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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Humanities

**Politics and Power in the Gothic Drama of M.G. Lewis**

By

Rachael Pearson

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2011



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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

POLITICS AND POWER IN THE GOTHIC DRAMA OF M.G. LEWIS

Rachael Pearson

Matthew Lewis's 1796 novel *The Monk* continues to attract critical attention, but the accusation that it was blasphemous has overshadowed the rest of his writing career. He was also a playwright, M. P. and slave-owner. This thesis considers the need to reassess the presentation of social power, primarily that of a conservative paternalism, in Lewis's dramas and the impact of biographical issues upon this. As Lewis's critical reputation is currently built upon knowledge of him as a writer of 'Gothic' works, this thesis considers a range of his 'Gothic' plays. The Introduction explores the current academic understanding of Lewis and provides a rationale for the plays chosen. Chapter One explores how *The Monk* prefigures Lewis's dramas through its theatrical elements and Lewis's reaction to violence on the continent in the 1790s. The remainder of the thesis examines Lewis's deployment of three conventions of Gothic drama in order to explore social power. Chapter Two discusses the presentation of the Gothic villain as one who usurps and abuses power through a focus on *The Castle Spectre*. Chapter Three considers Lewis's Gothic heroes in *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*; *Rugantino, or, the Bravo of Venice* and *Venoni; or, the Novice of St. Mark's* against his actions in Parliament and the trial by Court-Martial of his uncle General Whitelocke. Lewis uses these plays to advocate the qualities of mercy, benevolence and courage in those with jurisdiction over others. Chapter Four considers Lewis's use of Gothic spectacle in two 1811 plays, *One O' Clock! or, the Knight and the Wood Daemon* and *Timour the Tartar*, which return to a focus on usurpation. Factors considered include the use of

Renaissance influences and Lewis's rift with his father. Finally, the Coda examines Lewis's attempts to put his theory of paternal power into practice when he inherited two Jamaican estates.

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## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Rachael Pearson, declare that the thesis entitled 'Politics and Power in the Gothic Drama of M.G. Lewis' and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission

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## **Introduction**

(5,421 words)



The aim of this study is to begin to reassess the work of Matthew G. Lewis, using a biographical perspective. Although Lewis is recognised as an important and influential figure in Gothic Literature, this is largely on the basis of one novel, *The Monk* (1796). This novel was so successful commercially that it gave Lewis the nickname ‘Monk’ Lewis, which lasted not only for the rest of his life but which has survived to the present. It was a controversial text, affording him a degree of infamy, due to its depiction of the ‘real’ supernatural, violence and sexual desire. Lewis was accused of blasphemy on the basis of remarks made by one character, Elvira, concerning the unsuitability of the bible to be read by her daughter. The fourth edition (1798) was heavily revised, a fact which, alongside the recall of unexpurgated copies, appears to have prevented Lewis and his publisher from prosecution.<sup>1</sup> Lewis’s resultant reputation as a writer whose work was believed, by some, to be shocking and detrimental to its readers is not based upon a consideration of his entire career, but a relatively small proportion of it. *The Monk* is one of his earliest works, and it is not written in the medium on which he would eventually focus. Indeed, it is his only work of extended, original prose. Lewis was, in fact, primarily a playwright. He had written work for the theatre prior to *The Monk*, and concentrated largely on this after the publication of the novel.

In the fifteen years from 1797-1812 (the year in which his father died and he inherited his Jamaican plantations and slaves), Lewis wrote sixteen plays in a variety of genres, including melodramas (his most ‘Gothic’ plays, as I will argue), tragedies, translations from French and German works and farces. These works outnumber his non-dramatic output, which is limited to the collection of poems *Tales of Wonder* (1801), the four-volume collection of short prose and poetic works *Romantic Tales* (1808) and the translated novel *Feudal Tyrants* (1806). Some of these plays were very successful commercially, enjoying long runs at Drury Lane or Covent Garden: *The Castle Spectre* (1797), in particular, was a huge box office success, taking a large amount of money and experiencing a lengthy first run before being

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<sup>1</sup> André Parreaux, *The Publication of *The Monk*: A Literary Event 1796:1798*. Études de Littérature Étrangère et Comparée (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1960) 112-114.

revived throughout much of the nineteenth century. Some were so successful that Lewis revamped them: *One O' Clock!* (1811), for example, is a revised version of *The Wood Daemon* (1807). Others, like *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*, were less lucrative. The critical reaction to Lewis has likewise been varied: the use of apparently sympathetic black characters in *The Castle Spectre* led to him being accused of harbouring then-scandalous democratic, abolitionist views and he also faced censure for his use of an on-stage ghost and working in the populist genre of melodrama. Other reviewers, however, praised Lewis for his skill within this medium, notably for his flair for devising dramatic spectacle; some defended him against the accusations of his detractors; and some, towards the end of his career, even praised the political implications of his works.

Despite this commercial and popular success as a playwright, few critical or scholarly works have considered these plays, and the majority of these have not taken them seriously. Additionally, there has been little work on the dramatic influences on *The Monk*, or the relationship between that novel and the plays which succeeded it. Scholars have begun to consider the link between Romantic-era Gothic texts and their Shakespearean influences – Angela Wright (2008), for instance, interprets the ghost in Ann Radcliffe's *Gaston de Blondville* politically and in relation to Radcliffe's use of Shakespeare – but the implications of Lewis's use of Shakespeare and Marlowe have yet to be fully considered.<sup>2</sup>

Although *The Monk* has remained in print and is easily available in a range of scholarly editions, Lewis's plays are now largely unknown. Only two (*The Castle Spectre* and *Timour the Tartar*) are available in specialised scholarly editions. The rest have all but disappeared, with availability limited to facsimile editions, the result not of work on Lewis but of the wider process of digitisation of many texts recently. It is a sign of the critical neglect of Lewis that this has only been the case over the last couple

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<sup>2</sup> See Angela Wright, 'In Search of Arden: Ann Radcliffe's William Shakespeare', in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis and Dale Townshend, Accents on Shakespeare Series (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008): 111 – 130, 120.

of years: even these editions were unavailable when this thesis was begun in 2005.

The growth of wider scholarship focussing on Gothic texts and the current, burgeoning interest in Romantic-era drama highlight the need for a reassessment of Lewis. *The Monk* needs to be considered alongside Lewis's dramatic works in order for his writing career and the novel itself, established as a key Gothic text, to be understood more fully. In order to do so, however, it is necessary to consider what the term 'Gothic' means in relation to literature. The term has proved nebulous, with many studies of Gothic fiction beginning with a consideration of the term and a justification for its study. It is generally acknowledged to have its roots in the 'graveyard poetry' of the eighteenth century and to have begun properly with the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. Fewer attempts have been made to define Gothic drama, though Walpole is again often considered its father, having written *The Mysterious Mother* in 1768. Paul Ranger, in his study '*Terror and Pity reign in every Breast*': *Gothic Drama in the London Patent Theatres, 1750-1820* (1991), one of the few works to concentrate on this form, cites the prologue to Lewis's *The Castle Spectre*, in which Lewis comments on aspects of setting and characterisation as well as a Shakespearean influence, as exemplifying the genre.<sup>3</sup> Ranger identifies many points which could qualify a dramatic work as 'Gothic', including settings (often ruined castles, gloomy forests and imposing mountains); the action taking place in the past, usually medieval Europe; the presence of the supernatural; the influence of the German dramatists Schiller and Kotzebue; the separation of relatives; as well as 'clearly delineated stock characters':

[T]he romantic hero and heroine; the villain, a personification of relentless greed or self-devouring jealousy and the divided hero, a man at odds with himself . . . lighter entertainment was provided by a bevy of humorous domestics or rustics.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Ranger, '*Terror and Pity reign in every Breast*': *Gothic Drama in the London Patent Theatres, 1750-1820* (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1991) 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Ranger, '*Terror and Pity reign in Every Breast*' 10.

Ranger acknowledges that such stock characters allowed actors to specialise, but that equivalent character types can also be found in Gothic prose fiction of the period, which therefore suggests that the Gothic mode transcends form. Several critics of Gothic novels have explored the symbolic functions of the settings.<sup>5</sup> Ranger notes that Gothic drama often explores the ‘dark side of human nature, its greed, lust and power, its attempts to over-reach’ and the fact that this led to criticism from the Tory periodical the *Anti-Jacobin Review*.<sup>6</sup> All of these aspects can be found in Lewis’s *The Castle Spectre* (Drury Lane, 1797); *Adelmorn, the Outlaw* (Drury Lane, 1801); *Rugantino; or, the Bravo of Venice* (Covent Garden, 1805); *Venoni; or, the Novice of St. Mark’s* (Drury Lane, 1808); *Timour the Tartar* (Covent Garden, 1811) and *One O’ Clock! or, the Knight and the Wood Daemon* (Lyceum, 1811). Of these, Bertrand Evans identifies *Rugantino* and *Venoni* as ‘melodramas’, in his study *Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley* (1947).<sup>7</sup> Michael R. Booth, in *English Melodrama* (1965), identifies distinct plot types for Gothic drama, definable by their stock settings and characters – the ‘castle-dungeon-ghost variety’ and the ‘bandit-forest-cottage sort’.<sup>8</sup> Lewis’s *The Castle Spectre* and *Adelmorn, the Outlaw* respectively exemplify these plots.

Michael Gamer (2002) has pertinently commented that ‘Gothic’s nostalgia for simpler and more hierarchical class and gender structures, its fabling about the birth of the British nation, its xenophobia and anti-Catholicism,

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Frances A. Chiu, “Faulty Towers: Reform, Radicalism and the Gothic Castle, 1760-1800”. *Romanticism on the Net* [online]. 44. Available from: <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2006/v/n44/013996ar.html>, 2006. [Accessed 29/08/2011].

