarify where my use of the term "spectacle" stands in relation to historical and contemporary usage. In its simplest form in current discourse, "spectacle" describes a subject/object relationship between a consumer/viewer and a commodity/image. This relationship can be traced back to Aristotle who, in Chapter 6 of The Poetics, describes spectacle as one of the six constituent parts of tragedy.

Spectacle was, for Aristotle, the least important of the parts; a dramatist relying on spectacle for his principal effects was inferior to the dramatist emphasizing plot and character. He writes,

As for the spectacle, it stirs the emotions, but it is less a matter of art than the others, and has least to do with poetry, for a tragedy can achieve its effect even apart from the performance and the actors. Indeed, spectacular effects belong to the craft of the property man rather than to that of the poet. (Grube's translation 15)

The exact meaning of "spectacle" for Aristotle has been open to question. Where Grube interprets that spectacle is the province of the "property man," others have variously translated "costumer" or "stage carpenter" (Grube 15n7). Did Aristotle mean costumer, or the minimal stage decoration, scenery and props of Greek tragedy? The controversy is best resolved by Gerald Else's use of "visual manifestations" (280), a phrase vague enough to encompass all of the more

specialized meanings and still carry the obvious emphasis on the visual aspects of a presentation, as distinguished from the development of plot and character, the presentation of ideas and speech, and the music. "Acting" implies spectacle (Grube 12) and spectacle is an essential aspect of a play's emotional appeal. It seems clear that the inclusion of spectacle by Aristotle is almost grudging and that the appeal to the audience's emotions through the visual, bypassing the mental processes, is considered by Aristotle to be less artistic and less enlightening than the other components of drama.

This estimate of spectacle in drama is retained through the seventeenth century when we find Irish playwright Richard Flecknoe warning in 1664 that the introduction of scenery to the stage may result in the magnification of spectacle to the detriment of plot (Carlson 113). A shift in focus in the eighteenth century gives us Englishman Henry James Pye arguing in favor of spectacle, in the broad sense inclusive of acting and stage settings, because visual effects enhance realism. Carlson notes that in his A Commentary Illustrating the Poetics of Aristotle (1792), "Pye goes so far as to speculate that had Aristotle seen Garrick in *Lear* or Siddons in *Isabella*, he might well have placed much more importance on the presentation of the drama" (138). This interest in spectacle within "legitimate" theatre is inspired by a new interest in acting as an art form (138-9). In the "illegitimate" theatre that flourished in the eighteenth

century spectacle was a central concern but for very different reasons, and it is the spectacle of that theatre that will provide the beginnings of a vocabulary for speaking of spectacle in the gothic.

The melodrama, a sentimental theatrical mode employing musical accompaniment, as it developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in England, was an outgrowth of cross-Channel fertilization. The exact cause and effect relationship need not concern us here, but it is of interest that it was the export of aspects of eighteenth-century English sentimental drama and fiction, including the gothic, to France that made possible the importation of this patchwork dramatic mode to England in the form called melodrama (Brooks, Melodramatic 36-7). This was a rich symbiotic relationship of which many examples can be given. Brooks notes that it was Matthew Gregory Lewis's viewing and translation of the French melodrama Les victimes cloîtrées (1791) that to some degree prompted his writing of The Monk (50), though there is also a heavy debt to the German Schauerroman. In a reversal of the process, the pre-eminent French writer of melodrama, Pixérécourt, produced Le château des apennins in 1798 based on The Mysteries of Udolpho (30). The same playwright's Celina, ou l'enfant du mystère (1800), taken from a romance by Ducray-Duminil written in 1798, appeared in England first as Thomas Holcroft's A Tale of Mystery; a melodrama produced at Covent Garden in 1802, and the following year as a translation by Mary Meeke published by the primary publisher of gothics, the

Minerva Press (Summers, Bibliography 279).

The melodrama is an expressive, highly visual form whose early formative period, roughly from 1790 on (Brooks 87), encompasses most of the gothic era. To speak of melodrama as an example of the "illegitimate" theatre points to its birth and development in the world of pantomime, acrobatics, clowning and musical performance, the world of popular entertainment, in contrast to the officially sanctioned Patent Theatres whose monopoly on "legitimate" drama was reaffirmed by the Licensing Act of 1737. Because non-Patent theatres were prohibited from using spoken dialogue, their creative energies were diverted into musical pastimes, physical entertainments, and most importantly, into dramatic presentations that relied on extremely evocative visual techniques. The melodrama is identified by Peter Brooks as the place of the "decisive break" with the "theatre of the word where visual representation and action were of minimal importance . . . it brings a transformation of the stage into plastic tableau, the arena for represented, visual meanings" (47). It is the drama of gesture and facial expression, of silence and the "inarticulate cry" (Brooks 67). The tableau in which "the characters' attitudes and gestures, compositionally arranged and frozen for a moment, give, like an illustrative painting, a visual summary of the emotional situation" is its signature scene (Brooks 48). The reference to painting is not fanciful; both Brooks and Booth note that certain scenes might be arranged expressly to imitate

paintings with which the audience might be familiar (Brooks 61; Booth Victorian 9-10). This trait appears in gothics that call upon Salvator Rosa, Murillo and others to strengthen the reader's visual impression of important scenes.<sup>1</sup> Consider for example the following description by Maturin:

In his spasms, Everhard had thrown off the sheet. So he lay . . . in a kind of corse-like beauty, to which the light of the moon gave an effect that would have rendered the figure worthy the pencil of a Murillo, a Rosa, or any of those painters, who, inspired by the genius of suffering, delight in representing the most exquisite of human forms in the extremity of human agony. (322)

Or Radcliffe's account of the burial of Madame Montoni:

At the moment in which they let down the body into the earth, the scene was such as only the dark pencil of a Domenichino, perhaps, could have done justice to. The fierce features and wild dress of the condotierri, bending with their torches over the grave . . . were contrasted by the venerable figure of the monk . . . while, beside him, stood the softer form of Emily, who leaned for support upon Annette. (Udolpho 377)

The tableau of melodrama, as described by Brooks, is very close in appearance and function to gothic spectacle; of it he says, "Even the scenes constructed with words tend toward a terminal wordlessness in the fixed gestures of the tableau . . . . These instances are typical of the recourse to tableau at moments of climax and crisis, where speech is silenced and narrative arrested in order to offer a fixed and visual representation of reactions to peripety" (61). Naturally, these moments of stress frequently involve physical or mental anguish.

Though melodrama and the gothic have much in common, there is no one-to-one correspondence in their development or

their concerns; their differences in outlook and in focus are many and significant.<sup>2</sup> A commentator on the gothic has highlighted the characteristics shared by the two modes. Coral Ann Howells, noting that the genre has "frequently been criticised for being sensational, theatrical and melodramatic," sees in this description a summary of gothic "techniques [that] are essentially visual in their emphasis on dramatic gesture and action and in their pictorial effects, giving the reader an experience comparable to that of a spectator at the theatre" (16). Her statement stands as an excellent précis of the gothic's spectacular qualities though I would complicate the portrayal of the spectator who, in her account, is passive and confused, and in mine is alternately demanding and passive. I do not claim that the fit between gothic novel/melodrama and reader/theatrical spectator is perfect; my interest has been to document a popular "way of showing" contemporary with the gothic and to draw from that medium a visual vocabulary readily transferable to the gothic.

In Chapter One, I suggested that the spectacle of suffering is the site of the convergence of questions about desire, reading and closure in the gothic text. That there is pleasure in this interaction is verified by the habits of gothic readers who wish for their reading experience to continue indefinitely, not to end. A reviewer for the British Critic in 1793 described the experience of these readers who "'have been actually seen to weep . . . because they had not another volume to peruse'" (qtd. in Kate Ferguson Ellis 60).

The thought of Freud and Lacan is central to an understanding of this interaction between reader and text.

My analysis of Otranto foregrounded the role of the visual and the visible as concerns central to the experience of reading the gothic. "Who looks?", "Who is seen?" and the mechanics of that interaction are key questions in the texts under consideration here. Freud's "A Child Is Being Beaten" (1919) provides the background for his model of "looking," with which we begin our exploration of that interaction. His earlier "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915) had theorized "looking" in terms of mastery (sadism/scopophilia), passivity (masochism/exhibitionism), and identification as part of a larger attempt to describe the operation of the instincts. More useful for our purposes is the later essay that analyzes a common childhood fantasy of beating/being beaten (SE 17: 177-204).

Briefly, Freud theorizes that the common childhood fantasy he analyzes stands for three phases in the child's mind: "A child is being beaten," "My father is beating the child" (the first two statements are elided into a single phase), "I am being beaten by my father," and "A child is being beaten" (SE 17: 184-6). He couches his discussion in terms of identification by the child and the masochistic impulses. This scenario involves a movement in the child's identification, with the child first viewing the scene from the "outside," in the position of a passive spectator (subject) looking at the victim (object) of a beating. Moving

through a sequence of steps, the child identifies with the victim of the beating, sees itself in the position of the victim, and then is revealed as the victim of the beating by a specific figure, its father. In the final phase, the return to "A child is being beaten" removes the father from the scene and realigns the child with the role of the spectator. The role of victim is, in this fantasy, filled with masochistic pleasure (186, 189) whether through the child's seeing itself in the role of the victim or identifying with the victim. When in the fantasy the child shifts back into the position of spectator, the voyeuristic/sadistic pleasures of the role are only apparent. "Only the form of this phantasy is sadistic," Freud writes, "the satisfaction which is derived from it is masochistic" (SE 17: 191). The fantasy, produced by the effort to repress the child's forbidden desire for the father, enacts both the punishment for that desire and a substitute that offers pleasure. The situation described by Freud in this essay and in "Instincts," the movement from subject to object, is summarized in this way by Robert Con Davis:

We see in this set of scenes Freud's theatricalization of positioning in a text--largely a process of alternation between active and passive, a kind of spiral that continually twists deeper into experience--first active, then passive, then active, and so on--always claiming new territory through the repositioning of the subject. ("Narrative Repression" 248-9)

Davis's appeal to "theatricalization" in Freud is a reminder of Freud's own reliance on spectacle as the means of illustrating the foundations of his ideas in dream and memory, conscious and unconscious.<sup>3</sup>

The complications of this model are numerous and have been the subject of much commentary.<sup>4</sup> I intend to only glance at them here because I am interested in the suggestiveness of the model for further thought about the reader's involvement with spectacle, not in trying to twist every incident to fit the model or to make definitive comments about its psychological validity. Foremost among its controversial points is that Freud treats the assumption of the masochistic position by women as natural, writing in "A Child Is Being Beaten" that "Instincts with a passive aim must be taken for granted as existing, especially among women" (SE 17: 194) but finds it perplexing in men (196-200). From information provided by four women and two men, turn the scenario however he may, Freud can come to no conclusion with which he is satisfied. The situation is described thus by Michelle Massé:

The picture begins as a familiar Oedipal drama in clear, primary shades but the father's central placement, the disappearance of the mother, and the attempt to establish gender differentiation while at the same time wresting universal typicality from the pattern undermines any finality. (65)

Massé depicts Freud's drama of beating as a narrative written to divergent purposes and unable to come to an end, a reminder of its particular relevance to discussion of the gothic. Freud's continuing interest in the question is indicated by "The Economic Problem of Masochism" (1924) in which he takes it up again. I have made use of those features that provide insights into the function of the gothic narrative, seeing in the oscillating roles of spectator and spectacle what Eve Sedgwick refers to as a "free switchpoint for the identities

of subject, object, on-looker, desirer, looker-away" with "visibly rendered plural possibilities" ("A Poem" 115). This approach to the relationship of reader and text provides a powerful tool with which to examine the reader's repeated encounter with spectacle and the role this plays in the problematic closure of the gothic.

The relationship that Freud calls "looking" is the relationship on which Lacan posits his theory of the Gaze, replacing Freud's emphasis on instinctual behavior with a theory based in the unconscious as a function structured like language and driven by "Desire." Where Freud in "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" outlined the operations of instinct, Lacan sees the movement of "Desire."<sup>5</sup> It is difficult to formulate a definition of this "Desire" because it is an impetus to movement, a motivation, not an object. Robert Con Davis points out "that Freud's text, in staging the visual relationship, has already situated the Lacanian Gaze in the term 'desire'" (249-50). What Lacan does is accept the relationship that is constructed and give primary emphasis to desire as the motivation behind the visual relationship. The look, or the Gaze, as Lacan would have it, manifests desire. If we take the relationship described by Freud and re-express it in terms of the Gaze, what we have is a spectator (subject) whose look at an object expresses unconscious desire. That object Lacan speaks of as "the Other," a place of lack. The existence of desire implies lack; in seeking "the Other" the Gaze seeks to fill this lack, though that is an

impossibility.<sup>6</sup> In gazing, the spectator first possesses the object then subtly shifts to being possessed by it. The spectator only recognizes the desire expressed in his or her own Gaze when that desire returns in the Gaze from "the Other." Richard Boothby explains the Lacanian movement from the role of subject to object in this way:

When Lacan insists that human desire is the desire of the Other, he means that it is only in and through the Other, to whom I am linked in a relation of symbolic interchange, that I am able to announce to myself my own desire. (119)

In the act of reading, the text is the object of the Gaze and of the desire manifested in the Gaze, but the text masters the reader by returning the Gaze, if only for a moment and if only as one event in a constantly alternating series of shifts. The system described by both Freud and Lacan is one of positions and unconscious relations--an unconscious discourse. To say as Davis does that "the subject who looks . . . is the one who precisely is 'seen'--that is, is implicated--by the desire of unconscious discourse" (249) is to further define a relation of spectator and object described in 1820 by Maturin's Spaniard, observing that "the drama of terror has the irresistible power of converting its audience into its victims" (197).

It is not necessary to accept all the premises of either Freud or Lacan to conclude that both are useful in opening up texts and, particularly, in supplying a vocabulary and a model for discussing the relationship of reader to text. But neither school of thought provides an easy resting place for

feminists. In her book Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction Elizabeth Grosz suggests that an attitude of "cultivated ambivalence" may be the best strategy (191). In that way, we are free to use the ideas that facilitate understanding and return old texts to us from new perspectives while carefully avoiding subscribing to an entire system that, at best, simply fails to offer women insights that apply to their real lives and, at worst, proposes that those lives are irreparably damaged and compromised from their earliest moments. Eve Sedgwick notes her own reservations while observing that psychoanalysis and the gothic have a special relationship. Commenting on what the gothic has to show us about family systems, she says,

Notoriously . . . the Gothic seems to offer a privileged view of individual and family psychology. Certain features of the Oedipal family are insistently foregrounded there: absolutes of license and prohibition, for instance; a preoccupation with possibilities of incest; a fascinated proscription of sexual activity; an atmosphere dominated by the threat of violence between generations.

That said, she offers a brief reading of Freud through the gothic,

Even the reader who does not accept the Oedipal family as a transhistorical given can learn a lot from the Gothic about the terms and conditions under which it came to be enforced as a norm for bourgeois society. Indeed, traces of the Gothic are ubiquitous in Freud's writing, and not only in literary studies like 'The Uncanny' or 'Delusion and Dream'; it is not surprising, though maybe circular, that psychoanalysis should be used as a tool for explicating these texts that provided many of its structuring metaphors. (Between Men 90-1)

It is in that spirit that Freud and Lacan are invoked here.

As we have now seen, if spectacle is a way of showing, it is also a way of looking, and it is the relationship between the two that is explored by modern commentaries on the subject. Writing from a sociological perspective, Guy Debord argued in The Society of the Spectacle (first published in 1967) that "In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation" (para 1).<sup>7</sup> He was expressing a worldview of alienation in which spectacle is not merely a mode of presentation but the only means of interaction among individuals who are alienated not only from each other, but from themselves. From this perspective, spectacle furnishes unity, a seemingly unifying experience for people, but in fact the unity is illusory. The terminology of the experience as described by Debord and infused with Marxist theory is important because it becomes the terminology of all uses of spectacle; he speaks of spectacle "which concentrates all gazing and all consciousness" noting that the gaze is "deceived" and the consciousness is "false" (para 3). The unity that is achieved is a continuing separateness based on a system in which appearance is accepted as reality, being is having, and having is living. Images of need become indistinguishable from individual desires, so that as new images of need are constantly created, desire, like Lacanian desire, becomes impossible to fulfill or even to recognize. When everything appears to be permitted, that possibility

drives desire. What is hidden and what is denied in a society dominated by spectacle is that all is not possible and that desire is an always new creation, incapable of fulfillment. Dismissing more specialized uses of the term, Debord writes that "the spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images" (para 4), an unconscious social discourse.<sup>8</sup>

Modern discussion of spectacle is characterized by intergeneric fluidity with dramatic, literary, film and cultural theory energizing each other. In much the same way that melodrama and the gothic benefited from a symbiotic relationship, the concept moves among different fields of enquiry, though it is now an object of analysis rather than a mode of presentation (pace Debord Comments 5-6). Debord speaks of vision as the "privileged human sense" in the society of spectacle, and the critical approaches that will be touched upon here, whether they emphasize looking or being looked at, do nothing to dispel that notion.

Michel Foucault's Discipline and Punish (1979) is about spectacle as a power device and the historical shift from a culture of spectacle to a culture of surveillance. Writing of changing attitudes toward crime, punishment and the role of the criminal in society as they have changed since the eighteenth century, Foucault describes a movement from a culture in which punishment was a spectacle designed to reinforce, through public performance, the power of the sovereign, toward the modern system of punishment in which the

gaze once leveled by individuals at the spectacle of punishment has been turned around and is now directed at individuals by the impersonal technology that Foucault refers to as "panoptic" power. The Panopticon architectural designs of Jeremy Bentham (1787-91) allow every person in a building to be observed from a central location. Efficient, effective, economical and "humane," it is the ideal design for disciplinary structures like prisons, schools and barracks (205-8). The new "techno-politics of punishment" (92) rely on the threat posed by visibility, not the power of spectacular display wielded by, for instance, the scaffold. This power is exercised not only in the prisons of Panopticon design (200-2) but also by invisible authorities to whom the individual citizen may always be visible. The culture of surveillance, like the modern prison, ensures that "a real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation" (202). Real force need not be present if each individual knows it is possible that he or she is under observation. When this fear is internalized, the individual becomes both subject and object of the spectacle of power; discipline is self-enforced within the culture of surveillance (202-3).<sup>9</sup> This circularity is mirrored in Foucault's larger thesis that this broadly-defined "discipline" (215) has spread throughout society, ensuring that the "formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly enforce one another" (224). Foucault proposes that within the realm of surveillance, the self is split against itself, having internalized the spectacle/spectator

relationship. Internal adjustments take place in the individual in response to an external authority that is imagined or real. That power is invisible, unverifiable and intermittent, and invested with all the power that imagination can give. In this system the individual does not act, except to make internal adjustments.

The power of Foucault's thesis has been felt recently in any number of works of literary criticism that are not simply "about" literature but about the novel's overt and covert display or acting-out of systems of discipline. Among these are John Bender's Imagining the Penitentiary (1987), D.A. Miller's The Novel and the Police (1988), and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's Epistemology of the Closet (1990); however, the liveliest discussion and extension of these ideas is taking place in the area of feminist film theory where, combined with Freudian and Lacanian psychological theory, or anti-Freudian and anti-Lacanian theory where preferred, provocative insights are being developed about the relationship between spectator and spectacular image. The foregoing discussion has been intended to establish the link between the gothic and the theatrical notion of spectacle. Add the cultural critique conveyed by Debord and Foucault and only a small step is necessary to move toward contemporary film theory and to speak of what it can provide to illuminate the use of spectacle in the gothic.

The issue of spectacle in film has been framed primarily as a question about the response of viewers, male and female,

to spectacle on the screen. The most succinct description of how cinematic spectacle is constituted comes from Judith Mayne in her Woman at the Keyhole (1990):

Within individual films there are numerous effects of spectacle, the most obvious of which occur in the musical, whether in the way in which the narrative is frequently subservient to performance, or in the overall preoccupation with theatricality and staging. In a more general way, most classical films create spectacles by defining objects of the look--whether the look of the camera or of protagonists within the film--so as to stage their quality of what Mulvey [in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"] calls, referring specifically to the female object of the look, their "to-be-looked-at-ness." The staging can occur through the literal representation of performances on stage, to scenes staged against the background of doorways or windows, with attendant performancelike effects.

This is a generally agreed upon description of spectacular staging, with features readily recognizable in literature as well. Mayne's second point summarizes the more controversial aspect of spectacle in film:

The spectacle effect which has received the most critical attention, however, is the practice of systematized looks and gazes in the cinema that define the structures of editing and the creation of point of view, particularly insofar as the spectator is "sutured" into a trajectory of narrative and visual desire. (17)

That this system exists is not in question. How the system works and, especially, how the spectator's position is constructed/performed are the areas which have generated the most argument.

Linda Williams in Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible (1989) analyzes the attempts in modern times to use the movie camera to show the "truth" of women's sexual experience, that hidden, invisible, seemingly

unrepresentable event. In constructing the background for her argument about hard core films, she provides historical information and interpretation that form a link between what has been said about gothic and the film theory that follows. She discusses in detail the photographs of animal and human motion by Eadweard Muybridge taken primarily in the 1870's, in part, to answer "'academic questions'" about the minute physical components of movement (36). When put in motion mechanically, these stop-action photographs provided for their viewers a knowledge beyond science; Williams writes, "Motion could now be stopped or slowed for analysis, reconstituted to prove its veracity, and endlessly repeated to the satisfaction of an amazed and delighted public" (38). Of interest here is the discovery of these early audiences that there was "unanticipated pleasure" (38) in viewing bodies in motion. Viewing brought an excess of pleasure beyond the satisfaction of a point of scientific curiosity, such as, whether at any time during a fast trot all four of a horse's feet leave the ground. The images were created to satisfy requests to show what was not visible to the eye and to provide a form in which the "truth" could be repeated. Williams's principle point is that the images of men and women were, from the outset of these experiments, used and viewed differently. Her more general point about the drive to know, and to achieve this knowledge through seeing, reminds us that the cinematic spectacle has a pre-cinematic figuration in the gothic insistence on the visual and the connection of the act of

seeing to the reader/spectator's desire. The gothic provokes an "unsuspected visual pleasure" (39) in the reader with images that promise to show and promise to display the "truth" of whatever the reader wants to see--the expression on the face of a man as he murders his daughter; the face of death on a corpse; indeed, the face of death itself. If one image does not fulfill expectations, the next one may; repetition offers an endless possibility for the search for "truth" in whatever form it is desired. Muybridge's viewers who were not satisfied with horses soon had the naked human form to study. The prominence of the visual in the gothic provokes such a desire to see more.

