



The Gothic and the Psychology of Terror

**18thc Enlightenment
& Age of Revolution:
Modern ideals of society**



THE
CASTLE of OTRANTO,

STORY.

Translated by

WILLIAM MARSHAL, Gent.

From the Original ITALIAN of

ONUPHRIO MURALTO, *K*

CANON of the Church of St. NICHOLAS
of OTRANTO.

LONDON:

Printed for THO. LOWND, in Fleet-Street.
MDCCLXV.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE following work was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of *England*. It was printed at *Naples*, in the black letter, in the year 1529. How much sooner it was written does not appear. The principal incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of Christianity; but the language and conduct have nothing that favours of barbarism. The stile is the purest *Italian*. If the story was written near the time when it is supposed to have happened, it must have been between 1095, the æra of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not long afterwards. There is no other circumstance in the work, that can lead us to guess at the period in which the scene is laid: The names of the actors are evidently fictitious, and probably disguised on purpose: Yet the *Spanish* names of the domestics seem to indicate that this work was not



Horace Walpole - Strawberry Hill - The Gothic Revival



See p. 33.

THE MONK,

A ROMANCE;

IN WHICH IS RELATED THE

Wonderful Adventures of Ambrosio,

FRANK OF THE ORDER OF CAPUCHINS,

WHO WAS DIVERTED FROM THE TRACK OF VICE BY THE

Artifices of a Female Demon,

That entered his Monastery disguised as a Novice, and after seducing him from his

VOW OF CELIBACY,

PRESENTED HIM WITH

A Branch of Enchanted Myrtle,

TO OBTAIN THE FURNISH OF THE BEAUTIFUL

Antonia of Madrid;

HOW HE WAS

DISCOVERED IN HER CHAMBER

BY HER MOTHER, WHOM HE MURDERED,

To keep his Crime a Secret;

And the Particulars of the Means by which he caused the

Body of Antonia

To be conveyed in a Sleep to the

DREARY VAULTS OF HIS OWN CONVENT,

WHERE HE

ACCOMPLISHED HIS WICKED MACHINATIONS

On the Innocent Virgin, whom he then

ASSASSINATES WITH A DAGGER,

PRESENTED HIM BY HIS ATTENDANT FIEND,

Who afterwards Betrays him to the

Judges of the Inquisition,

In the Dungeons of which he is Confin'd, and suffers Torture

and Pain, he Escapes from thence, he Judges near his

Soul and Body to the Devil,

Who Deceives him, and Inflicts a

MOST IGNOMINIOUS DEATH.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY W. MASON,

25, CLENKENWELL GREEN.

1796.