<sup>6</sup> Ranger, ‘*Terror and Pity reign in Every Breast*’ 16.

<sup>7</sup> Bertrand Evans, *Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley*. University of California Publications in English 18 (Berkeley: U of California, 1947) 165. Evans also categorises *The Wood Daemon* (1807), an earlier version of *One O’ Clock!* as a melodrama, as well as *Raymond and Agnes*, an adaptation of *The Monk*, though that is unlikely to have been written by Lewis himself.

<sup>8</sup> Michael R. Booth, *English Melodrama* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965) 68. The aptness of Booth’s categorisation of Gothic plots was also cited by John Franceschina when discussing his choices for an anthology of Gothic melodramas by women. See John Franceschina, ed. *Sisters of Gore: Gothic Melodramas by British Women* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 6.

and its fondness for continental travel (not possible during the war years) all smack of the ideology of popular wartime fantasy'.<sup>9</sup> Again, this is true of Lewis's plays and, as this thesis explores, Lewis in particular had reason to engage with national issues during the war with France. Jerrold E. Hogle (2002) has also linked setting to common ingredients of plot, noting that:

A Gothic tale usually takes place . . . in an antiquated or seemingly antiquated space . . . within this space . . . are hidden secrets from the past . . . that haunt the characters, psychologically, physically or otherwise.

'These hauntings', Hogle continues, 'frequently assume the features of ghosts, spectres, or monsters' who 'manifest unresolved crimes or conflicts that can no longer be successfully buried from view'.<sup>10</sup>

Those features noted by Ranger, Gamer and Hogle can all be found in the plays listed above: the settings include subterranean spaces (*Venoni; One O' Clock*); over-reaching villains (Osmond, Hardyknute, Timour); physical and psychological hauntings (simultaneously, in the cases of Osmond and Adelmorn); European settings (France, Germany, Italy) and ancient buildings (*The Castle Spectre*). To define Gothic in these terms is to concur with what Jeffrey N. Cox (1992) has termed 'the most prevalent strategy' of identifying the genre – to consider common features of plot and setting, 'its appurtenances, particularly the almost obligatory castles and its resident villain'.<sup>11</sup> Cox also identifies an interpretation of Gothic which is of great use to this thesis: 'a political myth . . . a way of imagining the terrors of the French Revolution . . . or as a means to image the threatening rise of proletarian power'.<sup>12</sup> This interpretation agrees with another assertion of Hogle, that 'Gothic works hesitate between the revolutionary and the

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception and Canon Formation*. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism 40 (Cambridge: CUP, 2002) 45.

<sup>10</sup> Jerrold E. Hogle, 'Introduction: the Gothic in Western Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: CUP, 2002): 1-20, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey N. Cox, 'Introduction', *Seven Gothic Dramas: 1789-1825*, ed. Jeffrey N. Cox (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1992): 1-77, 6. Cox also acknowledges that Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* is 'an exemplary model' of such Gothic devices (5).

<sup>12</sup> Cox, *Seven Gothic Dramas* 7. Cox identifies Ronald Paulson, Peter Brooks and Chris Baldick as critics who have utilised these definitions.

conservative'.<sup>13</sup> This statement, in turn, complements Ian Haywood's (2006) more general claim that Romantic texts are characterised by a pattern of engagement with and withdrawal from political issues.<sup>14</sup> Lewis engaged with these 'appurtenances' of form and genre and his Gothic plays can be seen as a 'political myth'. I argue that, far from being a 'democrat' or 'Jacobin', as he was accused of being, Lewis's politics do not fit easily into either the Whig or Tory ideologies. Rather, he had a revisionist stance towards the authority and responsibilities of the ruling classes during his lifetime, advocating the paternalistic use of power. This was affected by domestic disorder, the slave trade and its abolition and the French Revolution, which can certainly be seen in this light.

Studying Lewis's works in relation to historical and biographical detail also allows an understanding of the way in which the texts share concerns with those written by other Romantic-era writers. *The Monk* has often been contrasted with the works of Ann Radcliffe. Criticism of this nature has often considered what has become known as 'male' and 'female' Gothic, or with the differences between 'horror' and 'terror'. It is not unusual for 'male' in this sense to be synonymous with 'horror' and 'female' with 'terror'. Such criticism is of great value and has in particular highlighted the way in which Gothic writers presented female experience, especially in relation to the ownership of property and the presentation of women as property. However, as Robert Miles (2004) has pointed out, some 'female' Gothic, including the work of Radcliffe, can also be seen to engage with more public, social issues.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the plot outline which Miles presents as typical of female Gothic novels is almost an exact synopsis of *The Castle*

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<sup>13</sup> Hogle, 'Introduction: The Gothic in Western Culture' 13.

<sup>14</sup> Ian Haywood, *Bloody Romanticism: Spectacular Violence and the Politics of Representation, 1776-1832*. Palgrave Studies in the Enlightenment, Romanticism and Cultures of Print (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 2.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Miles, 'Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, repr.; 2004): 41-57.

*Spectre*.<sup>16</sup> Miles also identifies the ‘male’ Gothic plot as often Oedipal.<sup>17</sup> Although Lewis’s works demonstrate a concern with patrician figures and a revisionist approach to such authority, and although a rift from his father can be seen to have influenced his works, his plots do not advocate an Oedipal stance advocating that such authority be overthrown. ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ Gothic were not clearly defined traditions in the seventeen-nineties. Lewis (not unusually for the time) was critical of female authors, but expressed great appreciation of Radcliffe’s writing in his correspondence to his mother and he, in turn, influenced the writing of women, notably Charlotte Dacre.

There has been relatively little consideration of the presentation of men and their roles in society in Gothic texts (‘male’ or otherwise), though it is a central concern of Lewis’s.<sup>18</sup> Though Lewis’s heroes often appear in conflict with authority, they never seek to overthrow it and the revisionist stance advocated by the dramas is presented through conflict with illegitimate, rather than legitimate, authority. As David Worrall (2004) has pointed out, ‘the strength of Gothic [in presenting political ideas to a wide audience] was that it had the fluidity to encompass high seriousness and low comedy’.<sup>19</sup> James P. Carson (2010) has identified Lewis’s paternalism towards his slaves and that ‘the problems of social control posed by . . . the French Revolution seemed . . . to be spreading to rebellious slaves on West Indian plantations’.<sup>20</sup> Some work has also acknowledged the influence of

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<sup>16</sup> ‘. . . an orphaned heroine in search of an absent mother, pursued by a feudal (patriarchal) father or his substitute, with the whole affair monitored by an impeccable but ineffectual suitor’. Miles, ‘Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis’ 43.

<sup>17</sup> Miles, ‘Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis’ 44. Miles also pinpoints the frequency of knife-wielding women in Lewis’s work (51), Lewis’s self-dramatisation (ibid.) and the influence of Shakespeare and (52 and 54 respectively), all of which are considered in this thesis.

<sup>18</sup> One of the few works on this topic is Kate E. Behr’s *The Representation of Men in the English Gothic Novel, 1762-1820*. Studies in British Literature 69 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> David Worrall, ‘The Political Culture of Gothic Drama’, in Punter, ed.: 94-106, 96.

<sup>20</sup> James P. Carson, *Populism, Gender, and Sympathy in the Romantic Novel*, Nineteenth Century Lives and Letters (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 102. Carson refers to Lewis as a writer not of ‘horror’ or ‘male’ Gothic but of ‘tropical’ Gothic.

Goethe and Schiller and, to a lesser extent, Marlowe and Shakespeare on Lewis. However, the implications of the latter two have not been fully considered. There is a need for a greater contextualisation of Lewis's works and this study will consider a number of unexpected links between these and some produced by other contemporary writers. Such a consideration is needed to help us gain an understanding of the way in which Lewis used his Gothic texts.

As it is beyond the scope of a study of this length to explore all of Lewis's plays, the six identified above will be taken as the main focus. This is for several reasons, all of which relate to developing a fuller understanding of Lewis's work: as these are the most 'Gothic' (in the area of their presentation of the supernatural and of threats to the heroes, heroines and the social order that such characters represent), they allow a logical furthering of the current understanding of Lewis as a Gothic writer (and it should be remembered that this is important in reassessing Lewis - even his 'serious' tragedies, *Alfonso, King of Castile* and *Adelgitha; or, the Fruits of a Single Error* include features which can be called 'Gothic', despite the fact that it would be inappropriate to use this label to refer to the entirety of each play). These works span the entirety of his career after *The Monk*; they include original works (*The Castle Spectre*, *Adelmorn the Outlaw*), translations (*Venoni*, *Rugantino*) and works which are based upon, but not direct translations of, the works of other writers (*One O' Clock*, *Timour the Tartar*); they include plays which were popular with the public (*The Castle Spectre*) and others which were less so (*Adelmorn the Outlaw*); some which rely heavily on staging and spectacle (*One O' Clock!*) and barely require any (*Venoni*). They show not only the Germanic influence for which Lewis was well-known (*Adelmorn* and *One O' Clock*) but also the French Neo-classicism which Douglass Thompson has identified in Lewis's work (*Venoni*) and the influence of the Renaissance-era writers William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe (*Timour the Tartar*).

These plays will be considered alongside *The Monk*. Some recent work, for example that of Christopher Maclachlan, has considered the influence of the theatre on Lewis's novel, but *The Monk* has not been studied in relation to

Lewis's own dramatic output. Cox (2002) has made the claim that many Gothic dramas were in fact serious works, as they both engaged with canonical Renaissance texts and with newer, German drama.<sup>21</sup> Lewis's plays are examples of this aspect of Gothic drama. As the thesis is focused on biographical and political influences on the plays, the approach taken is not one which foregrounds their performance history, though obviously there is benefit in considering aspects of their original presentation.