The article that initiated the discussion continued by Mayne, Williams and others is Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema" (1975). Working in the psychoanalytic tradition of Freud and Lacan from a specifically feminist perspective, Mulvey identified in film a relationship between spectacle and narrative that describes equally well the narrative flow of gothic. Speaking of woman as "an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film" Mulvey notes that "her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation" (19). For the gothic we must expand the perspective of these remarks to include the contemplation of the suffering of men in texts by Lewis, Maturin and others, but her description of the effect of spectacle on narrative flow is exactly right. She

distinguishes the "flow of action" (19) from the stop-action, or one might say, freeze-frame, of spectacle. The comparable pattern in gothic stands forth in the analysis of Otranto in Chapter One.

In her essay, written in 1975, Mulvey proposes that "cinematic codes [lighting, camera movement, editing, etc.] create a gaze, a world and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire" (25). The spectator, gaze and desire that are spoken of are strictly male, an authorial stance that Mulvey, rethinking the issue in 1981, describes as calculated and ironic ("Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure'" 29). Mulvey's conclusion about the pleasure derived by the spectator from the spectacular image on screen is that classical film presupposes and supports a gaze that is male and active and a spectacular object that is female and passive. The relationship as she describes it leaves no space for an active gaze that is female. The possibility of a female spectator viewing a film in the role of subject rather than object is denied, because the spectacle of the female body on the screen is the only role with which the female spectator can identify ("Visual Pleasure" 20). The whole so-called cinematic apparatus denies the presence of a camera and the existence of image as a created object. "The conscious aim," writes Mulvey, is "always to eliminate intrusive camera presence and prevent a distancing awareness in the audience" (25). This denial creates the illusion of seamless realism by which classical filmmaking is characterized. This false

verisimilitude can be punctured by filmmaking that exposes film's technical underpinnings (intrusion of the camera or director into the frame or exposure of the editing process, for example) and therefore calls attention to the manufactured quality of the screen image.

In response to the question raised and then left hanging by her essay, that is, the position of the female viewer or the possibility of viewing a film as a woman, Mulvey in her 1981 essay suggests two ways in which women can take pleasure in a classical film, in this case, the western. If a film focuses on men and masculine desires, a woman can take a certain regressive interest in the active male roles. This stance is regressive in the sense that a woman must revert to, in Freudian terms, a pre-Oedipal, active stage to enjoy an identification with masculine pleasure; in Mulvey's words, "Hollywood genre films structured around masculine pleasure, offering an identification with the active point of view, allow a woman spectator to rediscover that lost aspect of her sexual identity, the never fully repressed bed-rock of feminine neurosis" ("Afterthoughts," 31). This is not an unusual or difficult transformation for women because "for women (from childhood onwards) trans-sex identification is a habit that very easily becomes second nature. However, this Nature does not sit easily and shifts restlessly in its borrowed transvestite clothes" (33). Mulvey's second model for a woman's spectatorial pleasure is the pleasure that may be enjoyed when a film's focus is on a female character who

re-enacts the "internal oscillation of desire" posed for all women between masculine and feminine role identifications (37). This kind of film offers the opportunity to enjoy a "fantasy" of action and the "last-ditch resistance" to the repression demanded by "correct femininity"; finally, it is likely to afford an opportunity for nostalgically "mourning" the passing of that active role (37). Mulvey again appeals to the image of cross-dressing to describe this experience when she concludes that the "female spectator's fantasy of masculinisation [is] at cross-purposes with itself, restless in its transvestite clothes" (37). Even this revision has left many unsatisfied, since both choices offered by Mulvey's readings afford the female spectator only two avenues for enjoyment, both of which involve "becoming a man."<sup>10</sup>

Among the most interesting and innovative contributions after Mulvey are those of Kaja Silverman (1980, 1983), Mary Ann Doane (1981, 1982), E. Ann Kaplan (1983), Lorraine Gamman, Avis Lewallen and Jackie Stacey (1989), and Judith Mayne (1990). All of them grapple with the question of the existence of a female (or even the female) gaze and the characterization of the role of the female spectator. They come to a variety of conclusions ranging from denial of the existence of such a look (Kaplan and Lewallen), to various models of the working of the female gaze (Mulvey, Doane, Gamman, Stacey), to models of mutual gazing based in pleasure and unpleasure (Moore and Silverman), to models of filmmaking and viewing in which the concept of the gaze is critiqued and

marginalized (Mayne). It is not necessary to examine the arguments in detail. The lack of conclusive agreement on that question in film studies cited here shows that the model of spectator/spectacle interaction that I have chosen does not provide a clear answer to the question of gendered gazing that can be applied to the novel.

The scene of spectacle in the gothic text is a privileged site of interaction between reader, spectator in the text and the spectacular object. The relationship thus set up is a system of communication in which the roles are fluid and subject to shift. In the text the spectator, encountering the object, is affected in one of a variety of ways, but all as a result of a slippage from showing to concealing the essence of the spectacle. The spectator in his or her faint, speechlessness, paralysis or other reaction is, in this act of suffering, transformed into the object of spectacle for the reader. But of greatest importance in the effect on the reader is the undefinable point in between in this shift. The concept of "suture," drawn from psychoanalysis via film theory can illuminate the functioning of this point in the text.<sup>11</sup>

In The Subject of Semiotics Kaja Silverman identifies "suture" as "the name given to the procedures by means of which cinematic texts confer subjectivity upon their viewers" (195). Suture is the technique by which individual shots are sewn together into an apparently seamless narrative, thereby structuring, shaping and controlling the viewing experience. On the technical level, suture is necessitated by the need to

conceal the gap, or the cut, between shots. In film, this concealment covers up the existence of the cinematic apparatus that mediates reality for the viewer, moving the camera, arranging the shots, changing the focus, directing the spectator's gaze. In literature, there exists what we might call the authorial apparatus, the author's manipulation of point of view to selectively show or to conceal. Where suture works to conceal the edge of shots in classic cinema, to elide shots into a seamless narrative, spectacle disrupts the gothic narrative, exposing the edges of the surrounding text. The edges create the frame we have identified as a component of spectacle. The reader/spectator's experience of the spectacular text is one of manipulation or victimization through the act of concealment, but he or she becomes aware of this victimization only when there is a rupture in the text that marks the experience.

That point of slippage from showing to concealing is the impetus for the shift of roles between spectacle and spectator that takes place under the gaze of the spectacular text. What is concealed is not important. It can be anything to any reader.<sup>12</sup> What is important is that the performance of the slippage offers a testimony to the existence of the object that is concealed and withheld from the reader who wishes to see. Therefore, the narrative's attempt not to show becomes the focal point of the reader's attention, the reader's desire to see. Lacanian-based film theory describes this effect in terms of lack and, indeed, the kind of reading inspired by the

gothic testifies to that lack and to the desire to fill the space of yearning. The film viewer becomes aware of the lack when the existence of the gap behind the act of suture is disclosed; similarly, when the reader's engagement with the text is ruptured by a sudden movement from revealing to concealing, a heightened desire to see is born from the awareness of concealment. Silverman notes that the spectator, "suddenly cognizant of the limitations on its vision, understands itself to be lacking. This sense of lack inspires in that subject the desire for 'something else,' a desire to see more" (204). "We must," she says, "be shown only enough to know that there is more, and to want that 'more' to be disclosed" (205). By not showing, and marking the concealment with a slippage of focus, the narrative continually confirms the existence of the object that must be concealed and justifies, encourages even, the reader's continuing attempt to see. As the slippage occurs in the text, the reader, transfixed in the attempt to see, seduced by the text but a very willing victim, becomes the object of the textual gaze until released from this bondage by the narrative's movement forward past the moment of spectacle. As the moment of spectacle passes and the reader shifts back into an aggressive relationship with the text, the reader's eyes move on in pursuit of the next engagement with spectacle and a reenactment of the possibility of seeing. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to demonstrating how spectacular scenes are constructed and how the reader of the gothic

interacts with them.

The gap that is formed, that exists momentarily, in the shift between the spectacle's original object and the creation of spectator as object is produced in many ways which will be illustrated in the discussion that follows. In attempting to hold at a distance that which is concealed, these texts succeed in binding their readers more closely. This is the irony that exists in the method disclosed here. Interestingly, if the gothic is finally "about" "loss and deprivation" on the thematic level, as Elizabeth Napier has said (101), we will discover that such a response exists on a more basic level of the reader's interaction with the text, the level of the response to repeated spectacle. But where Napier finds overwhelming melancholy in the experience I would place the reader's pleasure.

Thinking back to our first example of spectacle, the helmet scene at the beginning of Castle of Otranto, we will recall that it is the spectators' response to the gigantic helmet, not the helmet in its detailed physical presence and certainly not Conrad's crushed body, that is the scene's focus. The point of origin for the fear that grips and transfixes first Manfred, then the other spectators in the courtyard, is the helmet, but the helmet is merely the impetus to a detailed observation of the behavior of Manfred and then the crowd that takes its cue from him. The reader is led to focus first on Manfred, then on the other spectators who look at him, and then to watch all of them as they turn their

attention to the helmet. The helmet, while it is the focus of the collective gaze, is not in the picture. The reader is looking at their act of looking at an object about which we are given only a sketchy notion involving size and feathers.

If the helmet is lacking in substance, how much less substance there is in the "mangled remains of the young prince" (17). The "disfigured body" is quietly removed from the scene. The helmet's presence shifts attention from the physical reality of Conrad's death, then Walpole shifts attention from the helmet to its audience. Manfred himself becomes an object of fascination and then the awed response of the crowd fills the frame. The reader comes upon a courtyard filled with mystery and violent death, but through the author's manipulation of perspective our views of the spectacular object and the body of young Conrad are blocked and we view instead the audience response to the helmet. Walpole shies away from depicting the physical; rather than blotting consciousness with a faint or the covering of eyes, gestures that other gothic authors depict to limit the impact of the spectacle of suffering, Walpole directs the reader's gaze away from the sight and shows the reader something else or, as in the scene of Matilda's death, provides plenty of dialogue and no visual details.

Where Walpole approaches spectacle and then bluntly removes it from our view or refuses to describe it, Ann Radcliffe's attempt to show the spectacular demonstrates a more subtle sliding away of narrative from the confrontation.

Radcliffe's heroines have a more lively interior life than Matilda or Walpole's other female characters and they bring to scenes of spectacle a psyche bound to tremble exquisitely, providing a more sensitive conduit for experience between the character on the page and the reader. Here, too, though, the reader is disappointed, because Radcliffe promises so much through the build-up of expectation but proves to be better at concealment than at display.

In The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) the heroine, recently-orphaned Emily St. Aubert, has traveled from her beloved home in Gascony to Venice and then to the desolate Apennine castle of Udolpho in the company of her unhappy aunt and the aunt's mysterious and unsavory husband, Count Montoni. In exploring the Count's castle, where she is a virtual prisoner and has reason to fear her new uncle will try to force her to marry against her will, Emily comes to a dark gallery hung with pictures. One picture in particular attracts her notice as it is covered with "a veil of black silk" (233). The fact that it is covered makes her want to uncover it, but also makes her hesitate. Her servant, Annette's, "alarming hints" about the supposedly sinister character of what is concealed inspire Emily with the courage to command her to remove the veil, which she refuses to do. Though daunted at this point, Emily, "excited by the mystery attending this picture" (234), vows to return to the gallery in the daylight. She passes a fearful night but is refreshed by the surrounding sublime scenery the next day. Bored, distracted and melancholy, she seeks the

gallery again.

The construction of the scene of spectacle that follows is typical of the style and preferred focus that distinguish the works of Radcliffe from most of her imitators. Though in most respects Radcliffe's heroines are of the conventional sentimental sort, her creations are set apart by her precise attention to their mental and emotional states and by her insistence on rational explanations of their motivations, an adjunct to her often remarked insistence on rationalizing the seemingly supernatural occurrences in her novels. So rational are their explanations for what they do and so careful is their attention to the decision-making process that Radcliffe's heroines--Emily, Ellena in The Italian and Adeline in The Romance of the Forest--would fit comfortably into a Richardson novel, had they chosen to stay home and write letters rather than to travel. In approaching the scene in which the picture will be unveiled, Radcliffe offers a detailed explanation of what could draw Emily irresistibly toward an action that holds terror for her. After depicting the melancholy train of thought that prompts Emily to remember the gallery, this explanation draws the reader, with Emily, toward the discovery:

As she passed through the chambers . . . she found herself somewhat agitated; its connection with the late lady of the castle, and the conversation of Annette, together with the circumstance of the veil, throwing a mystery over the subject, that excited a faint degree of terror. But a terror of this nature, as it occupies and expands the mind, and elevates it to high expectation, is purely sublime, and leads us, by a kind of fascination, to seek even the object, from which we appear to

shrink. (248)

The reader cannot help but be aware that the description of Emily's process of discovery is equally a description of the reading process, as the reader approaches an event that holds at least equal parts fascination and fear. It is also notable that Radcliffe chooses a moment filled with trembling suspense to offer an explanation for Emily's pursuit of what clearly terrifies her. But rather than distracting the reader from the narrative with a dry, abstract explanation, the tone of her explanation of the attraction of "purely sublime" terror is personalized, drawing the author, reader and Emily together with "we" and "us," and is concretized by its reliance on active verbs--"occupies," "expands," "elevates," "leads," etc. The reader is drawn further into the feeling of the experience by this explanation. The reader's identification with Emily in this scene is cemented by this shared sentiment, but is curiously skewed in the scene that follows.

It will be immediately apparent that Radcliffe's touch with scenes of spectacle is very different from Walpole's. Note the point of focus in the scene of unveiling:

Emily passed on with faltering steps, and having paused a moment at the door, before she attempted to open it, she then hastily entered the chamber, and went towards the picture, which appeared to be enclosed in a frame of uncommon size, that hung in a dark part of the room. She paused again, and then, with a timid hand, lifted the veil; but instantly let it fall--perceiving that what it had concealed was no picture, and, before she could leave the chamber, she dropped senseless, on the floor. (248-9)

The reader pauses on the threshold and hesitates along with

Emily; here the reader's experience is closely bound to Emily's. There are two moments of decision; first Emily pauses then enters the room, next she pauses then raises the veil. At this moment, the reader's identification with Emily is shattered because Emily sees what is behind the veil and the reader does not. This veil is a substitute marking a site of lack or absence for the reader. Suddenly, the reader is relegated to observer status, cheated of the vision that seemed to be promised. Not only does the reader not "see" but she who has been the reader's "eyes" faints. We will return to this point, but should first examine the visual details of this scene.

The scene begins on the verge of the room that holds a scene of terror. We are reminded here that boundaries of all kinds both keep out and keep in. Before she crosses the threshold, the emphasis has been on Emily's thought processes; after she raises the veil, conscious thought is blotted out by what she sees. The room encloses something--the reader will not know what that something is for another four hundred pages--that is dangerous when seen, and the outside world, represented by Emily, is no match for it. The physical details of the room are few. We are told that the part of the gallery containing the veiled object is dark. The object itself is of "uncommon size," familiar gothic shorthand signalling objects, like Walpole's helmet, that are both familiar and strange, reassuring in outline, but threatening in their uncanny physical reality. She lifts the veil, which

by now lacks all physicality: it has neither color, nor weight, nor texture. In this scene the veil comes to function not as a cover so much as the screen on which spectacle is displayed or the backdrop against which Emily performs.

In her strikingly original study of the imagery of the veil in the gothic, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick presents the veil as one of the many images repeated in the gothic code. Conventional commentaries on veil imagery, she finds, have consistently interpreted the veil "as a cloak for something deeper and thus more primal" (Coherence 143). While veil imagery can function as this kind of symbol, Sedgwick points out that the veil, by its constant formulaic association with certain qualities with which the gothic is preoccupied, virginity, for example, ceases to conceal and in fact comes to stand in for, or to display, that which is concealed (143). Taking her principal examples from The Italian, The Monk and The Mysteries of Udolpho, she demonstrates that the veil or the clothing can forcefully remind the spectator of the flesh, which they ostensibly conceal. In a philosophical move reminiscent of Freud's explanation of the fetish, Sedgwick notes of The Monk, in particular, that "among the qualities that make [it] such a formidably prurient book is its discovery that the attributes of veil and of flesh are transferable and interchangeable" (145). Analyzing the scene of Emily and the veil with this attention to the surface in mind, Sedgwick suggests that this particular veil, since it reveals "something" (147) far different from what is expected,

actually "exposes the fascination" held by the unknown object; it is "the place of any voided expectation." In these terms it is the experiencing of the veil itself rather than the "something" it reveals that is the cause of Emily's collapse. Sedgwick cites a series of subsequent encounters with veils and curtains that are shown to conceal bodies, alive but suffering or wounded, and notes that pallor and muteness of the veil come to be transferred first to what is concealed and then to Emily herself (148). The qualities can spread, like a "contagion," from the object to those associated with it (149). What is interesting about Sedgwick's proposal in the terms of the present study is the transference of qualities that she traces, since what I propose here is a transference, though of roles rather than qualities (though the two could be the same). Her attention to a movement that takes place on the surface rather than in the deep matter is also relevant, especially as she observes that the movement on the surface is "all." The "something" that the veil conceals does not have to be named, may not have a name or, as Sedgwick would probably say, does not actually exist at any level of the text. This quality of concealment is essential to the functioning of desire, which thrives through pursuit of a "something" that cannot be attained or grasped.

I would like to go back now and suggest a shift in focus as we examine the scene of Emily and the veil. One of the most interesting characteristics of this passage is that the object in which so much mystery is invested, and of which so

much is anticipated, is practically invisible in the scene. As noted above, it lacks even its distinctive coloration when Emily finally confronts it, and it is devoid of any additional characteristics that might render it more substantial or deepen the mystery. What the reader is forced to focus on in this passage is Emily, not the veil or its secret. To a large degree, this focus is brought about by the reader's wrenching change from identification with Emily's subjectivity to a position in which Emily becomes the object of scrutiny by a reader who stands far outside her experience. Emily is a "victim" of the veil's contagion and her suffering is such that her consciousness shuts down. The experience of spectacle is one of muteness and the inability to speak what has been seen. Emily as active seeker has been transformed into a mute illustration of what lies behind the veil. And for another four hundred pages Emily's mind reverts to what she saw (249, 250, 348), but she remains mute. What she has seen behind the veil finally does not matter and its effect is certainly dampened by the fact that it need not be explained except when the author is tying up loose ends because it does not have any bearing on the plot. There is another way in which what the veil hides does not matter, a way that has more relevance as we concern ourselves with the dynamics of the scene and the transfer of the role of object from the veil to Emily. At the moment that Emily's view of what lies behind the veil strikes her senseless, the reader experiences a point of fracture in the text. This is the moment when the textual

gaze is turned on the reader and far from being an active devourer of the text, the reader becomes, for this moment, a passive victim. In the transfer of focus from veil to Emily's body, the reader experiences a sliding away of the possibility of knowledge, the possibility that "it" or "something" will be shown. At this time. The violence of the shift and the necessity of not showing represented by the shift is a tantalizing reminder that the "it" does exist and that on the next page or in the next chapter the reader may find "it" fully displayed.

When we are finally told of the waxen image that lay behind the veil, Radcliffe has lost the opportunity to terrify the reader with that staple of horror fiction, the corpse. And if Radcliffe's sensibility would not allow her to introduce a moldering corpse into her novel, we are even less likely to find the more viscerally horrifying image of the body in fragments. Horace Walpole's sensibility was considerably less discriminating. According to Walpole, the idea for Castle of Otranto occurred to him in a dream featuring a "'gigantic hand in armour'" (ix) and he then concocted a story around the image. Though bestrewing the story with body parts and body-part referents like a helmet and a sword is one of the principal plot devices of Otranto, the images fail to achieve a high level of spectacular horror. Psychoanalytic theory holds that fragmented body parts create anxiety that is related to Oedipal fears, that is, fear of loss of the penis. Any separated body part is a substitute

that may hold the power to conjure this anxiety.<sup>13</sup> But some of the objects that might be expected to convey horror, for instance, the giant armored foot in the great chamber (31-3) and the mailed hand on the bannister (98-100), are described haltingly and with comic indirection by the domestics. As in the rest of the story and in the helmet scene already discussed, Walpole seeks his effects through exaggeration and the insistence on the uncommonness of what he is attempting. As with the ghost in the gallery, it is frightening that such things should be; however, second-hand description weakens the power of these scenes and the exaggeration comes closer to comedy than horror. Bianca's comic/terrified report to Manfred and Frederic of what she saw on the stairs finally amounts to "I saw upon the uppermost banister of the great stairs a hand in armour as big, as big--I thought I should have swooned," after two full pages of babbling indirection and hesitation (98-100).

The introduction of the giant sword is little more successful. While this sword is presented to the eyes of Manfred and other wondering spectators and has the advantage, then, of an appearance not mediated by the descriptive abilities of servants, its impact as spectacle is negligible. In a paragraph full of pomp and medieval pageantry, among the many knights and their instruments and devices, we find the matter-of-fact inclusion of "An hundred gentlemen bearing an enormous sword, and seeming to faint under the weight of it" (62). Then the pageant continues. One line in the following

paragraph is reserved for Manfred's gaze at this newest marvel. The sword makes a stronger impression in the middle of the next paragraph as it "burst[s] from the supporters, and, falling to the ground opposite to the helmet, remain[s] immoveable" (63). The prince, "almost hardened to preternatural appearances," an attitude that the reader seems to be encouraged to share, leaves the scene. The size of the object is amazing; its presence implies a figure large enough to use it. The description is not focused, though, on the details of the sword's appearance and what its presence implies. The result of this indirection on Walpole's part, whatever his intention, is to defuse the anxiety that might be attached to this object whose shape, size and existence as a reminder of dismemberment are very threatening. Unlike the response to the helmet, there is only minimal reaction to its appearance.