A Sicilian Romance

The House of Mazzini



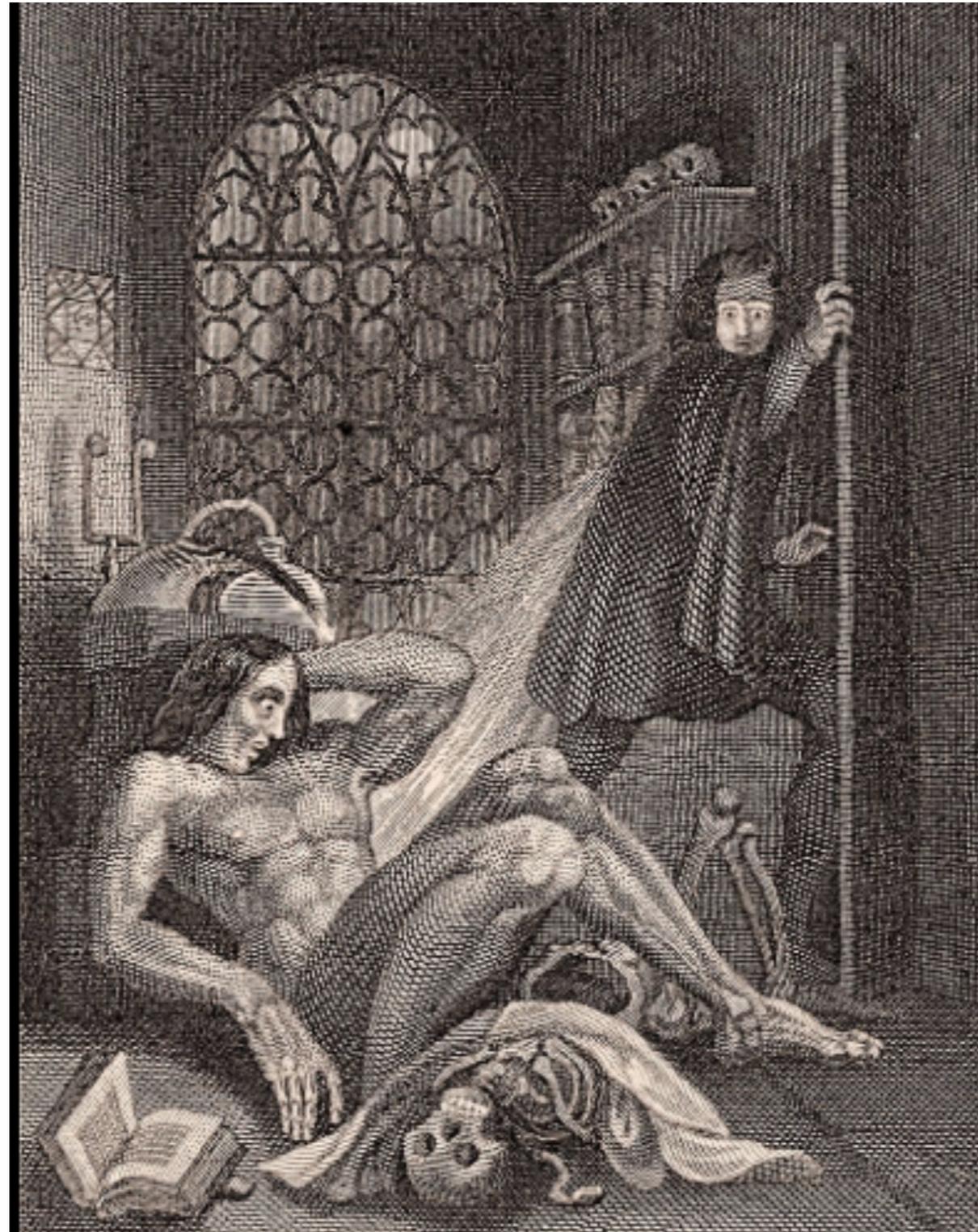
by

Ann Radcliffe

1796

1790

19thc Empire, Industrial Revolution, advances in scientific knowledge, Darwinian view of human evolution



1818

Fin de Siècle

- the city becomes the new site of the Gothic
- rise of psychoanalysis and religious crisis
- concerns with moral decadence and respectability
- sense of impending catastrophe.



OSCAR WILDE

THE PICTURE OF
DORIAN GRAY

ILLUSTRATED BY
LUI TRUGO

THREE SIRENS PRESS
NEW YORK

R

**The effects of terror in the Gothic novel
&
the imagination**

Terror?
Horror?
Beauty?



‘Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them.’

Anne Radcliffe

« In this idea originated the plan of the ‘Lyrical Ballads’; in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to personas and characters **supernatural**, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our **inward nature** a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these **shadows of imagination** that willing **suspension of disbelief** for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith »

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1817

Terror? Horror? Pain? Beauty?

The Sublime

ON closing this general view of beauty, it naturally occurs, that we should compare it with the sublime; and in this comparison there appears a remarkable contrast. For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small: beauty should be smooth and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates it often makes a strong deviation: beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy: beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure...

Edmund Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful* 1757

ous, if the pain is not carried to violence, and the terror is not conversant about the present destruction of the person, as these emotions clear the parts, whether fine or gross, of a dangerous and troublesome incumbrance, they are capable of producing delight, not pleasure; but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror; which as it belongs to self-preservation is one of the strongest of all passions. Its object is the sublime *. Its highest degree I call *astonishment*; the subordinate degrees are awe, reverence, and respect, which by the very etymology of the words shew from what source they are derived, and how they stand distinguished from positive pleasure.

* Part 2. sect. 2.

S E C T.

S E C T. VIII.

WHY THINGS, NOT DANGEROUS, PRODUCE A PASSION LIKE TERROR.

* A Mode of terror, or of pain, is always the cause of the sublime. For terror, or associated danger, the foregoing explication is, I believe, sufficient. It will require somewhat more trouble to shew that such examples, as I have given of the sublime in the second part, are capable of producing a mode of pain, and of being thus allied to terror, and to be accounted for on the same principles. And first of such objects as are great in their dimensions. I speak of visual objects.

* Part 1. sect. 7. Part 2. sect. 2.

S E C T.