As Cox has emphasised, Gothic dramas of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries need to be considered in relation to the society and culture of the time. Cox writes that 'the Gothic drama provided a major new form of entertainment and of reflection upon a world in major upheaval'.<sup>22</sup> André Parreaux has shown that much of the furore surrounding *The Monk* was politically, rather than morally or aesthetically, motivated. Much criticism, in fact, has considered this novel to be concerned with rebellion and to have been influenced by the French Revolution. The following chapter will revisit this issue and I will go on to argue that Lewis's dramas advocate a revisionist, rather than revolutionary, stance and the beginnings of this can be seen in *The Monk*, where characters struggle under not only a repressive society but also the absence of any reasoned and rational authority. This concern with power and authority can be seen throughout Lewis's later plays, in which he examines its abuse and illegitimate use as well as exploring a reformist approach. This approach is the result of the times in which Lewis lived and his own position within society. As Paula Backscheider (1993) has pointed out, Gothic drama was popular in England during the period which included the madness of King George III and the Regency crisis accompanying this; revolutions in France and America, the industrial revolution, the Napoleonic wars, the abolition campaign and slave revolts.<sup>23</sup> As the son of the Deputy Secretary at War, the nephew of the

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<sup>21</sup> See Jeffrey N. Cox, 'English Gothic Theatre', in Hogle, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*: 125-144, 127.

<sup>22</sup> See Cox, 'English Gothic Theatre' 125.

<sup>23</sup> See Paula R. Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1993) 149.

attorney-general of Jamaica, the nephew of the Chief Justice of Jamaica, himself a M.P. and heir to two Jamaican sugar plantations reliant on slave labour, Lewis must have been aware of the fact that his finances and position in society were far from certain and that the authority of these roles was attended by responsibility.<sup>24</sup> As an attaché to The Hague in 1793, Lewis saw at first hand the violence on the continent and the influence of this is explored in the following chapter. In addition to having a personal interest in the public concerns of his time, Lewis was also familiar with social disruption in the form of domestic conflict, having experienced the split of his parents' marriage as well as his later rift with his father. The theme of family (through marriage and maternal and paternal characters) is also common in Lewis's work, as Macdonald has identified. Lewis, due to his public and personal responsibilities, makes an interesting and important case-study for a focus on the social context of romantic-era Gothic drama.

Lewis's works are concerned with the use and abuse of power. As Macdonald has observed, Lewis's plays are populated by kindly masters and faithful servants.<sup>25</sup> His villains are, without exception, those who have usurped the power of another, either by denying the practice of primogeniture, military force or underhand plotting. Lewis's villains have received some critical attention, but even this has been denied to his heroes, who are remarkable in that they rise above the insipidity of many Gothic heroes: such characters in Lewis's works are active and can be seen to be the embodiment of ideals of masculinity. I explore this in Chapter Three. Lewis's use of stage spectacle is often related to the political and social values of the plays, usually by highlighting the punishment of the villain or the return to order that, without exception, forms the resolution of the plot.

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<sup>24</sup> Lewis's maternal uncle Robert Sewell held the position of attorney-general of Jamaica until 1795, when he became Jamaica's agent in England. He joined parliament in 1796 and spoke out strongly against both abolition and improving the conditions of slaves. See D.L. Macdonald, *Monk Lewis: A Critical Biography* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2000) 48. The post of Chief Justice of Jamaica was held by Lewis's father's brother, John Lewis. See Louis F. Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1961) 1.

<sup>25</sup> Macdonald, writing about the presentation of feudalistic relationships in Lewis's works, claims that '[m]any of them [. . .] have literally feudal settings, and they are densely populated with faithful retainers.' Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 54.

These plays provide a comforting, nostalgic view of the class system and gender roles at a time of change and upheaval. The sense of Gothic threat in Lewis's works is a reflection and exploration of the threat of social destabilisation. Twinned themes of social disorder and personal responsibility can be found in all of his mature works. The aim of Lewis's reformist outlook is to avoid and rectify such destabilisation and this has its roots in his experiences of domestic and social disorder, as his letters and *Journal of a West-Indian Proprietor* reveal.

Despite the growth in critical work on Gothic literature, this is often genre-based; very few studies exist which focus exclusively on individual authors and Lewis is no exception to this. Of course, there are other Gothic dramatists who are worthy of attention, but Lewis is particularly so due to his considerable commercial success and the fact that the reputation of *The Monk* continues to eclipse a fuller understanding of his output.<sup>26</sup> His prominence within both the fields of Gothic literature and Romantic-era drama and indeed the overlap between these mark him out as significant.

Margaret Baron-Wilson, a friend of Lewis's mother, prepared the first biography in 1839. The letters and miscellaneous works reproduced here are invaluable primary material. However, as is perhaps unsurprising given her relationship with the Lewis family, she is also biased. Baron-Wilson's dating of the correspondence has been found to be inaccurate by the later biographer Louis F. Peck and she is variously at pains to defend Lewis's personal qualities and to criticise the nature of his works. She also glosses over aspects of Lewis's family circumstances which would then have been considered scandalous: the existence of Lewis's half-sister Miss Lacey being the most obvious. She includes many fascinating anecdotes about Lewis, some of which are explored later in this thesis. It has to be acknowledged, however, that there is sometimes no other evidence of the

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<sup>26</sup>For example, though relatively little work exists on Joanna Baillie, who wrote the successful Gothic plays *Orra* and *De Monfort* (the latter particularly popular and starring Sarah Siddons), she has chiefly been considered as a dramatist. Though Charles Maturin, now known for his 1820 novel *Melmoth the Wanderer*, also had great commercial success with his play *Bertram* (1816), he had much less luck with his later plays (unlike Lewis, who experienced both commercial success and failure after *The Castle Spectre*) and is less often cited as the representative of a particular style than Lewis.

events she describes, and the reader has to be aware that while what they are reading is an important recollection of Lewis it is possibly one which is inaccurate in some respects. Louis F. Peck produced *The Life of Matthew G. Lewis* in 1961, and rectified many of the problems relating to the ordering of the letters, some (though not all) of which he reprints. Peck's work is thorough, but, like Baron-Wilson, he is bound by the conventions and popular beliefs of his time. This is evident in two areas, one relating to Lewis's personal life and one relating to his profession: he glosses over the possibility that Lewis was homosexual and he is dismissive of some of Lewis's works, the dramas in particular. D.L. Macdonald's more recent *Monk Lewis: A Critical Biography* (2000) is detailed and persuasive: he has taken advantage of evidence that has been discovered since the publication of Peck's work, presents a strong case for Lewis having been homosexual and begins to consider parallels between Lewis's life and his works as well as exploring Lewis's status as a member of the plantocracy. Some issues raised by this work include Lewis's ambivalent attitudes towards his slaves, his paternalistic treatment of his mother, the influence of his parents' separation and the violence he witnessed in Europe on his writing, including the faithfulness of servants in the dramas. My thesis concurs with some of the ideas raised by Macdonald's work, especially those concerning Lewis's political views. In terms of literary criticism, Macdonald's approach is wide-ranging, however, and therefore does not consider any of the plays closely, nor the significance of their use of Gothic conventions. The significance of Lewis's uncle Lieutenant-Colonel John Whitelocke's trial by Court-Martial is also overlooked by Macdonald. This thesis aims to build upon Macdonald's important work by examining a section of Lewis's oeuvre in greater detail than has previously been done and by taking into account new evidence such as records of the Whitelocke trial.

This thesis therefore supplements previous studies in a number of ways. For instance, Macdonald identifies the importance of the profusion of kindly masters and devoted servants in Lewis's works, but does not explore the plays individually and in-depth. André Parreaux's *The Publication of 'The Monk'* meticulously considers the controversy surrounding the novel,

identifying political bias as the cause of this, but Lewis's other works fall outside the scope of his work. Parreaux does indicate, however, that this controversy has clouded subsequent criticism of Lewis, noting that 'reviewers and critics did all they could' to thwart his career.<sup>27</sup> Given the extent of the novel's notoriety, it is perhaps surprising that this is the only full-length study to concentrate upon it and that no-one has taken up the challenge of reassessing Lewis in the way in which Parreaux implies is warranted. Syndy M. Conger's *Matthew G. Lewis, Charles Robert Maturin and the Germans: An Interpretative Study of the Influence of German Literature on Two Gothic Novels* (1977) discusses the literary background of *The Monk* and is extremely useful, but again does not explore the dramas or place the novel within the context of his overall writing career. The only existing full-length work on Lewis's overall literary output, rather than his life, is Joseph J. Irwin's *M.G. "Monk" Lewis* (1976), which, though useful, is an introduction to, rather than exploration of, the texts. For the reasons explained above, such an exploration is merited and this thesis aims to begin this process.

Recent critical works which, though not focused specifically on Lewis or even Gothic literature, explore the way in which various Romantic-era texts engage with the social and political environment in which they were produced include Ian Haywood's *Bloody Romanticism: Spectacular Violence and the Politics of Representation, 1776 – 1832*, cited above, and Judith Pascoe's *Romantic Theatricality* (1997), which examines the way in which several events of the era were theatricalised in a culture which was becoming more concerned with celebrity. Paula R. Backscheider's *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* considers the ways in which a range of dramatic genres engaged with the culture in which they were produced, including Gothic drama.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Parreaux, *The Publication of 'The Monk'* 159.