These fragments--helmet, foot, sword and hand--lack physicalness. By physicalness is meant color, mass, dimension and texture, the kinds of details that give reality to described objects. They exist only as inanimate objects made of metal or covered by mail. They are larger than life and have only the power to astonish, not the power to move with the visceral fear that threatens to bodily unity, theorized by Freud as fear of castration, generally inspires. It must also be said, again referring to Freud, that the combination of the human-like and the mechanical has a particular ability to inspire the anxiety associated with the uncanny ("The

Uncanny," SE 17:233, 249). However, if one were to substitute a realistically-drawn, muscled and war-worn hand stained with blood gripping the bannister, the threat of dismemberment and physical danger would be enhanced, but the visceral jolt that would be gained was clearly secondary to Walpole's interest in amusing and instructing his audience and doing something new with the romance tools at his disposal. When the pieces unite in the image of Alfonso at the tale's end they are gathered into a final spectacle that has the power of destruction and of renewal within the plot, and yet less emotional resonance than multitudes of scenes in the novels of Walpole's followers in the gothic vein.

Walpole grabs his readers' attention immediately by placing a helmet from out of nowhere in a courtyard to get Chapter One underway. Similarly, the opening scene of Mary-Anne Radcliffe's Manfroné or the One-Handed Monk (originally published in 1809) finds Rosalina, the heroine, in her chamber where she is soon attacked by an intruder who, when he is injured and driven away by her father, is belatedly discovered to have left his hand. We further find, when a man arrives who can bear to examine the hand, that "it was large and muscular, but no rings being on the fingers, they were at a loss to conceive whom the owner could be" (10-11). Lupo, the castellan, notes that its former owner should be easy to recognize and then he flings the loathsome object from the window. In the novel's final volume we will learn that the persecution of Rosalina, which ranges from kidnapping, to

attempted rapes and a variety of other assaults including imprisonment, is an obsessive project of a rejected suitor, the Prince di Manfroné (alias Grimaldi), not a monk at all, who becomes even more intent on vengeance after the loss of his hand. The hand itself shows remarkable resilience, making a murderous reappearance, now shrunk to skeletal form, in the last volume (64). In the inevitable disclosure scene in which Rosalina finally realizes that Father Grimaldi is her torturer, not her savior, the hand is equally important in its absence, signaling the novel's dénouement (126). His plot is foiled at the last possible moment by Rosalina's beloved Montalto and the tale ends with their marriage.

Gothic authors choose a variety of ways of handling the physicalness that is almost always an important aspect of spectacle. Walpole did not direct his readers' attention to the component of physical suffering in his scenes of spectacle. He treats the subject by refusing to focus on it, as in the case of Conrad's death and Matilda's. The details of violent death exist somewhere offstage or just out of our range of vision and we are not encouraged to think about the implications or even given the opportunity to face them clearly. Ann Radcliffe challenges her readers to imagine what a veil conceals and then cuts to Emily's conventional response, a faint. At each instance where she approaches an opportunity to "show," she backs away. A corpse, her aunt's dead body, another moldering corpse, and a mysterious veil become a pile of clothes, an injured soldier, a wax figure and

a faint. These are all gestures of denial, a refusal to look or to show. In every gothic author examined in this study the need is present to "show" and to cause the reader to "look" but in every instance that "look" and the attempt to "show" are undercut by techniques that direct that look elsewhere or undercut the power and visceral impact of what is shown. It is this need to show and the continuing attempt to do so that drives the genre, but the genre is equally defined by its inability, its failure, to confront the reality of the body's suffering.

In her production of the scene involving the dismembered hand, Mary-Anne Radcliffe proves herself to be more willing than some of her predecessors to introduce gory details and to use as a plot device a gruesome emblem of the body's vulnerability. As we examine the construction of the passage in which the hand is introduced we see that Radcliffe's desire to use such details is subject to careful control.

After her father's wounds have been tended and the attacker has been sought without success, Rosalina and her servant Carletta are left alone again in the sleeping chamber. Rosalina sits worrying about her father as Carletta is putting the furniture to rights, when Carletta produces a "violent scream." Rushing to Carletta's side, Rosalina "beheld her attendant standing with her eyes fixed on some object on the floor, and her hands clasped together, while her trembling frame bespoke the agitation she endured" (9). The stylized pose speaks her fear as Emily's faint before the veil told its

own story. Carletta's fear is translated into a still-life of conventional meaning evoked by phrases from the gothic code-- "eyes fixed," "hands clasped," " trembling frame."<sup>14</sup> It is as if she is momentarily pinned to her place by the object of her fear. Rosalina's gaze follows that of Carletta and she views "with horror" "a human hand, blood-stained, and apparently but lately severed from its limb" (10). Her response is presented with some detail and is different from that of the servant who "fainted away, and lay inanimate on the floor, close to the cause of her alarms." Her mistress "sickened and turned pale at the sight, and, sinking into a chair, covered her eyes with her hands, lest she should again behold so unpleasant an object." If she cannot blot out her consciousness of the object, she can obstruct her gaze and her vulnerability to the threat presented by the object, until the scene can be sanitized or otherwise made safe for her gaze. Notable is the fact that as each woman's gaze hits the fearful object, she is emotionally and physically victimized and rendered incapable of action. While the eye is the site of the powerful mastering gaze it is also a vulnerable organ as it is subjected to and reacts to spectacular scenes.<sup>15</sup>

The reader's position in this scene is one of outside observer. The confusion of activity in the first few pages of the book does not encourage full identification with Rosalina who, though a heroine in the style of Udolpho's Emily, is not quite so introspective. We are not so consistently drawn into her consciousness as into that of a Radcliffe heroine;

therefore, in this scene in which the hand is found, Rosalina physically closes off her sight, but this does not impede the flow of information to the reader who next sees Carletta faint. We are told that she falls "close to the cause of her alarms" (10), a macabre detail but also a faintly unsettling signal of a switch in tone. It is the reader who takes in the entire horrifying scene of Carletta, Rosalina and the "unpleasant" object. For a single moment, the reader is left alone in the grip of the silent, horrifying scene.

At the paragraph break, a boundary is breached. Released from the passivity inspired by that still, silent scene by the intrusion of outsiders, the reader's attention moves from the women to the arrival of Lupo and his men. Lupo, the castellan, and a number of domestics enter the room and Rosalina points out the hand. Her horrified gaze is replaced at this juncture by that of Lupo. The scene now takes on a matter-of-fact tone as he, apparently unfazed by the sight of a bleeding dismembered hand, takes it up, examines it, notes the muscular quality and lack of identifying rings, and offers his logical analysis of the ease with which its owner should be found. He ends this brief speech with "As to his hand, lady...it shall no longer alarm you" and he opens a window, "thr[ows] out the hand of the mysterious intruder, and having fastened the panel, depart[s]" (11). The castellan's no-nonsense handling of the grisly object and his unceremonious disposal of it defuses the horror of the situation and makes of the hand a mundane piece of forensic evidence. This

examination distances the threat of physical violence presented by the hand; it domesticates the object by subjecting it to cataloging. When Rosalina's easily penetrated gaze is exchanged for a less vulnerable, even aggressive, look supplied by Lupo, the danger implicit in the spectacle of a bloody dismembered hand is defused. The disjunction between the two looks produces a gap in the reader's experience.

With these examples before us, if we were to pose the question, "In what does spectacle reside, the object or the subject confronting it?", we would see that the answer depends upon at which point in the scene we ask the question. And it would depend upon whether we are asking the question about the scene on the page, as a question about its internal construction, or as a question addressed to the reader about his or her experience of the spectacle presented by the text. If the latter, that too depends upon at what point in the reading process we ask the question. What these examples point to is that the shift in roles on the page, the exchange of roles that transforms the subject spectator into a passive and powerless object, also works a transformation on the role of the reader. The reader enters the scene of spectacle as an aggressor and is converted by the experience of spectacle into the object of the text.

Typical of the heightened, more effective use of spectacle by Walpole's followers is this scene from Chapter 2 of the first volume of The Monk. In a scene of highly-

emotional argument, the alternating dialogue of Ambrosio and Rosario/Matilda gradually gives way to the visual, and suddenly their relationship reaches a turning point. This scene is a good example of how spectacle can be both a part of the narrative flow and an obstacle to narrative. The visual impact portrayed here is the incentive for the change of mind that makes Ambrosio's fall inevitable. The scene is constructed with a strong emphasis on the position of the spectator and the movement of the spectator's eye. Ambrosio insists Matilda must leave the convent where she has gained entrance and been accepted by the order as a male novice. The monk's words, "You must from hence. I pity you, but can do no more" (86), threaten an end to a long argument and Matilda has a violent response. It is necessary to quote from this scene at length as a basis for further discussion, but I have broken the passage into three sections into which the action naturally falls.

He pronounced these words in a faint and trembling voice; then, rising from his seat, he would have hastened towards the monastery. Uttering a loud shriek, Matilda followed, and detained him.

"Stay yet one moment, Ambrosio! hear me yet speak one word!"

"I dare not listen. Release me: you know my resolution."

"But one word! but one last word, and I have done!"

"Leave me. Your entreaties are in vain: you must from hence to-morrow."

"Go then, barbarian! But this resource is still left me." (86)

In this first section, the narrative moves from a short paragraph of description to a series of brief argumentative exchanges, varying the rhythm of reading. The two descriptive

sentences that open this section provide the visual details that accompany the conversation. Each action that is described moves the encounter closer to a climax. The first paragraph contains contradictory, competing motions; Ambrosio tries to leave the grotto, Matilda stops him. The dialogue, charged with strong feeling, links this action to the next, more dramatic, move.

As she said this, she suddenly drew a poniard. She rent open her garment, and placed the weapon's point against her bosom.

"Father, I will never quit these walls alive."

"Hold! hold, Matilda! what would you do?" (86)

"You are determined, so am I: the moment that you leave me, I plunge this steel in my heart."

"Holy St. Francis! Matilda, have you your senses? Do you know the consequences of your action? that suicide is the greatest of crimes? that you destroy your soul? that you lose your claim to salvation? that you prepare for yourself everlasting torments?"

"I care not, I care not," she replied passionately: "either your hand guides me to paradise, or my own dooms me to perdition. Speak to me Ambrosio! Tell me that you will conceal my story; that I shall remain your friend and your companion, or this poniard drinks my blood." (86-7)

In the second paragraph of description Matilda opens her robe and puts the knife to her breast. The outward movement checked as Matilda restrains Ambrosio suddenly shifts. The position of the knifepoint draws the reader's attention away from Ambrosio at the bounds of the scene to Matilda at its heart. Matilda's act heightens the suspense and increases dramatic tension, both because of its violence and because of what the move discloses. Her forbidden nakedness is disclosed by her act but full description and, therefore, full disclosure to the reader, is held in abeyance.

More breathless exclamations follow and Matilda voices the suicidal threat implied by the knife's presence.

As she uttered these last words, she lifted her arm, and made a motion as if to stab herself. The friar's eyes followed with dread the course of the dagger. She had torn open her habit, and her bosom was half exposed. The weapon's point rested upon her left breast: and, oh! that was such a breast! The moon-beams darting full upon it enabled the monk to observe its dazzling whiteness: his eye dwelt with insatiable avidity upon the beauteous orb: a sensation till then unknown filled his heart with a mixture of anxiety and delight; a raging fire shot through every limb; the blood boiled in his veins, and a thousand wild wishes bewildered his imagination.

"Hold!" he cried, in an hurried, faltering voice; "I can resist no longer! Stay then, enchantress! stay for my destruction!"

He said; and, rushing from the place, hastened towards the monastery: he regained his cell, and threw himself upon his couch, distracted, irresolute and confused. (87)

The long paragraph of description that follows her declaration is set off from the rest of the scene in a number of ways. First, the variations in the rhythm of reading in the movement from description to brief dialogue are ended by this intrusion of longer, more detailed description. The climax and the (literal) point of all the dialogue and action is reached as Matilda has the knife at her breast and Ambrosio is forced to decide. The reader is confronted with a change from reported conversation in which the presence of the narrator is unobtrusive, to description rendered at a distance by an omniscient narrator. This constitutes a change of rhythm in reading and a change to more obvious third person narration. The reader is no longer virtually in the midst of a passionate argument but at the side of a narrator well outside the scene.

The sudden change in distance created by this switch, in addition to the change in rhythm from exclamatory speech to description, signals a liminal moment in the reading experience.

Once the boundary has been crossed, the reader enters a passage suffused with the visual. The silence of this scene is reinforced by Matilda's "last words" left behind in the last line of dialogue. The point of the dagger is at Matilda's breast, she raises her arm, and Ambrosio's eyes are described as moving down from the hand to the dagger, to the dagger's point against her breast, and then to the breast itself. In the shadowy grotto a moonbeam, familiar to the reader as a part of the gothic code established in Otranto, falls like a spotlight on the breast in a touch worthy of a Baroque artist. As Ambrosio's eyes move, so do those of the reader, with the gaze of the internal and external spectator meeting at that white, round, now fully-objectified, mass. The description held in suspension since the folds of the robe were "rent open" is introduced with a reference to the breast's "dazzling whiteness" and the narrator's exclamation, "Oh! that was such a breast!" That particular part of Matilda's anatomy now fills the frame. The restricted aperture that focuses on this anatomical fragment, which exists as if separate from its female possessor, makes of the breast a free-floating metaphor, a "beauteous orb." Within the same sentence, at the next instant, the focus is shifted from the breast as object; its effect redounds on him and

suddenly the reader is in Ambrosio's mind, intimately aware of his feelings. He is no longer the spectator who has "dwelt with insatiable avidity" on Matilda's bared breast, but an object of that "beauteous orb"'s effect. The object overpowers him and he and the reader are momentarily locked in place. The moment is filled with energy that is all internal to Ambrosio's emotional and physical experience of the scene; if there is any movement or sound it is the swelling of his heart, the pounding of his blood, and the swirling of his thoughts. The spell is broken as Ambrosio reaches the breaking point of the silence of this tableau; his desperate exclamation, "'I can resist no longer'" (87), and his rushing from the grotto break the silence and stillness of the scene, ending the spectacle.

The movement between subject and object in the text that we observe here is the same as the shift of focus observed in the other scenes analyzed. We also see another way in which a scene that attempts to show all can end up in concealment, but Lewis does this by overwhelming the eye rather than shifting our gaze from the spectacular object or normalizing it. The moment of slippage in the text, marked by the shift from viewing Matilda's body to experiencing the view's effect on the Monk's mind, enacts the metamorphosis of a part of the anatomy of a particular female with a physical nature into a fragment at first reassuring and, then, so menacing that it overpowers both Ambrosio and the reader. They are first transfixed, then driven from the scene by a fragment that has

assumed the position of power.

This passage features a double concealment. The poignard in Matilda's hand designates what is not shown in this passage filled with erotic tension: Ambrosio's penis. But more importantly, the movement of Ambrosio's gaze from the knife to the breast is not simply prurient but defensive. When the man wields the knife, as Walpole's Manfred did against his Matilda, it bespeaks an obvious threat. When the knife is in the hands of a woman, it is threat of a different kind. Matilda is no longer disguised as a man but she holds a very phallic threat, one that is bound to produce profound anxiety in Ambrosio. His eyes travel from the too threatening poignard to the breast, a more reassuring object, which now substitutes for it. Ambrosio's safety does not last, though, because the breast's phallic power, momentarily repressed, returns, overwhelming him and the reader who shares his consciousness at this crucial point. The scene conceals by a series of disguising moves but finally conceals most effectively with an overwhelming display. Both Ambrosio and the reader, who enter the scene as powerful aggressors, are turned in this moment into objects of the textual gaze. The thrust away from revelation is so strong that the concomitant power of that which is hidden is given greater, renewed allure.

While the idea of spectacle is closely linked to the objectification of women, it would be incorrect to assume that the male body is never rendered in this way. Women are more

likely to be featured in gothic spectacle, but sometimes these frozen moments in narrative present a male character in extreme psychological distress or display the male body in physical agony. It is worth pausing for a moment to consider the particular kind of viewing such scenes invite. Scenes of male torment in the gothic go a long way toward proving the point made by Suzanne Moore in "Here's Looking at You, Kid!" that "where the male spectacle takes over from narrative" the "threat" of homosexuality posed for male viewers/readers by the display of the male body as an object of the gaze and of the desire represented by that gaze is expunged by punishment of the body (52). Punishment or wounding of the body feminizes it and makes the display more palatable. We see this, for instance, in the feminization of the character of Shelley's hero Verezzi in Zastrozzi. By this feminization, the focus on his emotional and physical suffering is rendered less threatening than would be the suffering passivity of a more traditionally masculine character. Scenes such as the near-death by hemorrhage of Everhard Walberg in Maturin's interpolated "Tale of Guzman's Family" (322-3), a macabre scene depicted with words akin to an aesthetic caress, support the point as well. The same author's scene of the novice's torture in the interpolated "Tale of the Spaniard" is perhaps the perfect example of this particular kind of gothic spectacle. This passage conveys the dynamic of many spectacular gothic scenes: it is perhaps the most purely pictorial, objectified scene of torment in all of the gothic;

it pulses with action and movement, bursts with emotion, yet it is a frozen, static point, set apart by a pictorial frame supplied, perhaps consciously and in the spirit of critique, by Maturin; it is a scene which does not advance the narrative but, in fact, stops it while the reader is invited to linger over "a spectacle of horror and cruelty" featuring a youth's "perfect human form" posed in "an attitude of despair" (83). The passage illustrates every important aspect of spectacle in the gothic, with the addition of the unmistakable air of homoeroticism for which the gothic as a notably "decadent" genre is justly known.<sup>16</sup> Men and women, of whatever sexual orientation, undoubtedly read these and other scenes of spectacle in different, i.e., gendered, ways. I cannot attempt a definitive statement on the issue. My point in raising the issue of homoeroticism at this time is to acknowledge a feature clearly present in the images themselves; but only a study with a rather different focus than the present one could hope to sort out these varied readings.<sup>17</sup>

The description of the torture of the novice is one of many spectacular moments in the autobiographical tale told to John Melmoth by a Spaniard saved from a shipwreck near Melmoth's home in Ireland. "The Tale of the Spaniard" is a long inset tale within the principal narrative; it is presented as the edited version of an oral history told to John Melmoth whose story is given us by a third-person narrator. John Melmoth's return to his ancestral home is the

spur for the entire narrative though the focus is not, finally, on him but on his ancestor, the "Wanderer" of the title. The narrative weaves together multiple strands of stories from the present and the near and distant past, tracing the history of Melmoth the Wanderer. The scene of the novice's torment is one of these strands. It is told in the first person and, though it is part of a larger frame tale, the narration has immediacy and a personal tone established during the preceding twenty-seven pages of first-person narration.

Monçada, the Spaniard, tells the story of being placed in a monastery as a child due to the fact of his illegitimate birth. His family is rich and powerful but he is hidden away, though it is quickly established that he does not have the temperament necessary for a religious vocation. He witnesses many frightful and disgusting scenes in the monastery where there are many, like him, whose spirits rebel against the bounds of what is described here as a hypocritical and unnatural life. One scene in particular, the punishment of a young man for the sin of offering comfort to another youth who is doing exaggerated penance for a minor infraction, stands out. Though he has already done his penance and still bleeds from the scourge, the monks are determined to force from him additional information about his connection to the young man to whom he offered comfort, that is, "the secret of the interest he felt for Fra Paolo" (82). Not believing his explanation of his motivations, "humanity and compassion,"

they apply the scourge until "mad with shame, rage, and pain, he burst from them, and ran through the corridor calling for assistance or for mercy." The paragraph that follows in the text details what happens when this "naked human being, covered with blood, and uttering screams of rage and torture" (83) is cornered by his tormentors. Monçada offers his account of the scene:

I was still on my knees, and trembling from head to foot. The victim reached the door, found it shut, and rallied. I turned, and saw a groupe worthy of Murillo. A more perfect human form never existed than that of this unfortunate youth. He stood in an attitude of despair--he was streaming with blood. The monks, with their lights, their scourges, and their dark habits, seemed like a groupe of demons who had made prey of a wandering angel,--the groupe resembled the infernal furies pursuing a mad Orestes. And, indeed, no ancient sculptor ever designed a figure more exquisite and perfect than that they had so barbarously mangled. Debilitated as my mind was by the long slumber of all its powers, this spectacle of horror and cruelty woke them in a moment. I rushed forward in his defence. . . . I have no recollection of what followed. . . . (83)

As the passage begins, the reader's identification with the thoughtful and virtuous Monçada is complete, so closely have we followed his thoughts for many pages. He enters the corridor and the silence is interrupted by "frightful cries" and the sudden vision of the bleeding youth, causing Monçada to cry out. This part of the scene is filled with sound, sight and movement, the tormented screams of the youth, his race toward the closed door, chased by the monks, and the eerie lights of their torches. But as the youth turns to face the monks, at the word "rallied," the scene stands still; sound and motion cease.

To the point at which Monçada suddenly awakens and acts, the scene contains no active verbs, no actions are described. Instead, the reader, viewing the scene from below, the position of Monçada on his knees, sees a scene that is compared to the work of the painter Murillo, to a scene from Greek tragedy, and to a sculpture. The scene of hideous torture is immobilized and aestheticized and in that moment the reality of that suffering body becomes unreal. Strangely, though, while this aestheticization must strike the reader as a distancing effect that denies the suffering body, Monçada, as he tells it, is compelled to act. Identification of the reader with him breaks here and must be reestablished. His admission that he has "no recollection of what followed" is a version of the faints and swoons and falls into incommunicability often experienced by those confronted with the spectacle of suffering.

To say that an act is aestheticized is not to imply that it lacks terror, but to describe a disjunction between what is promised the reader (constantly trembling on the verge, always almost transgressing the boundary) and what is actually given. If our terror at an event is somehow limited or controlled through manipulation of focus, a domesticating shift in tone or aesthetic distancing, this does not mean the events do not terrify. The reader may find something quite horrible in the fact that Conrad's violent death is practically ignored in Otranto's opening spectacle or something macabre and unnerving in the castellan's handling of Manfroné's severed hand, or in

the collision of the vocabulary of the artist with the bloody violence wrought on Maturin's novice. The fact remains, though, that the representation of such experiences in the gothic is invariably marked with a slippage that takes many forms but, nevertheless, results in an incomplete representation of the experience of suffering.