Terror?
Horror?
Beauty?



"There," said Montoni, speaking for the first time in several hours, "is Udolpho."

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

The extent and darkness of these tall woods awakened terrific images in her mind...

‘How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! – Great God –! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.’

Frankenstein (1818), ch 5

Liminality

Exploring the 'third space'

The Gothic imagination is situated on the border, or on the threshold, dividing distinct spheres, identities or discourses.

This liminal, “third space” is an inherently uncanny, “alien territory”

- **generates new meanings, social relations and identities,**
- **disrupts and subverts established entities and orders.**

Liminal reading calls into question binary oppositions:

Rational § Irrational
Conscious § Unconscious
Animal § Human
Masculine § Feminine
Reality § Illusion
Fact § Fiction
Literature § Psychology
Original § Copy
Art § Life

The third space is characterised by:

- a potential for disorder
- asymmetry
- instability

Freud's
« The Uncanny »
1919



LATIN: (K. E. Gorges, *Deutschlateinisches Wörterbuch*, 1898). Ein unheimlicher Ort [an uncanny place]—**locus suspectus**; in unheimlicher Nachtzeit [in the dismal night hours] —*intempesta nocte*.

GREEK: (Rost's and Schenki's *Lexikons*). **Xenos** *strange, foreign*.

ENGLISH: (from dictionaries by Lucas, Bellow, Flügel, Muret-Sanders). Uncomfortable, uneasy, gloomy, dismal, uncanny, ghastly; (of a house) haunted; (of a man) a repulsive fellow.

FRENCH: (Sachs-Villatte). **Inquiétant, sinistre, lugubre, mal à son aise**.

SPANISH: (Tollhausen, 1889). Sospechoso, de mal agüero, lugubre, siniestro.

The Italian and the Portuguese seem to content themselves with words which we should describe as circumlocutions. In Arabic and Hebrew “uncanny” means the same as **“daemonic,” “gruesome.”**

Let us therefore return to the German language. In Daniel Sanders' *Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (1860), the following remarks [abstracted in translation] are found upon the word heimlich; I have laid stress on certain passages by italicizing them. Heimlich, adj.: I. Also heimelich, heinielig, belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, comfortable, homely, etc.

(a) (Obsolete) belonging to the house or the family, or regarded as so belonging (cf. Latin *familiaris*): Die Heimlichen, the members of the household; Der heimliche Rat [him to whom secrets are revealed] Gen. xli. 45; 2 Sam. xxiii. 23; now more usually Geheimer Rat [Privy Councilor], cf. Heimlicher.

(b) **Of animals: tame, companionable to man. As opposed to wild, e.g. “Wild animals . . . that are trained to be heimlich and accustomed to men.” “If these young creatures are brought up from early days among men they become quite heimlich, friendly,” etc.**

The commonest of all plots of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel involves a frail protagonist in terrible danger. She (more commonly than he) is placed in a hostile, threatening, mysterious environment, usually so prodigiously large that it dwarfs her; she is made prisoner; she is threatened by individuals who should protect her, parents and parent-figures. It is a nightmare, and perhaps the reason for its potent appeal is that it enables the reader to live vicariously through nightmare. It is not so terrible as it would be if one were asleep. It is not nearly so terrible as it would be in life. Facing up to one's fears is a needful process, and emotionally satisfying. Besides, there is something comforting, again almost magical, in anticipating the worst. It is a common intuition that the known evil never comes. If all eighteenth-century popular fiction – not merely the Gothic – rests ultimately on the simple black-and-white fables common to oral literature in many cultures, it may well be because in these reiterated adventures by surrogate figures there is reassurance and even the illusion of protection.

M. Butler,
Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries,
Oxford University Press.

How might the Marilyn Butler extract help us situate Angela Carter's stories within the Gothic tradition?

Manuel Aguirre 2011 'The Rules of Gothic Grammar'

[http://www.northangerlibrary.com/documentos/THE%20RULES%20OF%20GOTHIC%20GRAMMAR%20\(1.2\).pdf](http://www.northangerlibrary.com/documentos/THE%20RULES%20OF%20GOTHIC%20GRAMMAR%20(1.2).pdf)

Margaret Atwood, 'Running with the Tigers' in *Flesh and the Mirror : Essays on the art of Angela Carter*

Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' 1919

<https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/freud1.pdf>

Ann Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry'

http://seas3.elte.hu/coursematerial/RuttkayVeronika/radcliffe_sup.pdf