<sup>28</sup> There have been a number of other historical studies which focus on events in England at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, some of which also refer to the significance of the theatre. Those which are relevant to this study include Marc Baer's *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London* (1992); Venetia Murray's *High Society in the Regency Period: 1788 – 1830* (1999); Ronald Paulson's *Representations of*

Backscheider's work is an important step in reassessing Lewis: she both discusses *The Castle Spectre* in some detail (though as an exemplary 'Gothic' text, not in relation to Lewis's overall career) and identifies the social and political influences on Gothic drama generally:

A few of the major events of the last quarter of the eighteenth century were the American Revolution, the Gordon Riots, the Regency Crisis, the French Revolution, the Reign of Terror, and the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars. In addition, Britain had to absorb the massive physical and social dislocations of the agrarian and industrial revolutions, navy mutinies, Irish unrest, and the arming of British citizens in preparation for a French invasion in the winter of 1797-98.<sup>29</sup>

The winter of 1797-8 was the time when *The Castle Spectre* was first performed. Backscheider could also have listed slave revolts and the ongoing abolition debate here, both of which affected Lewis. As asserted above, Lewis had direct experience of the debate surrounding the slave trade and violence on the Continent: he also, as a later chapter will explore, saw his uncle court-martialled for failing in his duties in Buenos Aires. This latter fact is discussed by Baron-Wilson, though she lifts sections verbatim from the original published report and does not consider its influence on Lewis. As mentioned above, this incident is not discussed by Macdonald.

Several editions of *The Monk* are currently in print, including scholarly editions. Four editions have been used in this thesis: Christopher Maclachlan's edition for Penguin (reprinted 1998), as the introduction contains the most thorough exploration of the influence of the theatre and Shakespeare (especially *Romeo and Juliet*) on the novel; Howard Anderson's 1978 edition for Oxford World's Classics, was reissued in 1998 with a useful introduction by Emma McEvoy which also identifies the

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*Revolution (1789-1820)* (1983); Edward Royle's *Revolutionary Britannia? Reflections on the Threat of Revolution in Britain, 1789 – 1848* (2000); Gillian Russell's *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793-1815* (1995); Julia Swindells's *Glorious Causes: The Grand Theatre of Political Change 1789 to 1833* (2001); George Taylor's *The French Revolution and the London Stage 1789-1805* (2000); Dror Wharman's *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780 – 1840* (1995); and David Worrall's *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality, 1782 – 1832: The Road to the Stage* (2007).

<sup>29</sup> Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 149.

influence of the theatre, and of tragedies in particular, on the novel; and D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf's 2004 edition for Broadview Press, which explores the text's relationship to slavery and the French Revolution. Judith Terry's edition of Lewis's *Journal of a West-India Proprietor* (Oxford World's Classics, 1999) is an important source, as is Douglass H. Thompson's edition of *Tales of Wonder* for Broadview Press (2009), which considers the significance of nationalism within the collection of poems. Reliable, modern editions of the plays are scarcer. Jeffrey N. Cox's *Seven Gothic Dramas 1789 – 1825* (1992) contains *The Castle Spectre*, impressively annotated with information about revisions of and to the source texts. Likewise, *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama* (2003), edited by Jeffrey N. Cox and Michael Gamer, contains a well-researched, introduced and annotated *Timour the Tartar*.

Lewis's other plays, however, have not been published in critical editions and it is in any case desirable that a project of this type uses first editions of the texts, when possible. *Adelmorn, the Outlaw* was published by J. Bell in London in 1801 and the Dublin publisher Thomas Burnwe produced an edition in the same year. *Rugantino* was published in 1806 in London by J.F. Hughes, and later editions include W. Oxberry's (1820) and an edition published in 1822 in America by Wells and Lilly. *Venoni* was published in London by John Cumberland in an undated edition and by Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme in 1809. *One O' Clock! or, the Knight and the Wood Daemon* was published by Lowndes and Hobbes in 1811, shortly after its first performance; then again in 1824 in Oxberry's English Drama series and in 1833 by John Cumberland – a date which suggests that the Cumberland edition of *Venoni* may also have been published long after its first performance. Differences between the editions tend to be minor, and, when they are important, they are discussed in the relevant chapter of this thesis. Generally, those texts published by Oxberry and Cumberland are acting editions, a little briefer than earlier versions and tell us a little less about Lewis's intentions, due to their omissions, especially of the prefaces he sometimes included. They are, however, crucial to understanding how the plays were actually performed.

The aims of this thesis are twofold: to explore Lewis's Gothic dramas more closely than has previously been done, in relation to their historical context and the better known *The Monk*; and to investigate the biographical and political influences on his writing. Lewis's use of Shakespearean and Marlovian plots is considered as one of the ways in which he dramatises his political and social ideas. Each chapter of this thesis looks at a work or group of works, using these to highlight various 'Gothic' elements most prominently used by Lewis. The chapters are arranged in a broadly chronological order, which allows us to see that although Lewis's views and concerns remained largely unaltered throughout his writing career, there are subtle shifts in focus. Chapter One focuses on *The Monk*, exploring its theatrical elements and heritage and also its presentation of a society which lacks a reliable, paternal and rational authority figure; it is this element which leads to the excess and horror for which the novel is infamous and is, I contend, the result of Lewis's experiences of violence in Weimar. The following chapters consider Lewis's use of three conventions of Gothic drama: the villain, the hero and spectacle. Chapter Two considers Lewis's depiction of Gothic villainy and focuses on the character of Osmond from *The Castle Spectre*, exploring his usurpation of his brother's legitimate (by right of primogeniture) authority and his association with the black character Hassan. Links can be seen between Lewis's earlier novel, with its portrayal of a society with no legitimate authority figure; and the play's focus on an illegitimate authority figure. The character of Earl Percy in this play, though in many respects a typically well-intentioned but ultimately ineffectual hero, nevertheless foreshadows, in his charitable treatment of his dependents, the more forceful heroes who are the focus of Chapter Three. This chapter considers the middle period of Lewis's career, when his relationships with his mother, Sir Walter Scott, the novelist Isabella Kelly and her son William reveal Lewis's tendency towards a paternalistic perspective. Lewis can be seen to engage with contemporary ideas concerning masculinity and duty to others through his depiction of the eponymous characters in *Venoni*; *Adelmorn*, *the Outlaw* and *Rugantino*. The focus of the plays moves away from the effects of illegitimate authority and towards an exploration of ways in which legitimate authority can be revised

and maintained. In doing so Lewis returns to themes present in earlier works, such as the importance of qualities such as mercy and gratitude. The significance of the Whitelocke trial is also discussed at this point. Chapter Five considers the spectacular nature of Lewis's works, including his use of Shakespearean and Marlovian elements, the supernatural and music. Though spectacle is famously evident in *The Monk* and *The Castle Spectre*, it is even more so in the two plays from the end of Lewis's career considered here: *One O' Clock! or, the Knight and the Wood Daemon* and *Timour the Tartar*. These plays, produced during Lewis's long rift with his father, return to a focus on the disruption of social order and its restoration. Finally, the brief coda explores the parallels between the ideas present in these dramas and Lewis's self-representation, in his *Journal of a West India Proprietor* (1834, reprinted in a scholarly edition by Oxford University Press, 1999), as a sometimes benevolent, sometimes maligned, slave-owner who made many reforms to the running of his Jamaican estates. He was to put into effect some of the methods for retaining order that he had theorised in his plays, with varying success.



**Chapter One:**

**The authority vacuum and theatricality of *The Monk*.**

(9,781 words)



In 1830, Sir Walter Scott referred to *The Monk* as a 'juvenile production' in his *Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad*.<sup>30</sup> This expression encapsulates some hitherto unexplored elements of the novel. Superficially, it damns its literary value whilst allowing the author the excuse of youth; however, Scott's phrasing also hints at the position of the text within Lewis's literary career, and it is this implication which is of interest here. The aim of this chapter is to locate *The Monk* within Lewis's writing career, considering its biographical influences, the nature and significance of theatrical influences on the text and its response to Lewis's experiences of the French Revolution. Exploring the novel in this way allows it to be understood as a text marking the transition from Lewis's parodic juvenilia to his later plays, as it shares similarities and differences with both. It also allows us to see that some of Lewis's concerns remain unaltered from his earliest works.

The idea that *The Monk* is a work which bridges Lewis's juvenilia and the plays, poetry and translations which form his mature output has not previously been explored in depth. In fact, the novel introduces themes and character types which are common in Lewis's later work, despite the fact that it is not written in the form that he went on to specialise in. Elements of Lewis's later work which appear for the first time in *The Monk*, or which are dealt with there in a way which marks a break from his juvenilia, include the use of Germanic literary influences combined with Shakespearean allusions, especially to *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*; an awareness of the value of mercy as a means of social control; the association of Gothic threat with the absence or corruption of a male authority figure; the use of spectacular set-pieces, often featuring supernatural elements; the female character type of the knife-wielding woman (influenced by Sarah Siddons's interpretation of Lady Macbeth); and of paternal inflexibility.

Many of these elements, as D.L. Macdonald has indicated, have their origins in Lewis's unusual family situation and an awareness of himself as a

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<sup>30</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad* [online]. Available from: [www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/works/poetry/apology/essay.html](http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/works/poetry/apology/essay.html), 1830. [Accessed 06/12/2009].

Member of Parliament and a scion of the planter classes during the time of the French Revolution and abolition.<sup>31</sup> Lewis's family background of plantation-holders in Jamaica and the political careers of both himself and his father would have ensured that he was aware of threats to his status and livelihood. This social and political situation was mirrored in the fraught domestic situation of his family, which saw him become an intermediary figure between his separated parents and eventually estranged from his father. Around the time of Lewis's sixth birthday in the summer of 1781, his mother eloped with the family's music master, Samuel Harrison, leaving Lewis and his three siblings.<sup>32</sup> In 1783, Lewis's father petitioned Parliament, unsuccessfully, for a divorce. Lewis remained close to his mother, writing frequent letters, but his relationship with his father never fully recovered after the latter began an affair with Mrs. Ricketts, a family friend, in 1803.<sup>33</sup> Lewis's letters reveal that he felt a strong sense of responsibility to both parents as well as to his younger siblings.