More than any novelist discussed so far, Maturin appears to be consciously manipulating spectacle to reveal to the reader its, and their, own limitations. He articulates the complicity of spectator and spectacle and gives a visage and a voice to the process by which the spectator becomes a victim, but a victim with a bad conscience. The question of the spectator/victim's bad conscience is dealt with in another story told by Monçada. The guilty conscience is implied in the defensive tone with which the Spaniard begins to recount his feelings as he watched a frenzied mob in Madrid attack, dismember and trample a parricide, a criminal whom he had known intimately. After describing every bloody detail of the scene, he goes into more detail about his own feelings in witnessing the event from a window. To his listener he explains:

It is a fact, Sir, that while witnessing this horrible execution, I felt all the effects vulgarly ascribed to fascination. I shuddered at the first movement--the dull and deep whisper among the crowd. I shrieked involuntarily when the first decisive movements began among them; but when at last the human shapeless carrion was dashed against the door, I echoed the wild shouts of the multitude with a kind of savage instinct. I bounded--I clasped my hands for a moment--then I echoed the screams of the thing that seemed no longer to live, but still could scream: and I screamed aloud and

wildly for life--life--and mercy! . . . I remained uttering shout for shout, and scream for scream . . . till sense, and sight, and soul, failed me, and I fell grasping by the bars of the window, and mimicking, in my horrid trance, the shouts of the multitude, and the yell of the devoted. I actually for a moment believed myself the object of their cruelty. The drama of terror has the irresistible power of converting its audience into its victims. (196-7)

His screams that "echo[] the wild shouts of the multitude" evince his identification with the primitive frenzy of the crowd, but his shouts for mercy and his remark that he "for a moment believed myself the object of their cruelty" is less a particular identification with the parricide victim than an articulation of the visceral impact of a spectacle of horror on the spectator. He becomes a victim in the sense that his hungry gaze is turned back from the object on which it feasts and he feels the full impact of another gaze of which he is the object, the spectacular gaze; the drama he witnesses makes of his guilty activity a drama that becomes a spectacle for the multitude. The window which seems to provide a frame for the distant activity and a protection from the violence becomes a frame for his transformation from spectator into spectacle. It is no accident that the sense of sight is emphasized in the scene and that it is through the sense of sight that he becomes a victim: "dropping my eyelids, and feeling as if a hand held them open, or cut them away--forcing me to gaze on all that passed below, like Regulus, with his lids cut off, compelled to gaze on the sun that withered up his eye-balls" (197).<sup>18</sup> The words emphasize the victim's powerlessness under the influence of a mysterious external

agency--the gaze of the spectacle. The gaze turned back on him from the spectacle is far stronger than that of the "well-known eyes" (197) of the Wanderer whose passing glance he feels during the fray. The gaze of the multitude turns on him and on his eager companion, the reader, now a victim of the gaze of the text. The guilt that speaks in this reversal is not that of a survivor but of an accomplice.

Maturin frames such events as portraits or dramas, showing himself to be very aware of the power of the discrete spectacular incident, with its appeal to the senses and emotions, to bind the reader to the story. In the scene just cited, the Spaniard's moment by moment accounting of his emotional reactions draws the reader close to his experience and point of view and, with the addition of the gruesome details of the scene of torture, gives the events a you-are-there quality.

Before Maturin, Percy Shelley's Zastrozzi (1810) offered another kind of commentary on the uses of spectacle and the dynamics of spectator and spectacle. In the novel a dramatic event is purposely staged toward evil ends by Zastrozzi and the villainous Matilda. The young hero, Verezzi, and his beloved Julia are plotted against by Zastrozzi and Matilda; Zastrozzi is motivated by revenge and Matilda by obsessive lust. They contrive to part the lovers and tell Verezzi that Julia is dead. The grieving Verezzi resists Matilda's advances but she pretends a tenderness and sensibility that weakens his resistance as she nurses him back to health after

his collapse upon Julia's reported death. His resolution is eventually overcome during his unwitting participation in a scene planned by Zastrozzi and Matilda to demonstrate to him in spectacular fashion the extent of Matilda's love for him. The naive and impressionable Verezzi, a gentleman with a weak constitution and a tendency to faint in response to Matilda's aggression, succumbs to Matilda's desires. He soon discovers by accident that Julia is still alive; he then kills himself in despair and Matilda takes his knife and kills Julia. Taken by the Inquisition, Matilda repents and is spared, while Zastrozzi remains unrepentant even on the rack. His wild, defiant laughter ends the novel simultaneously with his death.

The scene of Verezzi's conversion into a believer in Matilda's selfless love for him is an elaborate dramatic hoax in which the reader is a guilty participant. Chapter 12 begins with the meeting of Zastrozzi and Matilda during the tumult of an approaching thunderstorm. The thunder, lightning and electrical tension in the air mirror the frustrated fury and agitation that cause Matilda to seek a meeting with her "coadjutor in wickedness" (77) whose advice she trusts. For many pages, the reader has been an intimate of Matilda's "paroxysm of passion" (65) as she tries the virtue of the bland and naive Verezzi. As Zastrozzi and Matilda meet in the opening of the chapter, her emotions, and later even her dreams that follow the meeting, are depicted for the reader. Zastrozzi suggests a plan of which the details are merely hinted: if Matilda appears to risk her life for Verezzi, he

cannot continue to reject her (67). The reader is tied to this conspiracy but is ignorant of the details and, filled with curiosity, plays the role of accomplice. As Matilda awakes the next day the reader "gaze[s]" with her "upon her victim" (68) and is uncomfortably aware of her "ferocious pleasure" and her "well-feigned sensibility," a role she carefully acts for Verezzi's consumption. Matilda brings Verezzi to the same secluded spot where she and Zastrozzi conferred and, as Matilda's and the reader's nervous expectations mount, the stage is set. On the right is the dark and dangerous forest and on the left a "frightful precipice" and a "deafening cataract" (69), a perfect natural theatre for the violent drama about to be acted. Matilda's excitement is such that, for a moment, "her senses almost failed her" and then the overpowering natural display strikes both of them silent. Into this silent moment rushes an armed man who attempts to stab Verezzi but is prevented by Matilda's defense of him. The dagger pierces her arm; Verezzi falls to the ground and the assailant, who the reader and Matilda know to be Zastrozzi, escapes.

At the moment that the dagger wounds Matilda, the reader's intimacy with her is shattered and a complex rearrangement of roles takes place. Verezzi has been doubly targeted as an object, first by the gaze of Matilda and the reader who eagerly await his response to the drama enacted for him and secondly by the drama itself which turns his gaze back on him and transforms him. He is a spectator who is expected

to be transformed by the drama he witnesses; he in turn is an object of the gaze, a closely watched spectacle, for those who would judge his response. But his transformation is not the immediate centerpiece of the scene. The paragraph that follows her injury shows Matilda from the outside, in effect making her the spectacle and removing attention from Verezzi who has been both the focus of the pre-arranged act and the audience for the drama. Verezzi's programmed response is assured in the instant in which Matilda's body is transformed into pure spectacle:

Matilda's snowy arm was tinged with purple gore: the wound was painful, but an expression of triumph flashed from her eyes, and excessive pleasure dilated her bosom: the blood streamed fast from her arm, and tinged the rock whereon they stood with a purple stain. (69)

The reader is suddenly outside Matilda's consciousness in this passage full of appeals to the visual. Even Matilda's "triumph" is read from her flashing eyes and heaving bosom. Her "snowy arm" is contrasted with the stain of "purple gore" and her blood forms a "purple stain" on the rock, the stage for her performance. But, as if the danger of knowing too much is outweighed by the danger of showing too much, the narrative just as suddenly shifts Matilda out of visual mode and back into her role as observer in an experiment with Verezzi as its focal object. It is the sight of her blood that brings Verezzi to life and inspires his concern, but when he asks if she is wounded, Matilda turns the question back on him and continues to chatter solicitously of his well-being and her horror at the attempt on her beloved's life. In the

exchange that follows, the reader is privy to Verezzi's reactions to her act and her words, signaling his coming change of heart:

His heart, his feelings, were irresistibly touched by Matilda's behaviour. Such noble contempt of danger, so ardent a passion, as to risk her life to preserve his, filled his breast with a tenderness towards her; and he felt that he could now deny her nothing, not even the sacrifice of the poor remains of his happiness, should she demand it. (70)

The spectacle of Matilda's suffering has had the desired effect on Verezzi and the next chapter finds him declaring his undying love for her, marrying her and joining her in "licensed voluptuousness" (76).

Verezzi is almost literally offstage during this display of the power of obsessive passion. As the intruder stabs Matilda, "starting forward [Verezzi] fell to the earth" (69) and he rises only when the deed is done. Witnessing this event causes the transformation in his mind and heart for which Matilda has hoped, but the full transformation for the reader is only effected in the next moment as Matilda shifts from the role of static spectacle back into the role of eager, devouring spectator. "'Tell me--ah! tell me,'" she says, in terms of "well-feigned alarm," "'are you wounded mortally? Oh! what sensations of terror shook me, when I thought that the dagger's point . . . had drunk your life-blood'" (70). The gaze leveled at her as spectacle has now been turned again on her viewer, Verezzi. Belatedly, the reader is brought into contact with the feelings and motivations of Verezzi who is, after all, the hero, though Matilda provides the disquieting

center of this book-length emotional storm. But it is the reader as much as Verezzi who feels the impact of the shift in Matilda's role.

What of the effect of this double shift on the reader? At the scene's climax, where the reader's intimacy with Matilda would require that he or she somehow participate in Matilda's horrifying self-mutilation, the reader is thrust into a spectator's role, though it is of a different order than the spectatorship of naive Verezzi, as Matilda abruptly shifts into the position of spectacle. By this distancing move, an intimate confrontation with physical pain and suffering is avoided in favor of a confrontation with a stylized visual display of a body in pain. The calculated staging of the scene as well as the narrative shift marking a break between pain that could be too close and the stylized depiction of the body in pain acknowledge the power of visible suffering. It is also possible, however, that the very visibility of the suffering, the obvious shift into visible-ness, masks more than it shows. It is this possibility that tantalizes a reader already thrown off-balance by one shift and then boldly manipulated again before stabilizing in the role of spectator.

The reader enters the scene allied with Matilda's consciousness and experiences a sharp fracture when cut off from her thoughts and forced to view her triumphant wounded body. This separation forces on the reader an unavoidable awareness of the instability of his or her own role. The next

shift back into intimacy with Matilda and the return to her focus on Verezzi is a subtle reclamation of the reader after Matilda's demonstration of the power of spectacle. She "takes in" Verezzi in the sense of successfully perpetrating a hoax and she "takes in" the reader, gathering her accomplice back to her side. The reader's momentary awareness of physical and moral distance is elided in an instant, leaving disgust and a feeling of powerlessness that parallels Verezzi's passivity, though not his willful ignorance. The double shift of roles in the scene reveals for a dizzying instant the power of visible suffering framed on either side by an abyss. Each reader's fear and dark knowledge will give that abyss a name. The bearer of this power of the spectacle claims her victims, Verezzi and reader alike, though Verezzi rests in tragic ignorance and the reader in guilty knowledge of shifting complicity. While Verezzi is the quarry within the text, the reader is the object outside the text, and becomes self-consciously aware of having been manipulated into this position. We see again in this example the paradoxical power of spectacle to hold the reader at a distance and to bind the reader more closely. The act of extreme visibility is also a turning away from revelation and the act of showing too much is ultimately an act of concealment. The text turns away from revelation, having raised the reader's expectation then offered a fleeting, incomplete and disturbing fulfillment that serves to enhance desire rather than to satisfy it. Each such incident confirms the existence of something that is concealed

and builds the expectation that it can be revealed and it will be revealed in the next spectacular moment. Toward the satisfaction of this desire the reader continues to read.

The window as framing device is most often linked to revelation but if, as we have seen, a veil can reveal while concealing, a window may conceal while revealing. A window provides a perfect frame for spectacle because it offers a literal frame for a scene, has clear boundaries to mark the inside and outside and to signal the reader of the commencement and passing of the spectacular moment, and as figure it carries in balance characteristics of revelation and separation. Windows play an especially noticeable role in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (originally published in 1817), a novel in which notions of inside (domesticity and companionship) and outside (alienation) are fundamentally important. One thinks of the creature observing life in the DeLacey cottage through a chink in a boarded-up window (108), his appearance at Frankenstein's window in the Orkneys (166), his gloating presence at the window of the bridal bedroom where Frankenstein discovers Elizabeth's body (196), and the ship's cabin-window through which the creature jumps in the novel's final paragraph (223). It is the second of these instances that offers a particularly rich opportunity to discuss spectacle in terms not yet broached, the direct eye-to-eye confrontation of spectator and spectacle.

In The Coherence of Gothic Conventions Sedgwick speaks of "ocular juxtapositions" (160) in the gothic as inviting the

kind of "line-for-line" comparisons that determine identity in the gothic, a genre in which identity is so often surrounded by mystery. While the scene now under discussion offers an opportunity to consider identity, it shows us not a static line-by-line comparison but a point in which identity moves with fluidity from face to face.

To propitiate his monstrous creation who, upon Frankenstein's rejection of him, has vowed to destroy him, Frankenstein agrees to make the creature a mate. For this depressing and guilty work he withdraws to the Orkneys to a cottage where he is relieved to reside "ungazed at" (163) and yet is equally afraid to be out of the sight of fellow humans who might defend him from the monster who may arrive unexpectedly "to claim his companion" (164). He wishes to conceal from the eyes of the inhabitants his guilty task though he desires the protection such watchfulness can give. The situation encapsulates the paradox that is Frankenstein's downfall. The apocalypse of human values and lives that he envisions as he constructs the creature at the outset of his story (54) cannot be achieved in secrecy and solitude, away from human connections and separated from the responsibility that those connections bring. By the time Frankenstein retreats to the remote Orkneys any positive potential his discovery might have held has been destroyed. The construction of another monster is a desperate act of self-protection toward the creature who has sworn to "work at [his] destruction" (145).

One night as Frankenstein sits in his cabin thinking with horrible clarity about the possible effects of unleashing not one but two monsters on the world, he looks up to see the creature at his window. Their encounter is purely non-verbal until the monster's wail breaks the silence:

I trembled, and my heart failed within me; when, on looking up, I saw, by the light of the moon, the dæmon at the casement. A ghastly grin wrinkled his lips as he gazed on me, where I sat fulfilling the task which he had allotted to me . . . .

As I looked on him, his countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery. I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness, and, with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew. (166)

The reader views the scene at the window through Frankenstein's eyes since the inset tale that makes up most of the novel is Frankenstein's first person experience as told to Walton, whose letters to his sister provide the novel's frame. As Frankenstein sits thinking of the error he made in promising the monster a mate, he thinks of his own "remorse" (165), his "wickedness" and "selfishness" (166), and he looks up and sees the creature. If Frankenstein is indeed a "pest" (166) to future generations he is a monster because he has fathered a monster. He is, as he looks up at the "dæmon," engaged in that "dæmon"'s work. With Frankenstein, the reader looks up at a "ghastly" face that is a warped reflection of its maker. The reader, as if looking over the scientist's shoulder, sees the monster without seeing his maker. The effect of the scene is not one of looking through a window but

of looking into a mirror, inadvertently reconfirming the ancient relationship of spectacle to speculum. And without the intervening physical body of Frankenstein, the reader moves in a moment from looking at the creature to feeling himself or herself the object of his malevolent gaze. Frankenstein lacks physical presence in this scene, staging, one might say, a disappearing act as the monster appears, exposing the reader to the brunt of the monster's unmediated stare.

We have discussed passages in which the internal spectator in the scene faints, is speechless, is paralyzed or in some other way is unavailable to continue the spectator's role. The role of spectacle slips from the original object in the scene to the suffering body of the original spectator and from there to the reader, now held by the gaze of the text. The sleight of hand performed in this narrative enables the original spectator to disappear at the moment when his intercession might be expected. Thinking back to the example of Monçada viewing the enraged crowd and the details he provides of his own physical reactions--"dropping my eyelids, and feeling as if a hand held them open, or cut them away" (197)--we find in that example at least a sense of a palpable physicalness presented to the reader to enhance the scene of spectacle. The window scene in Frankenstein is soundless, non-verbal and dependent for its effect on purely visual details. It is very physical, in the sense that it depicts a close, almost nose-to-nose, physical confrontation of the

principals; but Frankenstein himself is present only as a series of thoughts that hardly seem likely or even relevant under the fright-filled circumstances. "Yes," Frankenstein thinks, "he had followed me in my travels; he had loitered in forests, hid himself in caves . . . and he now came to mark my progress, and claim the fulfilment of my promise" (166). At that moment, he is all unsubstantial thought, and the "malice and treachery" of the monster's gaze is leveled at the reader. Then, Frankenstein seems to wake from a dream and "trembling with passion" he destroys the creation on which he was working. The monster's response is the only sound in the passage. With a "howl of devilish despair and revenge" he departs.

The verbal component of this encounter is displaced into a scene that follows. After his violent response to the monster's visit Frankenstein sits in his cottage, "overcome by the sensation of helplessness, so often felt in frightful dreams, when you in vain endeavour to fly from an impending danger, and [are] rooted to the spot" (167). The creature enters and rails at him, taunting him with the power that he will not hesitate to use by saying, "'You are my creator, but I am your master;--obey!'" The role reversal to which the monster gives voice is one of the many shifting dichotomies one can point to in the novel. God and his progeny, father and son, artist and creation, hunter and hunted, haunter and haunted, victimizer and victim, these are all shifting identities in the novel. In the scene at the window, though,

it becomes clear that the question of identity must also be asked of the reader, who is drawn into an intimate confrontation from which there is no easy escape. The complication comes from the concealed role of Frankenstein in the scene. He draws away from the confrontation and the reader is left with a choice--window or mirror? Is this the visage of a monstrous creation, always to be singular, set adrift in the world by his maker or is this the reflection of the man before the monster? Is this the point at which Frankenstein changes roles with his creation, acknowledging his own "wickedness" (166), his monstrousness, in fact? Or, more unnerving still, is this the face of the reader, absent the mediating physical presence of Frankenstein, held by the powerful gaze of his or her own reflection? The reader feels the monster's gaze but is not pointed to any specific answer to the question of identity. The basis for comparison is incomplete. As Sedgwick notes of such comparisons, "there is such a thing as a decided 'Yes! They are exactly the same' but no possible criterion for a decided 'No'" (160). Frankenstein rouses himself to an act of repudiation of the monster and the reader is again drawn to his point of view, but is left with the uneasy impression of having glimpsed something too fleeting or too powerful to grasp and too important to ignore or to forget.

My detailed analysis of these scenes of spectacular suffering suggests that there is another narrative at work in these novels beyond the literal storyline. In the averted

gaze, the shift of focus, the speechlessness and the faint, the uncharted space between a figure and its image in the mirror, a story is being spoken by silence. The textual gaps, the cuts, documented in the many scenes discussed here, and the reader's attempt to fill those gaps by discovering what lurks just out of sight, is the story of the gothic reader's reading. It is my contention that the reader's experience of the spectacle of suffering, and specifically the reader's struggle with the blank spots or gaps that the scenes inevitably enact, is the most important part of the reading experience. The reader's desire to see, to give a name and a face to that "something," is stimulated by each encounter with spectacle. The reader keeps reading, avidly devouring the text, and constantly reenacting the movement from devourer to victim and back again. The spectacle of suffering, its force enhanced by repetition, is what keeps the reader from exercising the most important power this particular spectator has, the power to close the book.

## NOTES

1. Napier, noting that contemporary critics of the picturesque identified in it the tendency of the "amoral and immoral" to exercise its own fascination, writes that "the most dramatic and striking scenes of Gothic death are fixed like pictures . . . ; they freeze the soul and defy a constructive response" 147-8. While my own approach sees a similar objectification in such scenes, it should be apparent that I feel the reader's response lies elsewhere, i.e., in the interactive gaze that moves back and forth between subject and object and in the uneasy but pleasurable sense that the text is proffering more than meets the eye.
2. The topic is developed in some detail by Brooks, Booth, Gledhill and Rahill, all of whom approach it from the perspective of theatre or film. While the developmental relationship of these modes of expression is worth exploring, it is not directly relevant to the topic at hand.
3. Eve Sedgwick has written a very personal and provocative meditation on the beating fantasy, theatricalization and (homo)sexuality in "A Poem Is Being Written," Representations 17 (1987): 110-43.
4. The two most interesting are feminist commentaries written to very different purposes: Michelle Massé's In the Name of Love, 60-72, and Carol Clover's Men, Women, and Chain Saws, 214-24. Freud's essay is the topic of the sections noted but, throughout, both books provide a critique of issues of gender and masochism.
5. It is not that Freud discounts desire; in fact, Lacan's position is often described as a "return to Freud" because Lacan brings to the forefront a concept that Freud articulated but placed within a spectrum of ideas. Lacan gives desire the leading role in the object substitutions and shifts that are the individual's way of relating to the world. This "Desire" is not a simple match with any concept articulated by Freud. Lacan's use of the term evolves to incorporate a number of ideas that were expressed by Freud with a variety of terms, principally, Wunsch, Begierde and Lust. The difficulties of retaining Freud's distinct meanings in translating these words into French and English, and the implications of Lacan's choice of the French désir, are analyzed by Lacan's translators and his critics. For the first, see Alan Sheridan's "Translator's Note" for Lacan's The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1981) 278-9; for the second, see David Macey's skeptical and tendentious Lacan in Contexts (London: Verso, 1988) 114-19. I am most indebted to Macey's wide-ranging, challenging account for insights into this

complicated question.

6. The related concepts of "the Other" and "lack" in Lacanian theory are rendered problematic or unacceptable to many by the connection of these ideas to castration. Lacanian theory holds that desire originates in the child's discovery that its mother has no penis. For the boy, the result is anxiety; to lessen this anxiety, any sense of lack that he feels--and Lacan asserts that wholeness is impossible for both men and women ("The Signification of the Phallus" 287)--will be projected onto women, allowing him to remain secure in his feeling that he is not castrated. For the girl, the sense of lack is immediate and manifests itself in hostility toward her mother for her perceived connection to this lack. The perception of castration enables the boy to separate from his mother, while the situation of the girl is less straightforward. The girl's identification with her mother is expected to continue, but it is also necessary that she separate, though without the aid of anatomical difference.

The trajectory castration→lack→substitution→desire sketches the relationship of castration to desire. Desire begins in lack; desire is the drive that seeks to restore a lost (imaginary, impossible) wholeness. Satisfaction is always deferred but may be temporarily, incompletely achieved by the provision of substitutes. The substitute is taken to be a sign of lack, veiling an absence and showing it forth at the same time. Lacan identifies the sought-after object that would restore wholeness as "the Phallus" and therein lies another difficulty.

Much of the criticism of Lacan's work by feminists and others has its basis in this insistence on the importance of the penis and the Phallus. Though Lacanians insist that a penis is not the Phallus, any theory based in the seeing/not seeing of the penis is inevitably bound to cultural reality. The result of theorizing this anatomical presence or absence as the initiating experience of psychic development is to set up a system in which women can only be judged as lacking, always "less than." Woman is defined only by an absence. In Lacanian theory, all are castrated and all are afflicted by lack, but women will always be more castrated. To paraphrase Jane Gallop in The Daughter's Seduction, man is castrated by not being whole; woman is castrated by not being a man (22).

In "Difference," Stephen Heath notes that any attempt to universalize from either the Oedipus complex or castration should demonstrate awareness that the individual subject is a production (defined by Heath in "On Suture" as "a construction and a process, a heterogeneity, an intersection," 106). Heath summarizes the concerns about castration as follows:

The function of castration may stand as the term of that production, the articulation . . . of symbolic and sexual division but at every stage of the appeal to that term its specific representation-representing of that articulation

must be grasped and its own position within the existing order of representation understood accordingly. ("Difference" 110)

Heath and Gallop (in Reading Lacan as well as The Daughter's Seduction) have presented particularly useful analyses of these issues. The terms are used here with these reservations.

7. This work is not paginated. It is divided into numbered sections each encompassing one paragraph. I have designated this and all subsequent references by the number of the section in which they appear.

8. Looking back on his work of 1967, in Comments on the Society of the Spectacle (1988) he bitterly deplores the unanticipated "rapid extension" of spectacular power (4). He feels no need to modify his earlier pronouncements except to document the accumulation of spectacular power in so concentrated a form that it has now become "integrated spectacle" (8), so widespread that even societies lacking "modern conditions of production" are under its sway.

9. Jonathan Crary in "Spectacle, Attention, Counter-Memory" comments provocatively that by 1989 spectacle and surveillance are "not opposed terms, as [Foucault] insists, but collapsed onto one another in a more effective disciplinary apparatus." He takes as his evidence the planned development of televisions that "look back" at the viewer as reported by Bill Carter in "TV Viewers, Beware: Nielsen May Be Looking," New York Times, 1 June 1989, late ed., A1+. In "Eclipse of the Spectacle" he speaks of the current era as an age in which the image may be effaced in preference to the instantaneous display of limitless information on the VDT screen. Crary may be right on both points. It may even now be technologically possible for televisions to "watch" us in our living rooms, and the existence of interactive or "talkback" television will soon be a reality (Robert E. Calem, "Coming This Year: Talkback TV," New York Times 17 January 1993, late ed., section 3: 8). Both ideas have an interesting relationship to the notion of a text that "gazes back." On the "eclipse of spectacle" of which Crary writes, it is hard to imagine a connection to gothic beyond the mesmerizing quality of continuously displayed, undifferentiated, unending information. That text, however, would be seamless, gapless and the purveyor of a different kind of pleasure than that provided by the gothic.

10. I will say, however, that Laura Mulvey's re-thinking in "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'" inspired by King Vidor's Duel in the Sun of her earlier, influential article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," is a positive step toward a more intricate and less dogmatic rendering of the relationship between female viewers and

spectacle.

In addition, John Ellis in Visible Fictions (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), especially pp. 42-5, and Steve Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle," Screen 24.6 (1983): 2-16, offer flexible alternative theories of the construction of a spectator whose "Identification," to quote Ellis, "is . . . multiple and fractured, a sense of seeing the constituent parts of the spectator's own psyche paraded before her or him . . ." (43). These theories come close to representing the endlessly variable intricacies of human experience.

A very recent article by Bette London, "Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, and the Spectacle of Masculinity," PMLA 108 (1993): 253-67, suggests that critical attention linking issues of the body primarily with the portrayal of women has rendered invisible or marginal the connection of specularity with men's bodies; "positions of specularity," she writes, "are not gender-specific" (259).

11. Stephen Heath in "On Suture" (76) locates the origin of the psychoanalytic use of this term in a 1966 paper by Jacques-Alain Miller who is later closely associated with Lacan. Heath provides a lucid tracing of the evolution of the concept in Lacanian theory as a background to his discussion of suture in film.

12. These two statements are true for the purposes of this study, but it is not my intention to dismiss the question of sexual difference as unpersuasive or invalid. The point may be pursued in the works by Silverman, Doane, Kaplan, Gamman, Lewallen, Stacey, Moore, Mulvey and Mayne that have already been mentioned in regard to film studies. In addition, Stephen Heath's "Difference," Screen 19.3 (1978): 51-112, is a ground-breaking work. More specifically on women readers and the representation of women in literature, Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocínio P. Schweickart, eds., Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986) offers a broad range of approaches. Works previously mentioned by Radway and Modleski furnish detailed analyses of women as readers of modern romance; as an example of the reader-response approach to traditional gothic novels, Norman Holland and Leona Sherman in "Gothic Possibilities," New Literary History 8 (1977): 279-94 give a highly personal account of a male and female reading. Dealing more broadly with gender and representation are Jacqueline Rose, Sexuality in the Field of Vision (London: Verso, 1986) and Teresa de Lauretis, Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987).

13. Richard Boothby's Death and Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud (New York: Routledge, 1991): 145-51 offers a particularly clear guide to the interlacing of Freudian and Lacanian theory on this aspect of the Oedipus conflict.

14. Though she does not analyze this particular passage, Coral Ann Howells has pointed out that, in a genre noted for theatricality, this novel is particularly theatrical. Manfroné is "an almost perfect example of the contemporary stage melodrama in prose fictional form; not that the novel has a tight dramatic structure, but that it is built out of a series of crisis scenes, each one presented with great visual skill and appealing directly to the reader for an immediate emotional response," she writes (105).

15. This is the vulnerable eye of Freud's "The Uncanny." It is the eye through which the uncanny experience, that which "ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light," gains its entry (225). See also the entire discussion of "The Sandman" in Freud's essay.

16. Chapters 5 and 6 of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire cover most convincingly the connection between this vague "decadence" and the gothic trope of "unspeakability" that, Sedgwick explains, in "its very namelessness, its secrecy, was a form of social control" (94).

17. George E. Haggerty's article "Literature and Homosexuality in the Late Eighteenth Century: Walpole, Beckford, and Lewis" explores the relationship between these authors' proven or presumed homosexual orientation and their attempt to resolve socially unacceptable emotional feelings by depicting behavior that was unconventional by social standards and the standards of the novel.

See Neale 11-16 for a discussion of the refusal of the erotic that marks the relationship between the gaze of the male spectator and the display of the male body in conventional filmmaking.

18. In "The Uncanny" Freud emphasizes that the fear of injury to the eyes is "a substitute for the dread of being castrated" (SE 17: 231). The eyes, then, substitute for the member whose lack is feared.

## CHAPTER 3

## Repetition: The Structure of Desire

Perhaps every writer who has commented on the gothic has discussed the presence of repetition. Usually this has taken the form of discussion of the stereotyped characters and situations found in the novels, the stock attributes of physiognomy and expression, the repetition of family structures that double back and repeat themselves from generation to generation, or the doubling of family relationships and roles that is enacted in the representative criminal act of the gothic, incest. The sins of the parents are visited upon their offspring, as they are in the line of fault that travels from Ricardo, his grandfather, to Manfred and results in the deaths of Conrad and Matilda in Otranto, and again in Zofloya, the moral depravity of the older generation repeats itself in the vices of the demonic Victoria and her brother Leonardo. Dream and prophecy pre-date the events that repeat and prove their truth. Repetition in the gothic presents itself as a formal structuring device and as a thematic effect. The serpentine and coincidental nature internal to every gothic text produces a genre that is, as Michelle Massé has noted, "a serial writ large" (20). Cross-genre repetition provides continuity and ease of transition from novel to novel, facilitating the move past the ending of a particular novel and into the next. The serial, with its succession of similar parts extended indefinitely toward an

uncertain end, is an excellent analogy for the gothic genre.

The connection between the genre's "systematic repetition" in Barbara Herrnstein Smith's terms (48) and the struggle for closure in the gothic has been generally unremarked by critics, with two exceptions. David B. Morris glances at the effect on closure of the gothic's straining toward a language to represent the sublime, a process that inevitably involves "repetitions and exaggerations," in a word, the uncanny (311). He firmly links repetition and inadequate or impossible closure in the gothic with the remark that "Its conclusions always dissatisfy, since they can never be more than substitutes for other, unallowable, perhaps unthinkable endings" (313; emphasis added). In her study of female masochism and the gothic, In the Name of Love (1992), Michelle Massé emphasizes the repeated portrayal of female suffering as instrumental in the gothic's closural problems. She points out, "The momentum created by the repetition of ordeals within individual works overcomes the ending. . . . The ending's reassurances have specious weight when balanced against the body's mass of suffering: there is a surplus of anxiety still unaccounted for by 'reality'" (19). What interests me in Massé's remarks is the working of desire that is implied in the anxiety-producing dissonance between reality and the text. The ending does not fulfill the reader's desire for the unavailable and unattainable "something;" it offers a substitute that covers/advertises an absence. The desire directed toward this substitute, desire whetted and thwarted

continuously, produces the momentum that sends the reader into the next text. Massé's explanation is particularly interesting because it incorporates the thematic irresolution that others have analyzed (Napier and Howells, for instance) but links the thematic difficulties to the repeated portrayal of suffering that I, in this study, have labeled spectacle.

Morris speaks of a repetition that seeks to name the unnameable, to represent in language a world that cannot be represented, is finally not "knowable" (313). That attempt at representation ends in a scream or its twin, silence. As we examine the attempts by gothic authors to paint suffering and we see that repeatedly scenes revolve around a gap that draws the reader on and on, we may see that the gap is the point at which the text acknowledges its own inability to fully depict what the reader wants to, needs to, desires to see. This is a point where language fails, in Morris's terms, but a point where the gothic succeeds, in its own terms and the terms of the readers who continue to pursue the gap. Language fails, but a message comes through. Chapters Three and Four will suggest that the function of repetition in the novels is behind this perceived "failure" in the genre.

I have chosen for discussion in this chapter and the next several novels that represent a variety of ways to deal with the need to bring a narrative to conclusion. While on the surface there are obvious differences among the endings of novels this study has dealt with, they are significantly the same. Happy marriage (The Romance of the Forest, Udolpho, The

Italian, Manfroné) or melancholy marriage (Otranto), a villain dies chastened (The Monk, Zofloya, The Libertine) or unrepentant (Zastrozzi), the author or the author's persona appears for a final moral statement (Zofloya, Manfroné, The Monk of Udolpho, The Nun of St. Omer) or the action simply concludes (The Monk, Zastrozzi, The Abbot of Montserrat, Melmoth), all employ traditional devices, such as reconciliations, marriage, or death, to bring to a satisfactory conclusion their plots and themes. That these conclusions can be accounted for under a brief list of variations is an indication that the endings are overdetermined, predictable in the extreme. I would reiterate that this cross-genre repetition is a significant factor in the reader's ease of movement from one text to the next. My thesis here as throughout this study is that the content of the endings of these novels is not important in the relationship of reader to text, that we must look to the middles of the novels for the force that drives the reading.<sup>1</sup>

I would like to begin the discussion of the relationship of repetition and closure in the gothic with a detailed analysis of the sequence of events leading up to one of the endings frequently cited as bland and unsatisfying, that of Ann Radcliffe's The Italian. Typical of critical references to this ending is William Patrick Day's remark that it is a "forced happy ending[] that contradict[s]" the novel's "essential mood of gloom and horror" (45) or Mark Hennelly's observation that it is "significantly inconclusive" ("Slow

Torture" 14). The novel ends with the long-desired marriage of Ellena and Vivaldi, the heroine and hero, inadequately closing the questions of horror and evil raised by the plot. The ending seems to restore the harmony demanded by the strong romance tradition in which the gothic novel was developed. Even the comical behavior of the servant Paulo that closes the action has its background in Shakespearean romance and its antecedents. Pursuing her thesis in The Failure of the Gothic that the gothic's principal flaw as well as the source of its powerful attraction lies in the disjunctive responses expected of the reader on the moral and affective levels, Elizabeth Napier notes of Paulo's happy shouts that they

in effect drown out those deeper, darker tones that characterized the earlier sections of the novel, and the reader is transported into a world in which moral values and familial relationships, once skewed, are set happily to rights (though in doing so, Radcliffe pays tribute to a moral and emotional system that lies outside her own novel). (146)

These comments, typical of the many studies that assume the need for a particular kind of closure in the gothic, give no attention to the reader's repeated encounter with spectacle as an experience that, for the reader, obviates concern with these novels' gestures toward closure. Chapter Two suggested that the use of spectacle in gothic provides a pleasure based on the stimulation of desire and the expectation of its fulfillment and that this dynamic is present throughout the text. My own contention is that the repeated experience of spectacle, far from being at fault in problematic endings, offers an alternate structure to the reading that provides the

satisfactions for which the genre is known and valued by its readers. Unfortunately, just as it is difficult to write about repetition without seeming repetitious, it is hard to prove the unexceptional nature of endings without focusing on them.

The three final chapters of The Italian, III.xi, III.xi[A]<sup>2</sup> and III.xii, provide the working out of the principal mysteries of the novel in the form of Father Schedoni's deathbed confession and the confession he wrings from his accomplice, Father Nicola di Zampari, and the discovery of the true identity of the nun Olivia and the truth about Ellena's parentage. Other marks of closure are provided by the suicide of Schedoni and his murder of Nicola, Vivaldi's complete reconciliation with his father, the marriage of Ellena and Vivaldi, and the final festive dance and chorus of shouts of "'O! giorno felice!'" by Paulo and his fellow servants. The ending attempts to restore the balance upset by hidden or questionable identities and evil or misguided intentions. Participants are restored to their proper classes and roles in the kinship system. The fact that these many marks of closure have been deemed unsatisfactory or somehow unearned by generations of critics has been accounted for in various ways by the critics named above. I would like to focus on different questions: What is there about the reader's experience of this ending that prompts the reader to wish to continue reading? What is there in the reader's experience of this text that generates a force for

continuation, that willingly overlooks loose ends, like the unresolved mystery of how Schedoni poisoned Nicola, and finishes this novel with an appetite that is not frustrated into passivity but rather stimulated and ready for the next gothic novel? The detailed discussion of the final scenes of this novel will provide a model for this chapter's analysis of gothic repetition and closure.

In III.xi Schedoni, now imprisoned by the same Inquisition to which he unjustly consigned Vivaldi, is on his deathbed and has called a number of witnesses to his bedside for an unknown purpose. The group includes Vivaldi, still a prisoner, his father the Marchese, some officials, and, soon, Father Nicola. The point of this chapter is to clear up the mystery of certain events and those involved in them, as well as to provide the deaths of Schedoni and Nicola. But the significant action of the scene takes place on the level of the gaze. The emphasis on seeing in this chapter is yet another implied promise to reveal all to the reader's gaze. It remains unfulfilled and unfulfillable.

With great ceremony, Schedoni's cell is unlocked. As Vivaldi and his father cross the threshold they are presented with the picture of Schedoni, in a theatrical scene worthy of the eighteenth-century painter, Joseph Wright, famous for his depictions of prisons and prisoners.<sup>3</sup> But this actor is not a figure of sentimental suffering; he is a weakened but still malevolent force. Only a weak gleam of light enters the dungeon. Schedoni is too ill to rise from his mattress, but

his strong, stern countenance, a very lively and expressive presence in the novel, is now "more than usually ghastly," his eyes now "hollow" and "his shrunk features appeared as if death had already touched them" (389-90). The play of gazes begins immediately as Vivaldi looks at Schedoni then turns away from the signs of death in his face; the young man's eyes are at once the wielders of a powerful force and site of vulnerability. The reader approaches the scene with Vivaldi, allied with his consciousness and perspective in a position of power, but Vivaldi is momentarily vanquished. We are reminded of Frederick at the altar in Otranto when the "praying monk" turns and reveals the features of a skeleton. Frederick drops to the ground leaving the reader exposed to the creature's gaze. In an instant the observer can become the observed; the safe position of reader/spectator is reversed and the reader is observed. This switch turns on Vivaldi's observation of the signs of death not fully revealed to the reader. A temporary triangle of looks is set up in which the reader observes Vivaldi's response and is suddenly vulnerable as Schedoni "ben[ds] his eyes on Vivaldi" and demands his name; he continues to look at Vivaldi thoughtfully then withdraws his gaze; suddenly he raises his eyes which contain "a singular expression of wildness" and he glares in Vivaldi's direction, but beyond him, at Nicola who has entered the room (390).

This opening series of moves establishes that the relationships in the chapter will be based on the repeated re-

direction and re-positioning of looks. Schedoni is the force with whom all others must contend and the chapter follows the waxing and waning of his power, always demonstrated by his ability to command the gaze, either as its threatening subject, casting his eyes around the room, insisting that others look, the reader included, or as its irresistible object. Sometimes the reader looks at him; just as often, he is glaring back, with a gaze that takes in the reader, as it does when he looks past Vivaldi and out of the frame.

As the scene continues, Schedoni directs the Marchese to look at Nicola, pointing at the face that we are told is vaguely familiar to the Marchese (391). But at this point Nicola is a nonentity; he is merely the object of the regard of the Marchese and Schedoni without a face and without eyes to look back. The reader does not see what they see. Nicola's confession of his part in the slanders against Ellena is narrated and the countenance and expression that he brings to his task are not described. Pointing at Nicola, Schedoni brings him into the scene for good; he will not be released from scrutiny and from a duel of gazes with his tormentor and former friend until he and Schedoni are both corpses. As different bits of information come out about Ellena and Nicola, the Marchese looks in consternation at his son, staging another dialogue of gazes, with the effect of Nicola's confession on the pair described as a sequence of looks. Again Schedoni exerts his power, but not by looking; instead he deliberately solicits the gaze of all, announcing, "In me

you behold the last of the Counts di Bruno" (392). Indirectly, his gesture again recognizes the power that can be exercised by the object at which a look is directed. Schedoni's order is a blunt exercise of power and an attempt to turn back on his observers the power of the looks directed at him. This tactic does not always work, though, and there is a curious emptiness to the claim that is not entirely the result of the Marchese's derision. The body that Schedoni raises from his pallet as he makes this haughty announcement lacks strength and lacks substance; he controls the scene but it is by the force of his eyes and voice alone. Radcliffe emphasizes the visual by giving the scene a structure based on the direction of gazes, quizzical looks, glares, surprised stares. Movement and gesture are not important. For the reader/spectator the scene conveys an unsettling fluctuation of power and position from which to interpret the proceedings.

The Marchese and Vivaldi attend to Nicola's words, the father with an "unmoved countenance" and the son with a "fixed attitude" and "eager and stern regard"; then Vivaldi, enraptured by Nicola's vindication of Ellena, turns his gaze on his father, who returns a "cold glance" (393). An entire argument is spoken by means of these looks. The reader's attention is then returned to Schedoni who "appeared almost to writhe under the agony, which his mind inflicted upon him," which seems a dis-embodied method of expressing mental and physical agony, "dis-embodied" because lacking in physicality or even verbal expression. As if to underscore the fading

away of his physical substance he falters and sinks for a moment: "closing his eyes, a hue so pallid, succeeded by one so livid, overspread his features, that Vivaldi for an instant believed he was dying" (394). Of course, he is dying. This lapse into passivity, attracting the active gaze of Vivaldi and closing up the eyes that have protected Schedoni by preying on the vulnerability of others, is only temporary. He appears to revive and opens his eyes. All of the significant action of the scene is the action of facial expression and especially of the eyes. The reader is drawn into this web of gazes with his or her own gaze attracted by the seeming vulnerability and openness of the text and driven by the desire to see into, to know, Schedoni and the "something" that he can reveal. The frantic movement of eyes in the scene appears to promise that desire will be rewarded with the visible, but the reader's gaze is turned back and the desire to see, to know, is frustrated. The challenging gaze that looks back from Schedoni repels the inquiring eye and then, when Schedoni weakens, the reader's penetrating gaze is surprised to find only an empty space, no substance.

The next part of the scene takes place under brighter illumination; a torch is procured, further enabling the action of glance and gaze. The torch "discovered to Schedoni the various figures assembled in his dusky chamber," but equally "to them the emaciated form and ghastly visage of the Confessor" (394). Seeing him more clearly, Vivaldi again believes he sees the marks of death in the monk's features.

Again Schedoni has his eyes shut and is available to Vivaldi's gaze, but all the reader knows is that "death was in his aspect." What this looks like remains unknown. All eyes in the cell are trained on the monk, but the reader does not see. Schedoni rallies, this time to confess to Vivaldi that he is guilty of bringing him to the notice of the Inquisition under false pretenses, but he is disembodied, physically shrunk to nearly nothing, and without the eyes that might now be penetrated rather than penetrating. The next few pages continue the revelations that will result, by chapter's end, in answers to all the mysteries except that of Ellena's true parentage and the identity of Sister Olivia. Continued also are the haughty looks, vengeful glares and averted gazes that provide the chapter's action.

Around Schedoni is a changing web of gazes within which the movement of gazes between him and Father Nicola becomes central. As Schedoni grows weaker, the role of an active, sadistic gaze is assumed by Nicola. Without real physical presence earlier in the chapter, Nicola seems to gain strength as Schedoni wanes; indeed, he now stands "gazing at him with the malignity of a demon" (396). Casting an inquiring look at Nicola, Vivaldi recognizes him as the mysterious monk of the Paluzzi. Seeking confirmation indirectly, Vivaldi asks information from Schedoni. But he seeks his answer by turning to look at Nicola; in reply, Nicola averts his eyes from Vivaldi and looks at Schedoni. His eyes will not give away his secrets to the gaze of Vivaldi. A debate with Schedoni

ensues in which the turning point, in the discussion of the young man's "susceptibility" to superstition, takes place as Vivaldi is overcome by an uncanny feeling that the man with whom he speaks is not Schedoni. The tone of voice seems unfamiliar and to assure himself that this is really the monk, "he looked at Schedoni more intently, that he might be certain it was he who had spoken" (397). The monk, of course, has his eyes "fixed" on the young man.