These events informed Lewis's writing. For example, his mother figures are flawed or in some way absent, misguided, or gullible, but well-intentioned: some unwittingly endanger their daughters (Elvira, the Marchioness Caprara); some are spectral (Evelina, Elvira) or forcibly separated from their child (Zorilda). *The Monk* also marks Lewis's growing awareness of himself as a member of the planter class and the challenges that this involved in 1795. He would have been aware of the threat posed to his livelihood by the call for abolition: the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade had been founded in 1787 and the onset of the French Revolution in 1789 would have reinforced his awareness of the fragility of social status and

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<sup>31</sup> Macdonald writes of 'Lewis's constant (if not quite unchanging) personal preoccupations' originating from 'the failure of his parents' marriage, from his relationships with his mother and father, and from his sexuality.' (Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* viii). Macdonald goes on to assert that 'the personal is political, of course, and the political is personal too . . . [t]he problem of slavery . . . seems to have shaped every aspect of Lewis's personal life.' (Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* ix).

<sup>32</sup> Lewis had a younger brother, Barrington, who was disabled after an accident, and two younger sisters, Maria and Sophia. His mother gave birth to his half-sister, 'Miss Lacey', roughly a year after her elopement.

<sup>33</sup> Mrs. Ricketts was widowed before this affair began: Lewis objected to her because he thought she wished for his mother's death in order to be able to marry his father.

power.<sup>34</sup> The character Lorenzo owns estates in Hispaniola, and ‘the Indies’ are twice mentioned in the novel, with interesting implications: they are the exotic, off-stage setting for Elvira as she raises Antonia, and are mentioned by Ambrosio as a symbol of wealth and plenty when thinking aloud about Antonia – ‘Not for Indies would I make that gentle bosom know the tortures of despair’.<sup>35</sup> Despite the precarious position of the slave trade, Lewis as a young man clearly thought favourably of the wealth it bought. The influence of slavery on the novel has only recently come to critical attention, through the biographical and editorial work of D.L. Macdonald and the criticism of James P. Carson. Carson has noted the paternalistic methods of slave control used by Lewis in Jamaica, and notes parallels with the treatment of women in *The Monk*. Carson identifies Lewis’s introduction of Christianity to his slaves as one such method of control and suggests that Matilda’s invocation of Satan in *The Monk* (explored from a theatrical perspective below) possibly includes elements of Obeah.<sup>36</sup> *The Monk*, then, is a pivotal work in Lewis’s career, in which he begins to explore serious issues which affected both his domestic circumstances and place in society. The parallels between the structures of family and the state are explored below.

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<sup>34</sup> It is worth mentioning Lewis’s poem ‘The Fate of Kings’ here, in which he hints at his awareness of the responsibility of rule and the importance of maintaining the devotion of subjects in the phrase ‘Whether tyrannic Pride his purple soil’d/Or patriot subject loved his mild command’. M.G. Lewis, ‘The Fate of Kings’, in *Elegant Extracts: A Unique Selection, Moral, Instructive and Entertaining, From the Most Eminent British Poets, and Poetical Translators*, ed. R.A. Davenport. [Online]. 6 Vols. Available from: [http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=hLcDAAAQAAJ&pg=PA1&dq=m+g+lewis+poems+the+fate+of+kings&hl=en&ei=jK5cToeSD8ypgbPssGSAG&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=hLcDAAAQAAJ&pg=PA1&dq=m+g+lewis+poems+the+fate+of+kings&hl=en&ei=jK5cToeSD8ypgbPssGSAG&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false), (Chiswick: C and A Whittingham, 1827) 4: 144-151, 145 [Accessed 30/08/2011]. It is also included in Lewis, M.G. *Poems by M.G. Lewis, Esq* (London: D.N. Shurry, 1812).

<sup>35</sup> Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. Howard Anderson (Oxford: OUP, 1995) 244. Future references from this edition will be given in parentheses after the quotation.

<sup>36</sup> Carson, *Populism, Gender and Sympathy* 88. Carson considers Obeah to be a marker of the slaves’ cultural identity, something to be negated if control was to be maintained successfully by the plantation-holder (97-8). However, though Lewis also became a godfather to some of the children born on the plantation, his view of actively advocating a conversion to Christianity in the *Journal* is ambiguous.

## Lewis's juvenilia and influences on *The Monk*

Prior to his production of *The Monk* Lewis wrote a play, *The East Indian*, and began a parody of the sentimental novel, *Effusions of Sensibility*. The former (written before Lewis was sixteen) borrows heavily from the novels *Sidney Biddulph* by Frances Sheridan and Fanny Burney's *Cecilia*. It is likely that the title is a reference to the eighteenth-century play *The West Indian*, highlighting Lewis's awareness of popular drama and his preoccupation with the colonies.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, *The East Indian*, though derivative, introduces two themes which were to become the focus of much of Lewis's work – the issue of female virtue and the importance of mercy, though they are dealt with differently here, within the confines of a domestic comedy. Later works would examine these more seriously, using national conflict and power, in addition to the family.

Macdonald has argued that the ambivalence towards women in Lewis's work is the result of his mother's affair and his parents' separation. To this I would add that Lewis's experiences left him with the view that social orders and structures should be maintained if possible and that mercy is a valuable and expedient means of maintaining order, as the recipient's gratitude would result in pliancy – a form of self-enslavement. Such a theory was already part of the culture, as George Boulukos (2008) has pointed out; the notion of 'gratitude' was the defining element of a number of 'hierarchical relationships' in the seventeenth century and 'by the end of the eighteenth century, "benevolence" had become an ideal by which to judge those in positions of power'.<sup>38</sup> Boulukos argues that the figure of the grateful slave was a development of such idealised relationships.<sup>39</sup> I would also emphasise

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<sup>37</sup> *The East Indian* was eventually performed as a benefit for the actress Dorothy Jordan and was revised as the 'comic opera' *Rich and Poor* in 1812.

<sup>38</sup> George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008) 20-21. The relationships of power include gendered relationships, where men held authority, and those between an employer and his servants.

<sup>39</sup> Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave* 75. Boulukos claims the first example of this is to be found in Daniel Defoe's *Colonel Jack* (1722). The freed slave Olaudah Equiano advocated a similar approach to managing slaves in his 1789 autobiography. This is discussed in the Coda.

that Lewis grew up with the awareness that he would not only one day inherit two slave plantations but also that he was intended by his father (then the Deputy Secretary at War) for a diplomatic career. His first biographer, Margaret Baron-Wilson, notes this influenced his studies, which comprised not only the Classical languages but time spent in Europe speaking modern foreign languages.<sup>40</sup>

*The Effusions of Sensibility* was, according to Margaret Baron-Wilson, written when Lewis was sixteen, after *The East Indian* and before *The Monk*. It is an incomplete epistolary work, comprising letters between Lady Honoria Harrowheart and Miss Sophonisba Simper when the former leaves the countryside for London.<sup>41</sup> Here, Lewis begins to critically consider the stock character types of popular fiction, and critiques the issue of sensibility. The text uses parody to undercut outbursts of sensibility, highlighting the need for rationality and placing Lewis in a literary tradition alongside his contemporary Jane Austen, who also used parody in her juvenilia to deconstruct existing literary forms before constructing her own.<sup>42</sup>

Lewis also deconstructs overly sentimental language, a quality common to eighteenth century heroines in this work:

Fair and smiling blushed the young and rubicund morn when  
I stopt into my father's post-chaise and four, on Friday last.  
The azure atmosphere smiled with touching serenity; the  
feathered songsters poured forth their early orisons from the  
May-besprinkled bushes; and the heifers, hastening to their  
daily labours, lowed cheerfully to hail the gold-streaked  
dawn.<sup>43</sup>

By putting such flowery description into a first-person narrative, Lewis exposes its far-fetched nature, making it seem all the more ridiculous. It

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<sup>40</sup> [Mrs. Cornwall Baron-Wilson]. *The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis, With Many Pieces in Prose and Verse, Never Before Published*. 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1839, repr.; Kessinger, n.d.) 1:19.

<sup>41</sup> A section of the work was published in Baron-Wilson's biography, as cited from below.

<sup>42</sup> Works classed as Austen's juvenilia were written between 1787-1793. See Jane Austen, *Love and Freindship and Other Writings*, ed. Janet Todd (London: Phoenix, 1998) x.

<sup>43</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 243.

critiques some of the popular fiction of his lifetime and shows a sophisticated knowledge of a style that he would later reject for the direct narrative voice of *The Monk*.<sup>44</sup> It is this directness that added to its lurid, visual and theatrical nature. *The Effusions of Sensibility* focuses on events which befall heroines, something which his later works move away from. Although ensuing works often featured victimised heroines, they are rarely, in fact, the main focus of the plot. Rather, his concern with paternalistic power structures leads to the prominence of male characters and influences the qualities he attributes to his heroes and villains.

The accusation of plagiarism was often levelled at Lewis during his career and he acknowledged many of his sources in his published works. His use of often melodramatic Germanic influences led to some critical objections during his lifetime and modern scholars have thoroughly explored this aspect of Lewis's work.<sup>45</sup> As a result, the relationship of his work to that of his English contemporaries and influences has been overshadowed, though the introductions to both the Penguin and Oxford editions of the novel explore elements of *The Monk* that are theatrical. Recent work by Michael Gamer and Robert Miles, Dale Townshend and Jerrold E. Hogle (all 2008) has also built upon this, identifying echoes in the novel of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.<sup>46</sup> Hogle has written that '[t]he 1790s needed the Gothic as never before to address by symbolic displacement an extremely backward-longing and forward-moving era, and the Gothic was ready to meet the need because it harkened back so thoroughly to the most Janus-faced works of Shakespeare, who arose to his own prominence in the 1590s', a decade of

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<sup>44</sup> Lewis's critical understanding of literature, evident in this parody but also in his translations of foreign works and his advice to the young Walter Scott as both worked on *Tales of Terror*, is another aspect of his career which has been masked by his reputation for the lurid.