We must look at this incident more closely because it can be read in two ways: since the voice was unfamiliar, he looks at Schedoni to make certain it is Schedoni who has spoken, not some other person in the room; or, he looks at Schedoni to be certain that this is, in fact, Schedoni before him. This is an uncanny occurrence in the middle of a conversation and is not motivated by its content. At the midway point of the chapter, the experience of repetition catches up with the action. Over several pages a dizzying series of role reversals have taken place and it is as if we have to stop for this moment of uncanny hesitation marked at its inception and its end by the question, "Have you forgotten a conversation which I once held with you on invisible spirits?" and "Have you forgotten?" The questions and the uncanny moment they enclose mark the balance point of this chapter with its movement from ignorance to partial knowledge and from life to death.

Other commentators on this scene emphasize what the question and its answer mean in terms of the characterization

of Vivaldi and Schedoni (e.g., Sedgwick Coherence, 163-5) and the development of the theme of the joint role of imagination and rationality that is a mark of Radcliffe's work (Howells 61, McWhir 40). Schedoni, who is guilty of many outrages, asks a question that exposes a kind of guilt in Vivaldi; the guilt shows in the blush that follows the question. What interests me though is that the question makes sense but the uncanny feeling it seems to inspire does not, unless we look at the incident as uncanny itself. The moment follows repeated instances of spectacle involving Schedoni and his attempts to stare down and turn back the gaze that would objectify and immobilize him. His suffering is less and less visible and finally we find Nicola assuming Schedoni's role complete with "glowing eyes" and malevolent glare (396), as if the motivation that has joined them, revenge and mutual hatred, has allowed the spread of features from one to the other. The monks are evil doubles, similar but not identical. This moment of scrutiny echoes a much earlier examination in which Vivaldi considers every feature of Schedoni, including the "deep tones of [his] voice" which "he became almost certain . . . were not the accents of his unknown adviser" at the fortress of Paluzzi (49). In an eerie repetition, Vivaldi thinks that the voice he now hears is "different from what he had remembered" (397). He consults his memory for a voice that now sounds different, unfamiliar, and yet--he looks at Schedoni intently, consulting a model of a face in his memory. Is the face in front of him the same or different? Indeed,

Vivaldi's own memory tells him that the event mentioned in Schedoni's accusation did happen. The knowledge that Vivaldi, and the reader, hope to gain from this confessional chapter may be what we need to know or may be, like Vivaldi's experience in this moment, "something" we should not know, or will be sorry to be reminded of. Is this Schedoni before us? He is the agent who tortures the reader by frustrating the headlong drive toward the chapter's end and the knowledge promised there. Or perhaps he has slipped away and left us a victim of another foe. Schedoni would be pinned in our gaze but he is reduced in this moment to just eyes and a strange voice. The eyes are looking at Vivaldi as Vivaldi looks at them. Schedoni is there and not there. This is a point of stasis that forces readers to pause and examine where they now stand in relation to the gazes exchanged by Vivaldi and the monk. Avidly the reader looks at their confrontation, slowly realizing that he or she is cut out of the event and is now a bystander to spectacle. Acted upon, not acting, the reader is caught for a still, quiet moment in the face-off of two people separated by a doubt.

The moment of scrutiny passes and Vivaldi attempts to direct attention away from himself by asking Schedoni to explain the bloody clothing that excited his horror and curiosity in an earlier test of his credulity at the Paluzzi. When Schedoni appears mystified, Vivaldi turns to face Nicola and, just as Manfred's gaze at the fatal helmet drew the eyes of everyone in the courtyard of Otranto, all present in the

cell turn their eyes on that monk (398). But, curiously, as if reserving Nicola's powers for the later showdown with Schedoni, Radcliffe mutes the strength of the encounter between Vivaldi and Nicola. All eyes are on Nicola, but there is nothing to see. The argument between Vivaldi and Nicola consists of dialogue only and an interior portrait of Vivaldi's thought processes during the discussion. Schedoni suddenly intercedes as Nicola is being circumspect about his connection with the Inquisition and its secrets to announce that Nicola is one of the "dreadful summoners" of the Inquisition charged with the secret disposal of prisoners (401). While Vivaldi pauses, horrorstricken, Nicola turns his silent gaze to Schedoni, commencing the final encounter of their murderous looks.

When Schedoni says of Nicola, "His office has been short . . . his task is almost done," Nicola approaches to demand an explanation of this cryptic remark (401). "Nicola fixed himself before the Confessor, and bent his brows upon him as if he would have searched into his very soul," and Schedoni's exultant smile appears to waver. It is difficult to tell whether this is caused by intimidation or by his illness, because in the next moment, Schedoni is wracked by convulsions and groans, as if penetrated and physically victimized by Nicola's gaze. The spectators are thrown into disarray and horror by the sight, with the exception of Nicola who surveys his enemy's suffering with a "smile of derision." As he looks upon Schedoni's suffering, though, Nicola himself is suddenly

the victim of pains that change his triumphant expression:

As Vivaldi observed, with detestation, this expression, a slight spasm darted over Nicola's face, and his muscles also seemed to labour with sudden contraction; but the affection was transient, and vanished as abruptly as it had appeared. The monk, however, turned from the miserable spectacle before him, and as he turned he caught involuntarily at the arm of a person near him . . . . (401)

Leaving Nicola to his mysterious illness, a reminder of the dangers of the gaze turned back on the subject, the narrator again turns the eyes of all to Schedoni whose strength is quickly flowing away, leaving his eyes to express what life is left in him, and it is considerable. The expression in his eyes is feeble, but as he struggles to speak and finally utters, "Nicola," the monk so-named turns to him and Schedoni is revitalized by hatred; it shows in his eyes, which "as they settled on Nicola seemed to recollect all their wonted fire . . ." (402).

Critics rarely fail to cite the scene that follows and a long quotation cannot be avoided at this point:

The malignant triumph, lately so prevalent in his [Schedoni's] physiognomy, again appeared as in the next moment, he pointed to him [Nicola]. His glance seemed suddenly impowered with the destructive fascination attributed to that of the basilisk, for while it now met Nicola's, that monk seemed as if transfixed to the spot, and unable to withdraw his eyes from the glare of Schedoni's; in their expression he read the dreadful sentence of his fate, the triumph of revenge and cunning. Struck with the terrible conviction a pallid hue overspread his face; at the same time an involuntary motion convulsed his features, cold trembling seized upon his frame, and, uttering a deep groan, he fell back, and was caught in the arms of the people near him. At the instant of his fall, Schedoni uttered a sound so strange and horrible, so convulsed, yet so loud, so exulting,

yet so unlike any human voice, that every person in the chamber, except those who were assisting Nicola, struck with irresistible terror, endeavoured to make their way out of it. This, however, was impracticable, for the door was fastened, until a physician, who had been sent for, should arrive, and some investigation could be made into this mysterious affair. The consternation of the Marchese and of Vivaldi, compelled to witness this scene of horror, cannot easily be imagined.  
(402)

A rich stream of commentary establishes this deathbed scene as one of the most-quoted passages in the novel; the scene lends itself to both thematic scrutiny and analysis of the surface. Napier speaks of this passage as a betrayal by Radcliffe of the complexity of Schedoni's character and the reader's moral response to him (145). Attempting to simplify and clarify the moral judgment asked of the reader, Radcliffe requires of Schedoni murder and suicide, with witnesses to assure the reader of the acts' horror, to establish him as "more demon than man" (146), a judgment underscored by the unearthly sound uttered by the monk as Nicola realizes Schedoni has taken revenge on him. For Sedgwick, this passage furnishes the ultimate example of the "static and limited hieroglyphics" (Sedgwick Coherence, 160), that achieve their force by multiplying and spreading, like an epidemic, on the surface of the gothic providing in their "complication, fascination, and contagion" (165) a lively alternative to the claims for the primacy of psychological depth in the gothic put forth by critics such as Nelson, Lévy and Nichols. In addition, the repetition that moves and structures the reader's experience of the scene is supported by the motivation for the actions of

both Schedoni and Nicola (Sedgwick Coherence 164). Revenge, an irresistible desire to repeat a crime or to answer one action with another, an impulse tinged with the demonic identified by Freud in the uncanny experience ("The Uncanny" SE 17: 236, 238, Beyond the Pleasure Principle SE 18: 21-2, 36) lends an overlay of compulsive repetition to the events and their emotional impact for the reader.

This chapter represents a quickening and intensification of the scenes of spectacle intermittently introduced by Radcliffe. My point in citing this passage is to demonstrate that within the novel the chapter is a microcosm of the reading experience and, within the chapter, this passage is a microcosm of the experience that, having led the reader on through most of three volumes, prepares that reader, through repetition, for reading through and beyond the novel's ending two chapters later.

As I have previously noted, a typographical error resulted in the two following chapters, the final and penultimate, being headed "Chapter XI," an instance of repetition that does not necessarily make the skin crawl with dread but reminds one of Freud's attempt to draw a line between coincidences which do not seem uncanny and those recurrences to which we might "be tempted to ascribe a secret meaning" ("The Uncanny" SE 17: 238). This coincidence will only be ascribed to the compulsion to repeat in the typesetter of the 1797 edition. The chapter does contain a rather more significant doubling, however, in the form of two reunion

scenes. The first provides comic and sentimental relief in the form of Paulo's reunion with Vivaldi upon Vivaldi's release from prison. A clue to the reader's appropriate response is offered by spectators to the scene who can hardly contain their mirth and later despite the "coldness of their pride" (408) are drawn to applaud Paulo's demonstration of servile love. Paulo hurries from the room to conceal his sobs of happiness and gratitude.

Vivaldi and his father then set out for a more bittersweet reunion with Ellena who is still in the convent in Naples. The reader is placed at the side of Ellena as she hears Vivaldi ask for her at the convent's grate. As they see each other after their long separation, the reader sees Vivaldi through Ellena's eyes. The reader does not observe Ellena's countenance as she weeps but sees with her the "alteration, which severe confinement had given to his appearance" (408). Their happiness is tinged by sadness as Ellena finds Vivaldi much changed. Though she is the one who weeps, he is the one observed. The remainder of the chapter describes Vivaldi's account of his imprisonment and his meeting of Sister Olivia, now discovered to him as Ellena's mother and the witness who can clear up the final mystery. Schedoni, she says, was not Ellena's father but her uncle. Radcliffe does not take advantage of the opportunity for spectacle in the meeting of Vivaldi and Olivia. I would suggest that the reason for this is the return to prominence of Ellena as the internal spectator with whom the

reader/spectator is allied. In the previous chapter, she was not present but in this chapter, when she and Vivaldi are both present, the reader's access to the visual is through Ellena. Practically speaking, from Ellena's point of view the scene between her lover and her mother does not have spectacular overtones; she even withdraws midway through the scene. The whole interview is presented as narration not dialogue, making it less dramatic still.

The remaining portion of the chapter gives a brief account of the wedding day which, coincidentally, is also Ellena's eighteenth birthday which makes of the marriage as much a re-birth, a repetition, as a closing ritual, the end of childhood. Interestingly also, Ellena's thoughts at the altar are not of the future, as might be expected as she and Vivaldi prepare to spend their lives together, but of the past. She repeats in memory her earlier trip to the altar with Vivaldi, an event thwarted by her kidnapping and imprisonment. She "recollected," "a recollection" and "remembered" heighten the happiness of the present as she relives the past (411). She recalls "the moment when she had been carried from the chapel . . . that moment when she had called upon him for succour . . . when a blank silence, which, as she believed, was that of death, had succeeded" (411). Here is a spectacle of suffering repeated in her mind's eye containing a space of "blank silence," a curious linking of visual and aural referents, which she had filled with death, Vivaldi's imagined end. She watches her own suffering

repeated and the reader sees it again with her eyes, noting that ambiguous "blank silence" surrounded by anguish. The text draws us back from Ellena's thoughts and allows us to observe the scene from Paulo's perspective high in the balcony. We observe the expression of each countenance--Vivaldi's, the Marchese's, Olivia's--leading up to the revelation of "the tender complacency of Ellena's, which her veil, partly undrawn" reveals. This (partial) revelation (seeming to offer fullness but self-described as only "partly" revelatory) is the novel's final staging of a powerfully involving effect, reminding the reader of the many partially cloaked, partially veiled, indeterminate figures that populate the novel. In a description of erotic feeling that summarizes equally well the attraction of spectacular display, Roland Barthes writes in The Pleasure of the Text:

Is not the most erotic portion of a body where the garment gapes? In perversion (which is the realm of textual pleasure) there are no "erogenous zones" . . . it is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing . . . between two edges . . . it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance. (9-10)

It is noticeable that in our examples there is little emphasis on the display of skin and more on the eyes and expression. Most important is the emphasis on the appeal of intermittence, a quality of gothic repetition--coming when least expected and therefore always anticipated--that cannot be repeated too often. And on the idea of "appearance-as-disappearance" which highlights the continuing appeal, the never-enough, the never-

quite-all-of-it appeal of spectacle for gothic readers. The reader is left with the feeling that Ellena's insistence upon repeating her anguished memories, performing them again for herself and for the reader, shows a pattern that gives inordinate value to suffering, but it is the repetition of the pain that allows the existence of the pleasure for Ellena and the reader. What the gap in her veil reveals is less significant than what remains covered; what appears is a reminder of what remains hidden. That is what we need to see.

Paulo stifles his desire to shout for joy in this chapter's final words, but their repetition no fewer than seven times carries through to the next and last chapter. This chapter describes the post-nuptial reception at Vivaldi's villa to which both visitors of rank and the peasants are invited. Paulo, despite unbridled happiness, like Ellena spends more time in the past than the present. In speaking to his master and mistress and friends about his joy he reverts again and again to the past. "Do you remember," he says, how travelling on the banks of the Celano "reminded me," going still farther back in memory, of Naples and dancing on its beach? (413) His memory of an event that stages another act of memory shows the reader the possibility of unending repetition that Ellena's thoughts at the altar merely hinted. Now, he continues, the event has "come at last" and he is dancing within sight of Vesuvius which is smoking "just as it used to do before we got ourselves put into the Inquisition! O! who could have foreseen all this!" (413) The obvious point

is that, in temporal terms, "all this" did happen before and is happening again; memory makes the present an act of repetition. He imagines in visual detail their questioning by the Inquisitor; he sees them once again under the eye of the witnesses to that scene and the "faces grinning at us" (414). To Paulo, the repetition of these events is necessary to enhance his current pleasure. The difference, the gap between memory and the present, makes his pleasure. The point made indirectly is that this suffering is necessary for the happiness and that repetition of the experience provides that happiness. To repeat the unhappiness will create the pleasure. For the reader, this alternation must introduce the shadow of a doubt, a gap, in the terms used here, at the point where unpleasure turns into pleasure, unpleasure is repeated and pleasure recurs. Paulo's statements prove to himself and to the reader that the events live in memory and can be repeated. The reader views again this spectacle of suffering and is reminded of the power of repeated pain to provide pleasure. Even in the last paragraph Paulo for the third time describes the view of Vivaldi's prison that he had upon his own escape, insisting that no one who has not had such an experience could understand his current joy. Current pleasure insists that the suffering be repeated to propel it forward to the next experience of pleasure. In this the reading experience finds its impetus.

David Durant has referred to Radcliffe's plots as circular, because the happy endings evade confrontation with

the forces of chaos raised then shouldered aside in the novels (525); Napier and others say essentially the same. For the reader, however, the experience is likely to be one of a thrusting forward progress marked by repetition that both impedes and presses ahead. In each of the scenes discussed in the previous pages, the reader engages with scenes of suffering that provide a paradoxical opportunity. The reader's eye is drawn to these emotional scenes and their visual details and, while gazing, the reader is transformed by the engagement. Over and over an awareness of the grip of the text on his or her emotions and physical sensations is forced on the reader. In the next moment, in the next movement to another position on the "switchpoint" (Sedgwick "A Poem," 115) called spectacle, the reader moves out of the glare of the text and back into the seeming safety of the reader/spectator position. The pleasures of the engagement, the friction of the movement, let us say, are as real as the uneasy awareness that one has been "had." There are pleasures in looking on at the torments and sufferings of others; those pleasures are realized more completely when it is the reader at whom the gaze is turned. The alternation in role that occurs in the reader's engagement with the spectacle of suffering offers both the pleasure and the unpleasure of the text. It is the oscillation of the two experiences, even the inability to tell them one from the other, and the promise that this feeling can continue indefinitely that keeps the reader reading. There is nothing to stop the repetition. Such marks of closure as the

novel exhibits, faulty or not, are hardly responsible for the pleasure of the text.

Within the bounds of this study it is impossible to provide a detailed analysis of the spectacular narrative of which these three final chapters are the culmination. What follows is an attempt to place in context the final chapters discussed above so as to support the claim that the spectacle of suffering is the force behind the reader's enjoyment of the book. My point overall, though, is that this novel is not significantly different from other gothics in its use of spectacle and its representation of suffering and in the kind of interaction between text and reader that the repeated display of suffering constructs. Examples from a variety of works will be offered to demonstrate that the thesis put forward here is valid for the gothic as a whole.

The cumulative effect evidenced in the final chapters is set into motion of the first page of the novel, which begins to build a frame for the manuscript that is the novel's purported text. The frame story offers a mysterious figure with "an eye, which, as it looked up from the cloke that muffled the lower part of his countenance, seemed expressive of uncommon ferocity" (1). Though the visitors' guide claims very specifically that the figure has "no relation, with what I am about to mention" (3), the claim is only true in the letter, not the spirit. The cloaked, vaguely menacing figure with power in his eyes is duplicated throughout the novel in a series of nearly interchangeable figures which are created

by a process in which "static and limited . . . hieroglyphic faces multiply and confront one another, and multiply by confrontation" (Coherence 160), a multiplication we see enacted in the relationship between Nicola and Schedoni. The surface of the novel is covered with such repetitions. So closely allied is the figure with his coded accoutrements--cowl, habit, eyes--that when he is not physically present, he is still terrifyingly present, represented by a pile of bloody garments found by Vivaldi. We are told of Vivaldi's reaction that "he started at the discovery, as if he had seen the apparition" (78). So successful is the association that if the superficial markings of persons are the same, much detective work will be necessary to find out whether events are all the work of one monk or of an undifferentiated group of monks. Scenes of spectacle often involve these mysterious figures who are sometimes Schedoni, sometimes his shadowy stand-ins.

In 1919 Freud worked simultaneously on the two essays of greatest interest in our discussion of repetition and its relationship to the reader's experience of gothic literature. "The Uncanny," published in 1919, presents in summary form, narrowly applied to the subject of a particular type of dreadful fear, Freud's explanation of the repetition compulsion elaborated in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920).

"The Uncanny" establishes that the feeling so-named is caused by an unconscious sense of repetition in which something that is familiar seems unfamiliar. The uncanny is

distinguished from the merely novel by a sense of distress or vague threat. This, Freud says, stems from the additional feeling that what is seen "ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (SE 17: 225). Examining a variety of instances from seemingly inexplicable coincidences in daily life to bodies that come back to life, he concludes that "an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed" (SE 17: 249). The act of repression seeks to keep something from recurring, so that the uncanny is based in both repetition and the desire not to repeat.

This essay is only a prelude to Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle, published the following year. Freud himself directs the reader to that longer work for more information on the "compulsion to repeat." Before we leave "The Uncanny," though, we will be better prepared for the later essay, and for the topic of this chapter if we contemplate Freud's remark that

it is possible to recognize the dominance in the unconscious mind of a 'compulsion to repeat' proceeding from the instinctual impulses and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts--a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic character, and still very clearly expressed in the impulses of small children. . . . All these considerations prepare us for the discovery that whatever reminds us of this inner 'compulsion to repeat' is perceived as uncanny (SE 17: 239).

Just as Freud is able to show that "heimlich is a word the

meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, unheimlich," (SE 17: 226), the compulsion to repeat will be shown to bring together two seemingly contradictory ideas, pleasure and the ultimate unpleasure, death.

As Freud explains it, in its simplest form, repetition functions to enable the child to experience a feeling of controlling a situation that may not be within his or her power to control. The famous example given by Freud in Beyond the Pleasure Principle is known as the fort-da game in which a child devises a game consisting of throwing and retrieving a spool (fort, "gone," then da, "there") in which Freud detects the child's attempt to control his mother's coming and going (SE 18: 14-16). In his game, he converts this unpleasant experience (his mother's departure) into a pleasurable experience (his control over the going and return of the spool).

"Repetition," Freud says at one point in the essay, "the re-experiencing of something identical, is clearly in itself a source of pleasure" (SE 18: 36). That being established, he takes up the more curious question of why we would repeat, in dreams, for example, experiences that are obviously not pleasurable, scenes of trauma. From such repetition Freud deduces the existence of a stronger and biologically more primitive principle (hence, the "beyond" of his title), an instinct that works against the progressive nature of the pleasure principle. Where the pleasure principle is

associated with "change and development," this instinct is conservative: "It seems . . . that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces" (SE: 36). His discussion of instinctual behavior emphasizes that the repetition associated with it is conservative and resistant to change (SE 18: 37). Clinical observation and admittedly speculative reasoning, which becomes more speculative as the essay continues, lead Freud to the conclusion that while the repetition of trauma may not in itself give pleasure, the repetition occurs because the instinctive compulsion to repeat gives the mind repeated opportunities to master the traumatic stimuli that came to it while it was unprepared (SE 18: 32). Through repetition, the mind has the opportunity to develop the anxiety, in this case a constructive, self-preserving sense, that would have allowed it to cope with the original trauma, would have protected it, except in extreme cases. It is this mastery or "binding" that is the crucial response to compulsive repetition of scenes and situations that cannot give pleasure, preparing the way for the dominance of the pleasure principle (SE 18: 35). Repetition is a crucial part of psychoanalysis, a point to which Freud alludes in this essay (SE 18: 21, 32) and which he developed in detail in "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through" (1914). In the earlier essay, Freud says of a certain kind of patient that he "does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and

repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (SE 12: 150). I quote the earlier essay because, while Beyond the Pleasure Principle speaks primarily of compulsive repetition in unconscious dream-life, this essay speaks of repetition that involves unconsciously motivated action. Such patients repeat actions "instead of remembering" (SE 12: 151). Repetition is the resistance to memory as well as an act of remembering.