<sup>45</sup> Notably, for example, Syndy M. Conger's *Matthew G. Lewis, Charles Robert Maturin and the Germans: An Interpretative Study of the Influence of German Literature on Two Gothic Novels*. Salzburg Studies in English Literature. Romantic Reassessments (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, U Salzburg, 1977).

<sup>46</sup> See Dale Townshend, 'Gothic and the Ghost of *Hamlet*' and Michael Gamer and Robert Miles, 'Gothic Shakespeare on the Romantic Stage' in Drakakis and Townshend, eds., *Gothic Shakespeares*: 60-97 and 131-152 respectively.

similar challenges.<sup>47</sup> Plays which are echoed in the novel include *Romeo and Juliet*, which has been proposed by Maclachlan as a source for the subterranean rape scene; *Dr. Faustus* (identifiable in the pact Ambrosio takes part in at the end of *The Monk*, as well as in *One O' Clock*; and Jacques Boutet de Monvel's *Les Victimes Cloîtrées* (often quoted as the inspiration for the sub-plot concerning Agnes's incarceration and which Lewis later translated as *Venoni*).<sup>48</sup> Less explored have been the influence of *Macbeth* on Lewis's works – not so much of Shakespeare's text as of eighteenth-century performances of the play, especially the popular image of the actress Sarah Siddons as Lady Macbeth, explored in detail below. Writing to his mother in 1792, Lewis mentions '*Les Victimes Cloîtrées*' alongside another dramatic work which seems to bear similarities with the later sub-plot of *The Monk*:

There is an opera, called 'Le Touterrein' [sic], where a woman is hid in a cavern in her jealous husband's house; and afterwards, by accident, her child is shut up there also, without food, and they are not released until they are perishing with hunger.<sup>49</sup>

What is not normally noted is that the combination of references to such polarities of literary works – from works of the English Renaissance and the German Romantic periods – was, in fact, considered original at the time.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Jerrold E. Hogle, 'Afterword', in Drakakis and Townshend, eds., *Gothic Shakespeares*: 201-220, 211.

<sup>48</sup> *Romeo and Juliet* has been explored more thoroughly in relation to the novel in Yael Shapira's essay 'Into the Madman's Dream: the Gothic abduction of *Romeo and Juliet*' (2009). This essay is included in *Shakespearean Gothic*, ed. Christy Desmet and Anne Williams. Gothic Literary Studies (Cardiff: U of Wales P, 2009): 133-154.

<sup>49</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 60-61. Lewis refers to Joseph Marsollier's *Camille ou le Souterrain*. See Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 101.

<sup>50</sup> Parreaux attributes some of the novel's popular success to the taste for Germanic literature fed by the publication in 1796 of translations of Burger's ballad *Lenore* and of Karl Grosse's novel *Horrid Mysteries*. Parreaux points out that it is this novel which shares an 'erotic element' with *The Monk* which was rare at this point in time. Parreaux also, like Bertrand Evans, indicates that Lewis is a more important cultural figure than is generally acknowledged amidst the controversy surrounding his works – he 'was able to play a decisive part in the popularizing of German literature in England'. Parreaux, *The Publication of 'The Monk'* 26-29. Evans has also written that Lewis 'reached maturity precisely in time to inherit the combined properties of English and German subliterate materials, and to use the so-called new melodrama introduced from France. Better than any

It is with *The Monk*, in fact, that these influences begin to combine to produce some very effective Gothic works. D.L. Macdonald (2004) has explored the influence of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* on *The Monk*, particularly in its use of dreams. Macdonald makes the point that Lorenzo's dream about Antonia being tortured by a demon is indicative of the nobleman's own faults, writing that '[t]he monster may represent an unacknowledged side of Lorenzo himself'.<sup>51</sup> Macdonald goes on to reiterate that '[b]y giving Lorenzo a dream clearly based on Lovelace's, Lewis suggests that the monster's pride, lust and inhumanity are Lorenzo's as well as Ambrosio's'.<sup>52</sup> This is important in understanding *The Monk*. What Macdonald does not go on to explore is the fact that there are no fully virtuous and trustworthy young men in the novel, not even the heroes who fail in their attempts to help Antonia and Agnes. This is, I contend, the main source of Gothic threat in the novel, linked to its political implications. In later works, the threat arises, as is the case here, from the corruption or absence of such a hero, or is nullified by the presence of such a character. Also implicit in Macdonald's assertion is that a reader, in order to understand this threat, must have a good knowledge of *Clarissa*. In other words, Lewis, in a somewhat more sophisticated way than in *The Effusions of Sensibility*, has deconstructed and reconstructed his source material to demonstrate the importance of appropriate masculine behaviour. This becomes a key issue in the plays from the middle period of his career, produced when Britain was at war with France, when Lewis began his patronage of William Kelly and the slave trade was eventually abolished. Though plays were censored politically at this point in history, Lewis used the conventions associated with the stock characters of Gothic drama to continue to explore issues relating to power and masculinity.

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other, he represents the juncture of the native and foreign streams'. See Evans, *Gothic Drama* 132.

<sup>51</sup> D.L. Macdonald, 'A Dreadful Dreadful Dream': Transvaluation, Realization, and Literalization of *Clarissa* in *The Monk*', in *Gothic Studies*.6.2, November 2004:156-171, 157.

<sup>52</sup> Macdonald, 'A Dreadful, Dreadful Dream' 161.

## **The scandal of *The Monk* and its political implications**

*The Monk*'s reputation as a scandalous, shocking work has endured for over two hundred years and is at the same time unsurprising and misleading. Lewis was accused of immorality and blasphemy in the novel, but there was in fact a political element involved in this. *The Monk* was published just eighteen months after the arrest of the melodramatic playwright Thomas Holcroft for suspected treason and within two years of the 1794 treason trials of Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke and John Thelwall. 1794 had also seen the suspension of Habeas Corpus and fear, of both sedition and the corresponding societies, was high. Concerns about the morality of *The Monk* did not come to the fore until, as André Parreaux has pointed out, Lewis acknowledged his authorship when the second edition was published in the late summer of 1796:

So far most reviews had been . . . favourable; and even when they were not, they did not unduly stress the moral point of view. It was only after the identity of the author was revealed that the book began to be branded as immoral. The fact that the writer was a Member of Parliament and the son of the Deputy Secretary at War, a frequenter and a friend of the aristocracy, seemed to make his authorship of *The Monk* an unpardonable offence.<sup>53</sup>

Lewis appears to have become the victim of a politically-motivated smear campaign and his own ambiguous political views, not wholeheartedly those of the Whigs nor of Pitt's Tories, then in government, meant that he was susceptible to criticism from supporters of both sides.<sup>54</sup> Parreaux holds up the fourth dialogue of *The Pursuits of Literature* (1797) by the Tory and

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<sup>53</sup> Parreaux, *The Publication of 'The Monk'* 87.

<sup>54</sup> Macdonald has noted that 'When he took his seat, Fox crossed the House to congratulate him on his novel' (Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 129), but 'The tension between his social and parliamentary lives was more than a matter of scheduling: Lewis dined with the Whigs but tended to vote with the Tories . . . The ambivalence seems characteristic; one should add that he rarely bothered to vote at all' (Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 157). In fact, the occasions when he did vote are all the more instructive precisely because of this rarity. I explore these instances in Chapter Three. By contrast, Markman Ellis makes a case for Lewis sharing the political views of the Whigs, as does Victor Sage. See Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000, repr.; 2003) 108 and Victor Sage, 'Black Venice: Conspiracy and Narrative Masquerade in Schiller, Zschokke, Lewis and Hoffmann'. *Gothic Studies* 8.1 (May 2006): 52-72, 61.

anti-Jacobin T.J. Mathias as an example of criticism which stressed Lewis's background. It is the famous review by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, then still a liberal, for the *Critical Review* which attacks Lewis's morality and presentation of religion whilst using his parliamentary status against him, writing that the novel was 'a poison for youth, and a provocative for the debauchee', the censoring of the Bible was an 'impiety . . . equalled only by its impudence', calling Lewis 'the author of these blasphemies' and stating that 'the author is a man of rank and fortune . . . a LEGISLATOR! – We stare and tremble'.<sup>55</sup> Even this review, however, admitted the novel's better points.<sup>56</sup>

The censure of Lewis, even after his authorship was known, was not universal. In April 1797, 'A Friend to Genius' published 'An Apology for the Monk' in the *Monthly Mirror*, claiming the novel is 'well calculated to support the cause of virtue'.<sup>57</sup> This goes on to assert that 'when the critic stares and trembles to find the author of the Monk a legislator, his horror is not reasonable'.<sup>58</sup> *The Monthly Mirror* had published a glowing review of the novel, in June 1796, claiming that Lewis's writing is 'masterly' and 'impressive' and that the reviewer cannot 'remember to have read a more interesting production'. The novel, in fact, 'reflects the highest credit on the judgement and imagination of the writer' as well as demonstrating his 'poetical skills'.<sup>59</sup> So much for the blasphemous poisoner of youth that Lewis was presented as after his identity became known.

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<sup>55</sup> *Critical Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series. 19. February 1797, 194-200; cited in Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Ontario: Broadview, 2004): 398-402, 401-2.

<sup>56</sup> Parreaux, *The Publication of 'The Monk'* 106-7.

<sup>57</sup> *Monthly Mirror* 3, April 1797: 210-215; cited in *The Monk*, ed. Macdonald and Scherf: 402-408, 403.

<sup>58</sup> *Monthly Mirror* 3, cited in *The Monk*, ed. Macdonald and Scherf 407. The conservative *British Critic* joined the criticism of the novel, but its cause was defended by William Boscawen in *The Progress of Satire*, who pointed out that Ambrosio only gains misery from his dealings with Matilda and Satan. However, Boscawen's comments were probably motivated by the fact that Mathias had criticised him in the same piece of work. See Parreaux 126.

<sup>59</sup> *Monthly Mirror*, June 1796, 98.

It is also true that earlier reviews consider the aesthetic, rather than the moral or political, qualities of the novel: a review attributed to Mary Wollstonecraft, published in the *Analytical Review* in October 1796 acknowledges its theatricality by praising its ‘great dramatic merit’.<sup>60</sup> The *European Magazine* for February 1797 criticises Lewis’s supposed attack on religion, but defends his presentation of Satan and his poetry which ‘would have given popularity to a composition much inferior to this’.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, in a letter to his father written sometime after the outrage caused by the novel (Baron-Wilson dates this February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1798), Lewis claims that the novel was, in fact, intended to contain a moral message:

Unluckily, in working it up, I thought that the stronger my colours, the more effect would my picture produce; and it never struck me, that the exhibition of vice, in her temporary triumph, might possibly do as much harm as her final exposure and punishment would do good.<sup>62</sup>

This is significant as it suggests that Lewis felt an authorial responsibility to present his readers with moral guidance. Parreaux has also chronicled responses to these criticisms, including the publication of *Impartial Strictures on the poem called “The Pursuits of Literature” and particularly a Vindication of the Romance of “The Monk”*, published by *The Monk*’s publisher Joseph Bell, which, like ‘An Apology for the Monk’, argues that the novel is an instructive allegory which demonstrates the way in which vice can overcome virtue.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, in a private letter to his mother, Lewis recommended the novel *Caleb Williams* as ‘well written’, but laments

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<sup>60</sup> *Analytical Review* 24, October 1796:403-4, cited in *The Monk* ed. Macdonald and Scherf 395. Wollstonecraft is less complimentary about the novel’s two plots, which she accused of ‘splitting the interest’ of the reader.

<sup>61</sup> *European Magazine* 31, February 1797: 111-115, cited in *The Monk*, ed. Macdonald and Scherf: 95-397, 396.

<sup>62</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:156.

<sup>63</sup> See Parreaux, *The Publication of ‘The Monk’* 123. Interestingly, Parreaux is the first critic to link Lewis with Hannah More’s anti-revolutionary tracts, which also aimed to provide examples of punished vice and rewarded thriftiness in order to quell labouring-class rebellion, though he does not explore this. This is a subject to which I will return (see Parreaux 138-9).

that ‘unluckily, the author is half a democrat’.<sup>64</sup> Parreaux asserts that Lewis definitely ‘was not a democrat’ and that any suspected blasphemy in the work would be considered dangerous because at the end of the eighteenth century it was almost synonymous with political sedition.<sup>65</sup> This association was due to the atheism of the French Revolution: as E.P. Thompson has pointed out, many of those pushing for social reform in Britain also held dissenting beliefs.<sup>66</sup>

An interesting defence of the novel was the *Epistle, in rhyme, to M.G. Lewis, Esq.*, by ‘Soame’, identified by Peck as Henry Francis Robert Soame (1798).<sup>67</sup> ‘Soame’ proves to be a discerning critic, noting that Lewis’s work ‘Like our own Shakspeare, mingled grave and gay’.<sup>68</sup> By this point, Shakespeare had become a symbol of nationalism (evident here in the term ‘our own’) and using his name to defend Lewis is a political gesture on Soame’s part. Both praise of Lewis’s literary ability and distaste at his topics were to remain common in reviews of his work: in 1831, James Boaden wrote in his biography of Dorothy Jordan, the actress who had played Angela in *The Castle Spectre*, that *The Monk*’s ‘genius and indecorum are about equal’.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:134. Baron-Wilson dates the letter September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1794, from The Hague. It is also worth remembering that, in 1796, the same year that *The Monk* was published, Lewis also wrote the short dramatic farce *Village Virtues*, in which Sir David Downright attempts to convince his sister Lady Mount-Level that she is mistaken in assuming that moral corruption is peculiar to the *ton* and that the peasantry are uncorrupted. Sir David’s method is to show her a range of ill-behaved peasants, before revealing that they are in fact his own relatives in disguise.

<sup>65</sup> Parreaux, *The Publication of ‘The Monk’* 136.

<sup>66</sup> Thompson makes a specific link between social reform and Unitarianism. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1980, repr.; 1991) 29.

<sup>67</sup> Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 28.

<sup>68</sup> [Henry Francis Robert] Soame, *Epistle, in rhyme, to M.G. Lewis, Esq. MP Author of The Monk, Castle Spectre, &C. with other verses* (London: W.H. Lunn, 1798, repr.; Eighteenth Century Collections Online, n.d.) 3. The *Epistle* was clearly a fairly successful work – by 1799 Lunn had printed a third edition.

<sup>69</sup> James Boaden, *The Life of Mrs Jordan; including original private correspondence, and numerous anecdotes of her contemporaries*. 2 vols. (London: Edward Bull, 1831) 1:346.

My view of *The Monk* is that it is an anti-revolutionary text which was influenced by Lewis's experiences abroad whilst a student at Oxford in the 1790s. In taking this view, my reading of the novel is similar in some respects to that set out by Ronald Paulson (1983) in *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)*. Paulson points out links between the establishments of state and family unit which can be overthrown by a revolutionary son-character. The parallels between family and state run through Lewis's writing and are discussed in Chapter Two. Though I agree with Paulson's view of parallels between these two structures, I do not go so far as to share his more Freudian and Oedipal presentation of the family/state metaphor. Rather, my view is informed by Lewis's early experiences of disruption to his family and his later experiences of violence on the continent, which left him keen to maintain, not overthrow, hierarchical relationships, even in a revised form. *The Monk* responds to, but does not advocate, revolution. Lewis himself jokingly compared family life to national disorder in early 1793, when, in a letter to his mother, Lewis first complains that his father intends to give him an allowance, but that he will do his best to save some money for her: 'I hope you would make no scruple of applying to me, as our interests should ever be considered, like the French republic, to be one and indivisible'.<sup>70</sup> Lewis's humour reveals the extent to which his mother's situation was unpalatable to him. In later life, Lewis may have taken a protective role in his relationship with his mother and been in conflict with his father over the latter's affair with Mrs. Ricketts, but there is nothing to suggest that he relished this rift or desired to overthrow any authority of his father. His tone is always placatory, as this letter to his mother from Christmas Day 1793 demonstrates:

I can make every allowance for your intentions and your heart; but that does not prevent my seeing that you have erred in practice, however right your theory may be . . . but in whatever way I could show my affection for you, in making you more easy or more comfortable, I was ever ready to take the opportunity.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 94.

<sup>71</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:110-11.

Lewis goes further in this letter, taking on a paternalistic tone and responsibility for his sisters when persuading his mother that she should not seek to be reconciled with his father – ‘it would be a material obstacle to their establishment’, he writes, and his father would be difficult to persuade:

My father’s heart is not so easily shaken to what his reason does not approve. I would do any thing in the world to make you both happy in your separate situations; but I see so many obstacles, and even impossibilities, to a reunion taking place, that it is idle to think of it.<sup>72</sup>

Lewis’s message is that leniency at an earlier stage would have prevented the utter breakdown and overthrowing of authority. Paulson is right when he compares the bloody death of the novel’s intractable abbess who has denied Agnes mercy to Ambrosio’s behaviour and points out that ‘[b]oth are cases of justification followed by horrible excess’.<sup>73</sup> Paulson here implicitly identifies the germ of the patrician strain that runs throughout Lewis’s later work. The presence of this in *The Monk* has also been identified by Emma McEvoy: ‘there is also a side to *The Monk* which is more concerned with a supposedly benevolent paternalism, in which kind uncles, fathers, dukes and cardinals step in and right wrongs. More particularly they have to step in to right the wrongs caused by the seizure of power by unruly elements’.<sup>74</sup> Often, however, these patriarchs fail in their duty. Such failure is not present in Lewis’s later plays, which would, in their focus on idealised masculine figures, present the solution to the problem of disturbed social and domestic order. In this early mature work, however, Lewis was still exploring the nature of the problem – both in terms of family and state. It is to a closer consideration of *The Monk* and its reflection of Lewis’s nationalistic and familial duties that I now turn.

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<sup>72</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:112-3.

<sup>73</sup> Paulson, Ronald, *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983) 218.

<sup>74</sup> Emma McEvoy, ‘Introduction’ in *The Monk*, ed. Anderson: vii-xxx, xvi.

## Disorder and Patriarchy

Lewis, writing *The Monk* during a period of personal and domestic disturbance and in the midst of national disorder created by the French Revolution, develops the sense of Gothic threat in the text through the absence of a reliable male authority figure who holds that position legitimately, through birthright and primogeniture. Though such a figure is absent, an idea of the importance of a trustworthy patriarchal authority runs throughout the work, as McEvoy has identified, contributing to the links between plot and subplot. The plays, through their use of contrasting heroes and villains, are less threatening than the novel, which is notable amongst Lewis's work for its lack of such a hero. All the main male characters are flawed. The Wandering Jew saves Raymond, but his unnatural life is a penance for a previous blasphemous act. As explored above, Macdonald has identified that Lorenzo's dream of Antonia is less than heroic, and Raymond has been responsible for Agnes's seduction. Both also prove inept at rescuing these women.