Repetition carries this double function in the mental processes of the individual. It performs these seemingly contradictory functions because it operates in support of both the pleasure principle and the conservative instinct or death drive.<sup>4</sup> Freud defines the pleasure principle by its effect on mental events (as distinguished from the unconscious) which are

automatically regulated by the pleasure principle. We believe . . . that the course of those events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension, and that it takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension--that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure. (SE 18: 7)

Taking the model of biology, Freud notes that all organic life moves inevitably toward death, that "the aim of all life is death" (SE 18: 38), the cessation of all tension. Peter Brooks best characterizes the relationship among these forces and tendencies in "Freud's Masterplot":

One could say that the repetition compulsion and the death instinct serve the pleasure principle; in a larger sense, the pleasure principle, keeping watch on the invasion of stimuli from without and

especially from within, seeking their discharge, serves the death instinct, making sure that the organism is permitted to return to quiescence. The whole evolution of the mental apparatus appears as a taming of the instincts so that the pleasure principle--itself tamed, displaced--can appear to dominate in the complicated detour called life which leads back to death. (107)

Of the scenes of spectacle in the novel, several stand out as greater in magnitude of effect than others, but these are also reminders of the intermittent rhythm that draws the reader forward through spectacular experiences large and small. Thinking back to Barbara Herrnstein Smith's remarks on the "force for continuation" exerted by "systematic repetition" (48), I would emphasize that the gothic proves that systemic repetition is at least equally a "force for continuation." Examined from the point of view of the reader's response, intermittent repetition gives an irresistible impetus to desire. There is no detectable pattern to the use of spectacle in this or any other novel I have examined beyond the observation that the thrills tend to be greater and more frequent later in the book.

I noted above that the scenes of spectacle tend to occur with greater magnitude and frequency toward the end of each novel. Some, for instance Peter Brooks, would see in this a heightening of tension to be released at the novel's climax before a gradual tapering off of the action providing a force for closure. The example of The Italian and other gothic novels display a pattern of repetition and spectacular revelation that continues past the climactic spectacle, through the final action. I have demonstrated that this is

hardly a pattern of text/reader interaction that encourages quiescence at a novel's close. Rather, the continual presentation of suffering through spectacle repeatedly promises what it does not deliver, but with no diminution of desire in the reader. Satisfaction of the reader's constantly stimulated desire to see is denied in that moment of spectacle when a gap of meaning is opened and the reader/spectator's desire to see is frustrated. But the very fact that the gap was exposed for an instant encourages the reader to believe it can and will happen again and the next time he or she will "get it right" (Clover 213).

## NOTES

1. This opinion would seem to be contradicted by Janice Radway's study of modern readers of gothic romances, Reading the Romance (1984), but the disagreement is only apparent, a matter of different emphasis. While her readers insist that the romances they read have happy endings, the study documents a complex, mutually-dependent relationship between these readers' desire to know and to not know (205-7). If a novel repeats the expected events and characters, many readers report they will not put it down until they have finished (59). Many read several novels in a week, which I interpret to mean they are more interested in repetition, continuation and beginning again than in endings.

2. In the first edition of 1797 this chapter is mistakenly headed Chapter XI when it is, in fact, the twelfth chapter. This information is provided on p. 419 of the Oxford paperback edition of The Italian (1971) edited by Frederick Garber.

3. Wright's work is discussed in Bender, Imagining the Penitentiary, 233-8.

4. The relationship between these functions, indeed, the very idea of a "death drive," has been the subject of much controversy and criticism. Laplanche's Life and Death in Psychoanalysis (Ch. 6) and Boothby's Death and Desire (Ch. 4) represent helpful attempts to grapple with the paradoxical idea of a "conservatism" associated with both the pleasure principle and the death drive. Boothby, in particular, notes that Freud's insistence on the importance of repetition in the death drive weakens his argument since he associates repetition more strongly with pleasure than with unpleasure (80).

## CHAPTER 4

## Closure: Interrogating Failure

With the pleasure principle and the death drive combining their effects toward cessation of tension, quiescence, final outcomes, extinction of action, ending, closure, and all the other names under which death masquerades, how is it possible that repetition can compete effectively with these forces? How can it compete so effectively that endings toward which authors employ formal structural devices (climax then dénouement, for example), linguistic markers ("Here the author lays down her pen," "They lived happily ever after," "The End," or, as more often in the gothic, "FINIS") and all the traditional literary signals of finality (a marriage, a death) are deemed failures? The question can be stated another way with particular regard to the gothic: If the typical gothic reader is under the influence of whatever marks of closure the gothic affords--weak, strong, unconvincing, inadequate, bland--in varying degrees, what, in the reader's relation to the text, grips that reader so tightly that he or she discounts these varying degrees of closure or does not regard them with the degree of importance placed upon them by critics of the genre?

The idea of "getting it right" seems a good place to return to the discussion of possible approaches to the question of narrative closure that was begun in the Introduction. We will also take a look at the forms that

closings, with or without satisfying closure, take in the gothic. Carol Clover in Men, Women, and Chain Saws offers some very helpful insights into the gothic when she connects the repetition of "fear-inducing scenarios" in the modern horror film with the repetition compulsion as it is displayed in both those who make movies and those who view them, enjoy them, and view them again (213). This genre, she says, and it is as if she describes the novels we are considering here, "retells the same stories decade after decade, sequel after sequel"; it is "probably the most convention-bound of all popular genres" (212). The reader/spectator who voluntarily, in the name of pleasurable experience, faces the same events ("scary stories endlessly repeated" 213) repeatedly, hoping to "get it right," is under internal compulsion to see, therefore to know, what the spectacle of suffering seems to offer. The desire to keep going and "get it right" this time and the compulsive impetus behind that desire provide an explanation for the nature of interaction between gothic reader and the text from a point of view that is rarely expressed in more conventional approaches to closure in narrative.

I have already indicated in the Introduction that I consulted a number of conventional sources searching for approaches to narrative closure that might shed some light on the problem identified in the gothic. With some variations, most of those approaches look to closure as an organizing principle from the perspective of which one looks back and makes sense--finds meaning--in what came before. Kermode,

Friedman and Smith can be loosely characterized in this way while noting that Kermode's approach is based in philosophy and history and Smith's very different bent is toward the details of poetic structure. The work of J. Hillis Miller has been so varied, and has exposed so many of the paradoxes that any discussion of beginnings and endings must confront, that it is hard to categorize. One remark that has resonance for the gothic is his statement, so commonsensical and yet so striking, that "no narrative can show either its beginning or its ending. It always begins and ends still in medias res presupposing as a future anterior some part of itself outside itself" ("Problematic of Ending" 4). Another part of his work moves toward exposing the relationship between Western conceptions of history and our expectations of fiction, including assumptions about the unity and meaning granted by endings to events that came before ("Narrative and History" 460-1).

David Richter in Fable's End argues that closure can be mixed: issues can be left unresolved while a work can also have a sense of closure. He relates the quality of openness in literature less to the social milieu in which it is produced than to instabilities that are likely to exist in a work. He argues, using Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield as his text, that an unconvincing ending, one lacking a sense of completeness, may be a sign that the narrative contains parts written to diverse or unreconcilable ends (175), a description reminiscent of what Smith calls a "self-divided" text, one

whose "closure may be not only inadequate but impossible" (220). Bringing to mind the thematic insights of critics like Howells and Napier, it would appear that such observations coincide, then, with texts like the gothic which are occasionally mechanically inept and philosophically confused. What has interested me all along, though, is why readers read such things, less than what critics think of them. To paraphrase Clover, the distinction that interests me is between the novel's self-commentary and the commentary of critics and theorists (168).

Clover states that horror cinema has always had available a "metacinematic dimension" offering a rich, but "oddly underexploited," self-reflexive commentary about its own production and spectatorial response (168). She suggests, and then goes on to compellingly show, that most critical commentaries on the genre uncritically accept the notion that the horror audience's main enjoyment is in "assaultive gazing," i.e., the active, sadistic gaze specifically identified with men. The blind spot that is pointedly ignored (perhaps "because of" its relevance--and threat--to the "'official'" discussion, 168) is that much of the pleasure of gazing comes from the "introjective" or "reactive" gaze, the gaze that is penetrable and able to be hurt. She is extremely persuasive in her demonstration that the issue of spectatorial, particularly male spectatorial, masochistic pleasure is the unspoken "blank" exposed by horror films (209). The critical insistence on the sadistic pleasure

derived from horror films ignores the construction in the film and the audience of "failed gazing" where the confidently gazing, controlling, spectator is suddenly transmuted into a humiliated, "overwhelmed" victim (210). The relevance of these insights for our discussion of the gothic novel is threefold.

First, Clover demonstrates that the pleasures of horror come from two different spectatorial positions that the cinematic text constructs or enables; the spectator experiences the pleasures of both looking and being-looked-at. Secondly, she notes that a gap in critical commentary on the subject of male masochistic pleasure is made noticeable by the very absence of comment and is aided by the uncritical acceptance of a model of spectatorship that constructs only male (voyeuristic, sadistic) and female (passive, masochistic) pleasure (212, 222, but especially 225-30). And, thirdly, Clover makes room for variation in her model, acknowledging the difficulties that any model will have in accounting for the infinite varieties of human desire, acknowledging even that women viewers may enjoy sadistic pleasures (223) as well as the masochistic pleasure allocated to them by Freudian theory. The news is that both positions are available for men and women.

It is Clover who notes, too, that the formulaic endings of horror films, which typically "deliver the spectator back into the status quo," are not the place to look for the most significant developments of the text (222). The spectacle of

suffering in the gothic novel provides a self-commentary on why people read them and why they read them the way they do and, as I have said before, it has little to do with endings. Suggestions gathered from the work of D.A. Miller and Susan Winnett, mentioned in the Introduction, offer more of a corrective to theoretical approaches that would look at the end and work their way back through the text to find its meaning. While both are critics of theory and builders of structure rather than critics looking at readers (Miller's more recent "'Cage aux folles'" is a very different case that takes the novel's effect on the reader's physical body very seriously) their efforts are very useful correctives to the tendency to concentrate on the ending and render the narrative invisible. The practice creates a critical blind spot.

In Narrative and Its Discontents D.A. Miller provides critical access to both theme and structure. He constructs his analysis around the concepts of the narratable and the non-narratable, two conflicting aims of traditional narrative that are at odds in the traditional novel and create a state of narrative "uneasiness" (xiv). His emphasis on the anxiety inherent in this conflict is of particular interest in our examination of the effects of repetition in the gothic. The narratable, which is the "general insufficiency from which a given narrative appears to arise" (ix), creates the dynamic of the narrative; these are the elements, such as complications of plot, that create uncertainty or suspense, that impel the story toward its end. As we have already seen, repetition is

the most important element driving the reading of the gothic. Repetition, in turn, refers the reader back to the non-narratable elements of the text, because repetition--in its tendency to make the reader both resist and desire an end--is inherently a movement toward the non-narratable state of quiescence. It provides the energy for forward movement but that same energy increases tension creating a desire for relief. The problem is that there is nothing to end it (272). It is important to note that repetition itself contains incompatible aims which may make closure impossible. Wallace Martin in Recent Theories of Narrative illuminates the point most clearly:

The two terms [narratable and non-narratable] are not symmetrically opposed to each other, because a final stasis would not simply be a fulfillment of desire, a stable life, or complete knowledge; it would imply that the narratable, and all impulses to move into the future, are wayward deviations from total rigidity. Thus the narrator could truly end only by rejecting the very impetus to narrate in the first place. The dialectic of desire and satisfaction cannot be stopped, even by traditional novelists, and those who realize this . . . reject closure. (85)

I do not suggest by this that the openness identified as a failure of closure in the gothic is in any case a deliberately chosen artistic element, a "rejection of closure,"<sup>1</sup> but the contradictory impulses above ascribed by Miller to the narrative and its author tellingly echo the model of reader response to gothic spectacle delineated here.

The observations of Susan Winnett arise from the possibilities opened by feminist theory. In a corrective to the "gender bias of contemporary narratology" (506), Winnett

first exposes the model of male sexual response that is a given as the basis for much narrative theory, for example, that put forth by Peter Brooks in "Freud's Masterplot" She proposes an alternative model, saying that "the existence of two models implies to me the possibility of many more" and theorizing that other experiences, for instance that of race, may have another model more appropriate to that experience. Her sample analysis of Frankenstein "explore[s] the different narrative logic--and the very different possibilities of pleasure--that emerge when issues such as incipience, repetition, and closure are reconceived in terms of an experience (not the experience) of the female body" (509). The idea is intelligent and thought-provoking and opens up many possibilities for exploration. And despite my own (mostly) approving use of Freud and Brooks, the repetition foregrounded in this discussion of gothic would seem to be better served by a model, though not necessarily Winnett's, that posits continuation rather than quiescence.

If we refuse the focus on endings and remember that what we have in the gothic novel is the same story repeatedly told, we will see that stories that refuse to end, that seek and do not find the "right death" (Brooks "Freud's Masterplot," 103), are constantly renewing themselves and beginning again. Perhaps this model does not stave off death so much as insist on renewing life against the odds, always trying to "get it right."

To conclude my examination of how the reader's engagement

with spectacle eludes and overcomes gothic attempts at closure, I intend to look in some detail at the endings of Zofloya and Melmoth the Wanderer. I have chosen novels that bear traditional marks of closure and the examination will show that the reader's interaction with spectacle is the determining factor in the complex dynamic that is gothic closure. But spectacle may be used to create different final effects, while still thwarting the reader's desire.

Earlier detailed discussion of the endings of The Castle of Otranto and The Italian provided examples of novels that employ the device of the wedding and its associated rites in slightly different ways to facilitate closure. In Otranto the final paragraph, wrapping up the futures of the principals, suggests that Theodore and Isabella eventually marry, having in common melancholy memories of Theodore's first love, Matilda. In The Italian it was pointed out that the wedding is followed by another chapter that brings together the newlyweds, their families and retainers for a celebration that invokes memories of the past more than dreams of the future. In both cases, these events are preceded by spectacles that resolve plot mysteries and right wrongs and involve the reader in displays of suffering that appear to offer revelation through visual excess but do not, finally, satisfy the reader's desire to see and know.

Elizabeth Napier says of gothic endings, and her remarks, as we have seen, are typical of criticisms of gothic conclusions, "Throughout these works, aesthetic pleasure seems

to derive from simple--indeed, simplistic, and often forcible--resolutions of situations of imbalance: identities are confirmed, families reunited, and rightful heirs restored" (10). Such resolutions are present in all of the novels of Radcliffe under discussion here, as well as Manfroné, The Monk of Udolpho and others, and must provide some part of the "aesthetic pleasure" of the novels. Again I would argue, though, that the insistent focus on endings has blinded critics to a more basic source of pleasure provided by these works, a source of pleasure more powerful than that provided by a marriage or the death of a villain. If we think in terms of the desire that keeps the reader reading it may be that these "bland" endings represent a false fulfillment of that desire, an incomplete satisfaction to which the reader does not look for the pleasure of the text. The desire for that closure is not what keeps the reader reading. We will look now at some other examples in which closure is signaled but reading pleasure lies elsewhere.

Gothic plots often conclude with the death of the villain though this occurs with many variations. Zofloya concludes with the death of the evil protagonist and a moral, The Monk with the death of the evil protagonist sans moral, Zastrozzi with the villain's unrepentant death, St. Irvyne with the deaths of both villain and protagonist, and so on. Some plots manage to incorporate both the villain's death and a marriage, as in The Italian, or the villain's death and a moral about marriage, as in The Libertine. I am aware of no case in which

the villain goes unpunished; the scrupulous apportionment of rewards and penalties is one of the genre's hallmarks, though some authors emphasize the punishments more than the rewards. The many variations make little difference when we attend to the effects of spectacle and repetition, which is why those critics such as Punter who carefully catalog the gothic's nearly infinite variations perform a service with limited usefulness.

Charlotte Dacre's Zofloya is typical in most respects while offering the variation of an evil female protagonist, Victoria de Loredani. The plot's many similarities to The Monk have been noted: a protagonist perverted by an unhealthy upbringing, this unpleasant and unhappy protagonist's complex association with a friend/advisor who turns out to be a representative of Evil with a capital "E," the continual questioning of the intertwined influences of nature and nurture in the development of the depraved personality, and a conclusion featuring the protagonist's violent death, flung from great height, by the hand of Satan or his minion.<sup>2</sup> These features are mentioned by way of establishing in yet another manner the atmosphere of repetition pervading any gothic novel and which must have been part of the reading experience for many readers of the period.

The novel follows the eventful life of Victoria and to a lesser extent that of her brother Leonardo. They are born to a wealthy family whose happiness is destroyed by their mother's desertion of them to follow her evil seducer who

later murders their father. Leonardo runs away and Victoria is raised in the lurid environment provided by Ardolph, the seducer, and her mother. Victoria is herself seduced from her home by the Count Berenza who eventually becomes her husband. She is doomed, however, to repeat the vices of her mother, so we find her falling in love with her husband's brother, killing her husband, driving the brother to suicide and killing the woman he was to marry. Her own brother, who earlier tried to kill Berenza, soon becomes a leader of a group of banditti. Zofloya the Moor enters the story as a mysterious man in the service of Berenza's brother. He and Victoria become close and he assists her in her many evil deeds with his supernatural powers while demanding complete loyalty from her. Their relationship is an interesting blend of Victoria's self-interest, fear, and a powerful erotic charge.

The novel's final chapter, a mere twenty-four pages, presents an act of treason, an attempted murder, a suicide, a murder, another suicide, an earthquake, an appearance of Satan unveiled, and his violent punishment of Victoria who is "whirled . . . headlong down the dreadful abyss . . . and a mangled corse . . . [is] received into the foaming waters below" (III 235). This ending follows upon numerous spectacular scenes of murder and unfeeling violence dramatically framed, including a struggle between Victoria and her female rival on the edge of a precipice from which Victoria, after stabbing her many times, flings her. The

rhythm of the events in the final chapter is an acceleration of the previous spectacular scenes.

A group of soldiers rush into the bandits' cavern stronghold led by Ginotti, a traitor. Victoria, who has been the focus of the reader's attention throughout three volumes, is shown in high anxiety during this beginning of the scene because Zofloya has disappeared. She looks around frantically, fearing that this time he will not save her. His "non-appearance" alarms her (III 218). In a series of quick events, Leonardo is captured by soldiers and prepares to say farewell to his mistress who, Victoria suddenly discovers, is a woman with an old grudge against her, Megalina Strozzi. Frightened of the woman, justifiably as we shall see, "she beheld herself seated next a dire foe, surrounded by death and danger!--she looked for Zofloya; he was no where to be seen" (219). Zofloya's mysterious absence provides a center of interest in this part of the action. The scene itself is not built of visual details; it consists of narration and dialogue. The focus shifts back and forth quickly among the participants, though the withholding of visual details results in a scene whose energy comes from frenzied exclamations and swift, violent moves. Megalina draws a stiletto and tries to stab Victoria who is saved by the intercession of the Moor. In her frustration, Megalina stabs herself; in his despair, Leonardo stabs Ginotti. At this, the soldiers grab Leonardo who breaks away and stabs himself, perpetrating "repeated wounds with the poignard, still reeking from the heart of the

treacherous Ginotti!" (222). The repeated stabbing incidents culminate in the repeated wounds that Leonardo inflicts on himself. He dies with wild eyes rolling and a smile of contempt on his face (223). What visual incident fails to provide in the scene repetition supplies, drawing the reader in with first a feint, then two stabbings in quick succession and in the next paragraph a series of wounds. Visual detail only begins with Leonardo's self-inflicted wounds; his capture by the soldiers, breaking away and further forcible restraint, with him struggling throughout, adds the energy of movement to the latter part of the scene.

The final chapter breaks in two parts, with the second consisting of the actions of Zofloya and Victoria together. Zofloya, who cuts a very imposing figure, intimidates the soldiers. He voluntarily turns his dagger over to them so that all, including the reader, know that the stabbings will not be repeated. His power lies elsewhere, and he demonstrates this by causing an earthquake that destroys the cavern. Throughout the novel, countless times, Zofloya has demanded that Victoria trust him completely, but she has never put full trust in him. She expresses her fears; he softly says "Rely upon me wholly" (224). During the earthquake, she again yields to her fears, but this time it is not mere trembling uncertainty:

her senses became over-powered, confused horrors danced in her sight, her eyes closed, and, unable to preserve her fleeting faculties, she swooned.-- On recovering, she beheld herself in the midst of a spacious plain, reclining in the arms of Zofloya, and encompassed by myriads of guard--she gazed

wildly around--scarcely could she believe that still she existed! (225-6)

The fainting fit is a watershed moment in the scene; consciousness is blotted out by her fear and then she awakens to a scene almost equally horrible. Her language shows her a victim of what she sees: "behold we are surrounded,--no hope of escape.--Would that . . . I had preserved myself from the ignominious death that too well I see awaits me!" (226). She expresses herself to the Moor in desperate terms and, testing her, he repeats, now in a "terrible voice," his demand that she place complete trust in him (226). She swears her faith and suddenly, "more swift than a point of time was the transition," they are on a high peak (227).

Victoria, who has previously shown herself to be immune to the beauties of nature (III 61), is overcome by what meets her eyes and by the thoughts it inspires of her past crimes:

Involuntarily she cast downwards her eyes,--a dizzying precipice, that made the senses stagger, yawned at her feet; far, far in its bottomless abyss, battled the deafening cataract, which, from the summit of the adjacent rock, tumbled a broad tremendous stream, till broken mid-way in its course by some rude projection, it divided into numberless dancing sprays, and branches of foam, uniting again at a considerable distance beneath, and thundering as it fell with resistless fury down the rugged sides of the precipice, whose hollow bosom sternly re-echoed to the mighty sounds. (227-8)

Zofloya whisked her to a mountaintop to save her on a previous occasion (III 124) but this event reminds Victoria of her murder of Lilla on the edge of a similar precipice, and images of her other crimes pass before her. Filled with remorse, but also despair, she gazes around herself in panic. The Moor's

manner, previously solicitous like a lover, has changed. In a terrible voice he offers to save her from "all future worldly misery" if she will "resign" herself to him (229). She equivocates, not from a full understanding of what he asks, but because she is still too self-absorbed to attend to his full meaning. He appears to soften and she, less wary, swears she is his, because she is frightened to her soul "at the view of surrounding horrors" (231). She swears and he bursts into laughter and bends on her the power of his gaze:

Fixing on her his terrible eyes, from whose fiery glances Victoria turned enhorrored!--"Nay, turn not away," he tauntingly pursued,--but look again, and--see to whom thou hast sworn! (231-2)

Earlier, her active gaze sought him out and now she can see him--unveiled--and she becomes his victim, a role she had perceived only dimly before this. Ironically, this echoes a statement made to Victoria earlier by Zofloya implying that her problem in their relationship is that she never asks the consequences of having her wishes fulfilled (III 119). The fiery eyes, the averted gaze, the cataract, the abyss, these are gothic clichés, yet they are resonant in repetition. The scene is filled with stern reminders of the uncontrolled spread of these effects from person to person and between people and things. Victoria's passions were described early in the narrative as akin to "the foaming cataract, rushing headlong from the rocky steep, and raging into the abyss below!" (I 223). And it is the principal business of the novel to make clear that the profligate mother's vices are spread to and repeated in her children (e.g., I 35, III 162-3,

and many others).

The novel's final act is illustrative of all that is vague and horrible, obvious and didactic in the gothic. Victoria can no longer resist the Moor's command: She "raised her eyes--horrible was the sight which met them!--no traces of the beautiful Zofloya remained,--but in his place, stripped, as in her dream, of his gaudy habiliments, stood a figure, fierce, gigantic, and hideous to behold!" (232). The reader is told that all is shown; the power of the sight nearly sends Victoria plummeting from the peak. But what is shown? The language of the scene calls upon vision and withholds the visual. Victoria is taunted, and the reader's expectations mocked, as Zofloya says, "Behold me as I am!" (233). After his mocking speech, which establishes his role in Victoria's initial temptation to murder, he flings her into the abyss. However the reader may fill the gap created between the demand for and withholding of the visual, there will inevitably be a falling short, an expectation that there must be more, and the anticipation that the next reading experience may provide it.

A final paragraph cautions the reader to "consider not this as a romance merely," (235) in implicit acknowledgment that the reader may have been tempted to "read for the plot" and discount the serious message. Just in case, the author reiterates the argument against innate evil ("an insult to the Deity") and in favor of the individual's responsibility to withstand temptation. This not uncommon display of authorial anxiety demonstrates the thesis of those critics who declare

that the "failure" of the gothic lies in its inability to come to terms with serious moral issues while basing its appeal in emotional stimulation and the irrational. The struggle for closure foregrounded in such critiques is not a part of the gothic reader's experience. I would not characterize such reader's experience in terms of discontent or uneasiness but rather of the pleasures of constantly stimulated desire. If discontent or uneasiness outweighed pleasure, books would not be "torn from hand to hand." The explicit moral offered by an uneasy author, or the lack of such a moral, has little to do with the reader's experience of the text. The author's attempt to force closure offers only a false and incomplete fulfillment to the desire that energizes reading. That experience is not one of closure but of the opportunity for continuation.

In contrast to a work like Zofloya that features the conscious attempt to close--the villainous protagonist and other principals dead and properly punished, a cautionary conclusion pronounced by the last survivor, and a moral pronounced by the author--any number of gothics produce endings which foreground the difficulty of closing, call attention to the weakness of their use of closural gestures, or display their incompleteness by setting up a structure, a manuscript, for example, or a correspondence, and then not closing it. It is not necessary to speak of deep structure or irreducible ethical or psychological issues to see that there are certain other features of the gothic that do not restrain

the reader; indeed, they encourage that reader to give the text's conclusion the barest pause and then leap to the next volume. A catalogue would point out in the first category The Monk, in which Lewis jerks chronology awry, actually presenting his melancholy, "gloomily ever after," ending before an event which happens earlier, Ambrosio's spectacular destruction. In the second I would place Shelley's St. Irvyne which features an abrupt, one-paragraph summary, impatient in tone. In the third category I would place The Italian, which is initially presented as a manuscript given by an Italian guide to a visiting Englishman, but does not close with any kind of comment from or textual acknowledgment of this purported reader; and Frankenstein, which is presented as a correspondence and, as such, presumably able to continue beyond the point at which the text ends. Obviously, this catalogue is not complete, nor are the categories intended to be exclusive. In bringing them up, I mean to give some indication of the formal qualities in gothic endings, exclusive of content, that support the reader's continued pursuit of what Brooks calls "the right death" ("Freud's Masterplot" 107) and Clover refers to as "getting it right" (213). Examine the varieties of endings and closural gestures as we may, there will be no end to the reading, because, in the case of the gothic, closure does not control the reading experience. Control lies in the repetition of spectacle and the reader's attempt, through the engagement with spectacle, to "get it right."

One unintended effect of all of the foregoing discussion may be a suggestion that all gothic novels are equally valuable. This has not been my intention, but it is no more possible to discuss the variety of forms that closure can take without giving that impression, than to prove that closure is not important without centering attention on it at some length. While Zofloya has been presented to illustrate the fact that neither a spectacular ending nor a closing moral can still the desire that drives a reading experience that borders on the obsessive, and the reading of The Italian shows that the common closural device of marriage has little effect, I will point to one novel that differs from the rest, Melmoth the Wanderer.

So much has been written about Melmoth as the last and finest expression of the "pure gothic" or original gothic impulse of the period that it is not necessary to make the case here. Mario Praz describes it as "the masterpiece of the 'tales of terror' school" (116), William Axton as the "finest flowering" of the gothic spirit and the "last and greatest expression of its kind" (xii), and Coral Ann Howells as the "most powerful imaginative treatment" given to gothic feeling (131). Its intensity of expression, labyrinthine structure, and manipulation of point of view are without equal among the novels here under discussion. Of greater interest though is Maturin's provocative and adroit handling of the relationship between spectacle and spectator, shown in situations and observations sprinkled throughout the text, as we have

discussed in Chapter Two, and of particular importance in Melmoth's unusual conclusion. My argument will not be that Melmoth's conclusion solicits a different kind of reading but that the conclusion is smoothly congruent with the gothic reader's obsessive desire to continue. It works with, not against, the reader's desire, inviting the kind of reading that thrives on continuation and that will not rest, cannot rest, at the conclusion of action.

There is no doubt that the complex narrative of Melmoth requires of the reader a different kind of attention than that required by other gothic novels we have discussed. These other novels exhibit a nearly uniform forward movement with which the thrust of the reader's desire is allied. The examples of interpolated manuscripts, for instance that which reveals the fate of Adeline's father in The Romance of the Forest, and the transitions necessary to maintain the epistolary fiction of Frankenstein, in addition to the forcible fracturing of chronology in The Monk's conclusion, offer insignificant impediments to the reader in the linear progression from beginning to end. Melmoth consists of a series of narratives nested one inside the other so that the reader is drawn from the frame narrative, into a tale told within that narrative, into another tale embedded within it, and so on. The reader's experience of this labyrinth may be as if "abandoned somewhere within the maze seemingly without a map, or even a thread," as Kathleen Fowler has described it (525). But to pursue the maze metaphor a bit further, the

reader's expectation will be that at the next juncture, no, at the next, the exit will be waiting. It is my contention that in the absence of a perspective from which the reader can locate his or her position in the text it is the constant recurrence of spectacular scenes of suffering that engage the reader in the movement from one embedded narrative to another. The individual tales leave their impressions in terms of events of high intensity, not style, because they are not stylistically differentiated. The events that the reader retains as the experience of the text as a whole are (to wrench a statement from its context) "all beads strung on the same string" (Melmoth 229); the string is the excruciating human-induced suffering that holds the tales together while the beads are the vividly detailed spectacular incidents that will remain in the reader's memory.

Melmoth's final chapter describes the day and night during which the Wanderer anticipates his reclamation and is finally reclaimed by an angry God at the end of his 150 years of wandering in search of another soul to accept his unspeakable offer. The younger Melmoth and Monçada are witnesses to his preparations as he closes himself in the room in which he was born, a note of circularity that, as we will see as the chapter continues brings, not closure, but a sense of beginning again. The seeming circularity is also false in the sense that Melmoth the Wanderer's beginning was many generations before the start of the novel and any reference back to that time will begin an interminable backward search,

rather than closing a circle. The setting at the family home, The Lodge, harks back to the novel's start in which young John Melmoth comes from college to attend his dying uncle. He is introduced, first, to the portrait of John Melmoth "the Traveller" which exhibits "the eyes" with which he will command many scenes of horror; the young man, who shares the Traveller's name, "gaze[s] in stupid horror on this singular picture" (13). Soon the original shows up in one of the novel's many moments of uncanny effect as young Melmoth resists his uncle's insistence that the very old portrait depicts a man still alive:

John had discovered in his face the living original of the portrait. His first impulse was to utter an exclamation of terror, but his breath felt stopped. . . . What could be more absurd, than to be alarmed or amazed at a resemblance between a living man and the portrait of a dead one! The likeness was doubtless strong enough to strike him even in that darkened room, but it was doubtless only a likeness . . . . The door opened, and the figure appeared at it, beckoning and nodding to him, with a familiarity somewhat terrifying. (15)

The duplication and repetition of Melmoths is one of the features that adds a note of continuation to the novel's ending. Young Melmoth lives at the end and the preceding narrative marks a beginning rather than an end for him. The conclusion features the death of the villain, a rather common mark of closure as we have seen, but in that death is an elision of the reading process and the spectacular text that produces a different experience for the reader and adds to our understanding of the complex function of spectacle in gothic closure.

The examination of many other gothic texts has shown that the reader's response to closure does not vary with the use of particular closural devices; weddings, deaths, moral pronouncements, none have a significant effect on the reader's desire to continue reading beyond the ending. In every text, the anticipated, familiar signals of closure put up at least a token, formulaic resistance to continuation of reading. But the engagement with spectacle lures the reader on, into the next text, past these gestures toward a closure that is not desired and is not the point of the reading. We might see in Percy Shelley's feeble and dismissive effort to end St. Irvyne a signal from an author who knows that endings do not matter in the gothic. The reader is eager to move on to the next text and repeated encounters with devices that can be endlessly pursued.

That is not an accurate description of the reader's experience of the ending of Melmoth the Wanderer, though the ending is replete with signals of finality and with qualities we have come to associate with spectacle. John Melmoth and Monçada prepare for the Wanderer's death and he speaks to them of the discretion they must show. The liminality that signals spectacle is present in the closing of the Wanderer in his room and, after a night in which horrible sounds have issued from the room, the approach of his young relative and Monçada to that room. The Wanderer warned that his death agonies would be dangerous to them though inevitably they will be tempted to watch. His warning to them--"Your lives will be

the forfeit of your desperate curiosity" (411)--refers the reader back to those many instances of spectacle in Melmoth in which the dangers, physical and spiritual, of such involvement have been acknowledged. Monçada's presence in the final scene is a direct link to some of those spectacles, such as the torture of the novice and the death of the parricide. In another reference to the importance of the visual in this scene and other scenes of spectacle, young Melmoth experiences an odd disturbance of vision that is not a good omen for the encounter with the spectacle of death. The sudden silence that is more awful than any scream brings them to the room, where they find--nothing.

Their, and the reader's, expectation of being overwhelmed by the visual encounter with death is thwarted, but after their initial "fruitless amazement" they find that there are visual clues to follow. The scene is furnished with a profuse replication of doors: the door to the room, the door opposite it that leads to a stairway, the open door in the garden which they see beyond it. The emptiness of the room is hardly unsettling compared to the uncanny emptiness of the "footsteps that appeared to be those of a person who had been walking in damp sand or clay" that lead from the room, through the garden and down the walk to the cliff overlooking the sea. Footsteps impressed in the sand present an eerie combination of presence and absence. The eye has a sign to grasp but it is a sign that announces emptiness. The eye desiring the spectacle that brings with it the promise of knowledge gazes at these

footprints, presented in the concrete vividness typical of Maturin but a concreteness that paradoxically stands for emptiness and absence, is given a spectacle that is pure gap. There is no moving back and forth between boundaries; there is no boundary in the scene to bring the gap into focus. And the passage continues, not allowing the reader that moment of stasis in which the gap is perceived, internalized, and surpassed. By their nature footsteps continue and these steps are pursued through varied landscapes and across boundaries. These footsteps mime movement and that movement is repeated by the pursuers, whose eyes are gripped by these signs.

As they reach the high rock that marks the precipice overlooking the sea, they encounter the locals who have no words to describe what they heard during the night. The final spectacle must be quoted in full:

Through the furze that clothed this rock, almost to its summit, there was a kind of tract as if a person had dragged, or been dragged, his way through it--a down-trodden track, over which no footsteps but those of one impelled by force had ever passed. Melmoth and Monçada gained at last the summit of the rock. The ocean was beneath--the wide, waste, engulfing ocean! On a crag beneath them, something hung as floating to the blast. Melmoth clambered down and caught it. It was the handkerchief which the Wanderer had worn about his neck the preceding night--that was the last trace of the Wanderer!

Melmoth and Monçada exchanged looks of silent and unutterable horror, and returned slowly home.  
(412)

The visual interest invested in the footsteps is transferred to "something" that is down the cliff, hanging above the "engulfing ocean." The "something" is a lure toward that "engulfing" presence; the "something" is both insubstantial

and everything, "the last trace of Melmoth." Like the footprints it stands for an absence and provides no resistance, no closure, no ending. It can be usefully contrasted with the veil covering the supposed corpse in Mysteries of Udolpho. The blank veil "gazes back" at the reader, in the terms we have used here, and forces on the reader an acknowledgement of the active role of the text in manipulating the reader and stimulating the desire to continue. This handkerchief exists in a series--room, footprints, handkerchief--that draws the reader in as spectacle will, but into an uneasy shifting balance of absence and presence. A modern reader raised on horror films would take this kind of death that is not a death as an indication of sequels to come and it has a similar effect here. The chapter is, after all, preceded by a chapter describing the Wanderer's dream of just such a death; and from this he awoke. And yet its hint at continuation gives pause.

This closing causes unease rather than the pleasure of repetition and continuation identified in other novels. The glance between Melmoth and his guest provides a clue from which we can work back to discover the source of unease. The two "exchange looks," a mirroring gesture that signals endless reflection rather than finality. The handkerchief wields an "engulphing" look that threatens to overwhelm and devour, to subject the reader to free fall from that precipice. And the footsteps that lead to that "something" attract a look that exists only in relation to nothing. This look clearly leads

in the direction of danger, not pleasure.

Maturin's equivocal offering of evidence for thematic interpretation present in his choice of irreconcilable phrases to represent the reclamation of Melmoth provides an adjunct to the visual emphasis of this final scene.<sup>3</sup> But the reader's final impressions reside in the visual and that is consistent with the experience of the preceding text as a sequence of spectacles. It has been amply demonstrated with examples from a number of gothic novels that the reader's interaction with spectacle is the controlling feature of reading. Engagement with spectacle will carry the reader past a great variety of endings that make at least a token gesture, however unconvincing or faulty, toward closure. The example of Melmoth proves, though, that there exists an unexpected and paradoxical relationship between the reader's engagement with spectacle and a particular kind of conclusion. Other gothic novels strive feebly against the power of repeated spectacle with gestures that a reader will perceive as expected and formulaic and therefore they do not command even a pause, much less satisfying closure. A novel such as Melmoth that chooses in its conclusion to exploit the power of spectacle rather than to strive against it can harness the combined power of spectacle and repetition to produce an effect that is at once open and arresting.

## NOTES

1. The statement from Martin displays the problems inherent in any discussion that attempts to speak of openness and closure separately. In consulting works such as Robert M. Adams's Strains of Discourse: Studies in Literary Openness I have found that very often conscious literary art is imputed to authors of works perceived as "open" or the opposite tack is taken and openness can only be judged a failure of literary art. Obviously, neither coincides with my view of the gothic.

2. The repetition that stretches out across the genre provides for Percy Shelley's gothic novels, among other features, the bandit Ginotti for St. Irvyne and the murderous love rivalry between an evil woman and a good one for Zastrozzi.

3. Are they "shrieks of supplication, or the yell of blasphemy"? (411) Did the Wanderer drag himself to the verge, or had he "been dragged"? (412) Is he a repentant villain, like Ambrosio, or does he laugh at his own execution, like Zastrozzi? Though writers often comment upon the effect of undecidability produced by this novel's ending, it is fairly obvious from Maturin's remarks in the Preface that undecidability was not his conscious intention (3). I would contend that the equivocal aspects just quoted are beside the point; like a movie without dialogue, the story is told in its visuals.

What must have been a powerful struggle between Maturin's Christian faith and his dark vision of suffering and despair are cogently argued by Kiely (especially 204-207) and Howells (particularly 157-8). That struggle is underscored by the absence of any hint of faith or hope in the final spectacle.

## Conclusion

This dissertation offers a corrective to the criticism implied in the comment from Coleridge quoted in its opening paragraph: "The reader, when he is got to the end of the work looks about in vain for the spell which had bound him so strongly to it." The corrective is that gothic readers really do not look in vain; readers know very well that the ending of a gothic novel is also the beginning of an opportunity to pick up another novel and become the willing object of its spell.

The gothic failure pointed to by Coleridge and many others after him has been revealed to be a primary element in its success and survival. Much of the criticism of the gothic is based on a focus on endings that applies a set of standards to these texts that is not key to the readers' enjoyment of the text. This focus on endings has led to a critical blindness toward the real sources of the readers' enjoyment of the texts and the real source of the texts' power. This dissertation has explored the question of pleasure, the pleasure that certain readers derive from a certain kind of text.

Starting from a long line of complaints about and criticisms of the endings of gothic novels, I have presented a model of the interaction of readers and gothic texts that must modify widely held opinions about gothic novels. The model I have suggested begins with the reader's engagement with spectacle, insistently visual scenes of pain or

suffering, framed and set apart from the surrounding text. Their pictorial qualities are emphasized and the act of seeing is foregrounded. In the interaction between reader and text spectacle acts as a switchpoint for an exchange of roles: the reader's active, voyeuristic gaze turned toward the scene of spectacle is turned back. At the peak of the engagement he or she is aware of being held in thrall by the text, a passive victim of the textual gaze. The text "looks back" at the reader through or from the gap created in each spectacular scene. The promise implicit in the use of spectacle is the promise that the reader will see. What the gap exposes for a brief, static moment is the manipulative activity of the text that works very hard to conceal. The very existence of the gap, though, testifies to the existence of something that must be concealed, but may, next time, be revealed. The narrative's attempt not to show becomes the focal point of the reader's attention, the reader's desire to see.

The intermittent but frequent repetition of the spectacle of suffering involves the reader in an on-going, seemingly endless, pursuit of the satisfaction of a desire whose stimulus lies within spectacle. The pleasures of this reading experience come from the alternation between the pleasures of seeing and the pleasures of being seen. The reading style encouraged by this dynamic is obsessive and devouring, with books read through the night and torn from hand to hand. The reader's intense engagement with spectacle derogates the novel's ending, which may or may not employ spectacle, to the

level of a secondary interest. Readers enjoy the generic repetition and the intensity of the reading involvement and they know that the end of one novel is simply the beginning of another that guarantees the same satisfactions, including the continued engagement with spectacle. Critical models that focus on endings as the point of access to a text will by definition be blind to the accomplishments of a genre in which endings are of little importance.

This dissertation represents an accomplishment but also a failure. We do not yet have a model that accounts fully for the pleasures of women and men in their sameness and difference, but I have found the efforts of Michelle Massé and Carol Clover particularly stimulating and imaginative as they turn the question about, looking for a gap through which to explore it. Work by them and others like them may someday give a name and recognizable identity to the "it," the "something," that desire pursues, an identity that escapes the drawbacks of the Lacanian phallus. For now, I have found the general term "lack" sufficiently descriptive to characterize texts that conceal while promising, and withholding, revelation, whetting the reader's desire and giving impetus to continued reading. I have invoked Freud and Lacan where their ideas offer theoretical support to the observed behavior of readers. The interplay of desire and lack seems to perfectly characterize the gothic reading experience, obsessive as it seems.

On the other hand, I cannot wholeheartedly accept the

underpinnings on which this model of desire and lack is constructed. Only with great reluctance have I invoked the terminology of a model based in a theory of human development that takes the experience of men as its standard, treating women like an unwelcome and rather distasteful appendage to the more interesting topic of men's experience. With Jane Gallop, Elizabeth Grosz, Eve Sedgwick and others I am skeptical about the connection of the Lacanian phallus with the real privileged penis. If the phallus is not a penis, why not call it a McGuffin? Like the reader of a gothic novel who must hold in mind two different sets of rather contradictory expectations in regard to the text, I have had in my mind throughout this project two rather contradictory expectations of my own. The first is that the model I have demonstrated at work in these novels applies to the experience of all readers, allowing for a degree of individual variation. The second is my belief that any theoretical system that is based in thoughts, feelings and behaviors that attach to only one-half of the population, is bound to be somewhat lacking when stretched to cover the broader population. That said, however, I have not felt at any point significant doubts as to the truth of the readers' experience as I have described it here.

I have emphasized an action, reading, over another problematic and mysterious site, the individual reader. The reader of whom I have written is not equivalent to the individual reader, defined by race, class, gender, sexual

orientation, physical characteristics, etc. My reader is not a person but a place, a place where actions are initiated and responses are inscribed. This universalizing of the reader's experience can, I hope, in the future be amended or extended as we discover more about the construction of gender. Only here will I note how difficult it has been to test a model with the flaws noted above against a genre traditionally associated with women writers and readers. The merit of the model I have demonstrated is that it applies equally well to those novels that fall clearly in the camp of the "female gothic" and those, like The Monk and Melmoth that are more "masculine" (focused on a male protagonist, more violent, more overtly and violently sexual) in their appeal. A certain amount of trans-sexual complication is added by Zofloya and Zastrozzi, which just goes to show that any simple demarcation of the essential masculine and feminine within the gothic is probably wrong.

My own concern with endings is paralleled in the larger society by a certain low-grade millennial fever as this millennium draws to a close. Some watch for signs and deal in predictions, more concerned with the future than the past. If all goes well, we will end and start again, continuing in the expectation that, this time, we will discover what we need to know.

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