It is unsurprising that Lewis's works share, in various forms, concern with patriarchal power and its most effective delivery. As the eldest child, Lewis was affected by his parents' separation in ways which his younger sisters and disabled brother could not be. Lewis also shows himself to have been aware, even as a teenager, of the benefits of staying on the right side of masculine authority, writing to his mother from Weimar on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1792:

[N]othing can give me more sincere pleasure, than to know you are happy and comfortable. . . I felt this pleasure with your last, which informed me of your reconciliation with your brother Robert, upon which I congratulate you, and hope it will be productive of many good consequences.<sup>75</sup>

Another of Lewis's letters from Weimar, dated December 24, 1792, reveals Lewis's apprehension of war, of some disagreement with his father and a concern for his family:

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<sup>75</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 74.

But my father saying he did not wish me to hurry home in case of a war breaking out, I have written to him to beg that, in such a case, he would permit me to return to England immediately. In fact, though I am at present perfectly well satisfied with my situation, I should not like to be shut up in Germany, the Lord above only knows how long; and more especially should I be uneasy, in the present disposition of the English populace, at being at so great a distance from my family. I trust there is nothing to apprehend; but still, when one is so far off, every trifling accident becomes a serious and alarming affair.<sup>76</sup>

This also reveals that Lewis was afraid of a possible uprising in England to parallel that on the continent, a fear which was shared by the government of the time, as the previous section identifies. The most flawed male authority figure of *The Monk* is, of course, Ambrosio, whose pride and vanity mar his famed virtue even before he succumbs to Matilda. Paula R. Backscheider has commented on the proliferation of insane patriarchs in Regency drama, reflecting the descent into madness of George III. After noting that the notions of monarchy and patriarchy are linked to that of stability, she writes:

The heart of Gothic drama in the nineties is an authority figure gone mad, or at least seriously obsessive and neurotically moody . . . this man, and it seems always to be a man, is ‘Gothic’ because he is pushing the limits of what the audience imagines to be possible in nature . . . what has gone berserk in this world, of course, is power. And British people felt they lived in such a place.<sup>77</sup>

*The Monk* likewise contains a man, Ambrosio, whose authority allows him to become ‘berserk’. He becomes obsessed with the thought of raping Antonia. The power and responsibility he bears as apparently the most virtuous monk in Madrid masks and facilitates his actions. The reader wonders at the depths of his depravity as much as his congregation do at his apparent purity. It is worth noting that the incidents of the sub-plot arise from paternal inflexibility. Agnes’s father will not allow her to marry Raymond, insisting that she become a nun:

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<sup>76</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 80.

<sup>77</sup> Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 162-163 (Backscheider does discuss *The Castle Spectre* in this work, but points out that this is not in detail).

Liberal and kind in every other respect, Superstition formed the only stain upon his character. Upon this head He was inflexible; He sacrificed his dearest interest to his scruples, and would consider it an insult to suppose him capable, of authorising his daughter to break her vows to heaven. (185)

It is this severity which will lead Agnes to more infamy through breaking her vows and bearing an illegitimate child. In the sub-plot as well as the main plot, unreasonable repression results in shocking and avoidable consequences. By contrast, Raymond's father has attempted to give him some sound advice, telling him to 'disguise [his] rank':

'Believe me', said He, 'my dear Raymond', you will hereafter feel the benefits of your temporary degradation . . . your exalted birth would not permit your mixing with the lower classes of society, which will now be in your power, and from which, in my opinion, you will derive considerable benefit. . . Examine the manners and customs of the multitude: Enter into the Cottages; and by observing how the Vassals of Foreigners are treated, learn to diminish the burthens, and augment the comforts of your own. According to my ideas, of those advantages, which a Youth destined to the possession of power and wealth may reap from travel, He should not consider the least essential, the opportunity of mixing with the classes below him, and becoming an eye-witness of the sufferings of the People". (95-6)

The speech is lengthy, and has little to do with the story that Raymond goes on to tell. The message is that Raymond's travel is not a luxury but part of his training for his role in society: it is easy to see why it would be advantageous for an aristocrat to have knowledge of the grievances of his subordinates and Lewis's plays take up this theme. The emphasis is on the responsibility of the aristocrat, which Raymond's father clearly understands. By contrast, Ambrosio is an important character because he is Lewis's attempt to explore the concept of villainy in relation to culpability. It is his unforgiving approach to Agnes and his dangerous villain.

The actions of characters, even when their motives and emotions are genuine, can read like stage directions. Matilda's theatricality is discussed below, but it is Ambrosio whose treatment is the most theatrical. His remorse after his rape of Antonia is marked by his speech towards her, in which he acknowledges his guilt but berates her bitterly:

That you will proclaim me an Hypocrite, a Ravisher, a Betrayer, a Monster of cruelty, lust, and ingratitude? No, no, no! I know well the whole weight of my offences; Well, that your complaints would be too just, and my crimes too notorious! . . . my conscience is loaded with sins, which make me despair of Heaven's pardon. (385)

This lengthy speech, punctuated by exclamation marks and rhetorical questions, reveals much about Ambrosio and his then mental and emotional condition. As such, it functions very much as a soliloquy, despite Antonia's presence. Indeed, she says little here and Ambrosio, though speaking to Antonia, could easily be addressing and upbraiding himself. Later, as he is imprisoned, meditating upon the offer to renounce God made by Matilda, he becomes even more the insane stage villain, as Christopher Maclachlan has identified.<sup>78</sup> He looks 'earnestly' at the book, wrings his hands, picks up the book, throws down the book, 'stoop[s]' to pick it up again, and 'rave[s] with a delirious passion'(432) – all the recognisable posturing of a confused and furious villain suffering turmoil and indecision.

The concepts of mercy (which Ambrosio so noticeably lacks), gratitude and loyalty are crucial in Lewis's understanding and presentation of paternal authority. In a letter dated January 24<sup>th</sup> 1819, after Lewis's death, his youngest sister Sophia Shedden wrote a letter to his one-time collaborator, Sir Walter Scott, in which she proves herself to be a shrewd literary critic as well as a devoted sibling. In response to a 'scurrilous' attack on her brother in two newspapers, accusing Lewis of 'vice' and 'profligacy' in his literary works, she ascertains that 'the most prominent of his good qualities was *Mercy*', citing his support of William Kelly as her evidence, and that mercy is 'the *moral* of his *Monk*'.<sup>79</sup> In pointing this out she develops the views of those contemporary reviewers who pointed out the admonitory function of the novel – that the depiction of vice can be a warning rather than an invitation – but curiously, the feature she identifies as being the key to her brother's novel has not been explored by critics, despite recent interest in Lewis's depiction of paternal power. This is surprising as Lewis's formative

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<sup>78</sup> See Christopher Maclachlan, 'Introduction', in Matthew Lewis, *The Monk: A Romance*, ed. Christopher Maclachlan (London: Penguin, 1998): vii-xxv, xviii.

<sup>79</sup> The letter is cited in Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis: 267-70*, 267-8.

experiences, both domestic and socio-political, seem to have brought home to him the importance of mercy as a means of maintaining a productive peace rather than a dangerous chaos. We have already seen that his letters to his mother often take a placatory, sometimes paternalistic, tone when discussing her financial support and the situation of the family. He often passes on information about the health of his siblings to her, indicating that the rest of the family were not in regular contact with her and that Lewis held a conciliatory role within the family group.

This concern with reconciliation and maintaining calmness and order could only have been compounded when he visited Weimar in his capacity as an attaché to The Hague, on an unnamed national mission. It resulted in his absence from university for two terms in 1792-3. Lewis witnessed first-hand the violence and ill-feeling which were the results of the French Revolution. In a letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1794, Lewis informs his mother:

I did not despair that our affairs upon the continent would take a better turn, till I was a witness myself of the disorders of the soldiers and discontents of the officers. . . My hope is that Holland will make a separate peace, and remain neutral; that our troops will be withdrawn from this country, and employed in defending our colonies.<sup>80</sup>

Lewis's concern at this point is grievances of the soldiers and the displeasure of their superiors – the beginnings of problems maintaining order in the army. Later in the same letter, Lewis outlines the violence he witnessed:

I saw two cannon balls pass through the roof of a house about ten yards distant . . . a ball passed through the house under the shelter of whose roof I was standing. . . I was much shocked at seeing a countryman whose leg had been shot away at that moment, as he was sitting at his cottage door, and the same ball carried off the arm of his child, an infant of three years old, which he held upon his knee.

He continues:

The French are adored wherever they go, while the allied forces are execrated and detested. In truth, I am sorry to confess that no ravages more wanton and unjustifiable

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<sup>80</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:140-1.

were ever committed in the annals of war, than have been perpetrated by all the combined army, and more particularly by the English.<sup>81</sup>

This letter was written shortly before the production of *The Monk* and it is unsurprising, given experiences such as these, that the novel should be so concerned with the destructive excess that is the result of undue oppression. Lewis, usually patriotic, is clearly distressed by the fact that the detestation of the English troops appears to have been justified. Proof of Lewis's patriotism and his lack of democratic and revolutionary sympathies can be found in the earlier, unpublished poem 'France and England in 1793', in which he refers to the French as 'wild People' who 'drenched the soil with blood', 'while trampling Heaven and Nature's laws'. In Lewis's interpretation of the French Revolution, 'Justice was spurned'. This carnage is unfavourably compared to England, where 'Kings possess/No power to bless' and 'Liberty herself is forced to say/'Tis sweet to rule, who willingly obey'.<sup>82</sup> Lewis here approaches the notions of gratitude and benevolence within hierarchical relationships and considers them in relation to national stability for possibly the first time in his literary work. *The Monk* engages with the idea that tyranny leads to uprising: as has already been noted, Ambrosio is so repressed by his religion that after breaking his monastic vows his behaviour is destructive and insatiable; Agnes has been thwarted by an unreasonable father, leading her to break her own religious bonds; later, her punishment at the hands of Ambrosio and the abbess is so severe that it leads to the mob destroying the abbess:

They forced a passage through the Guards who protected their destined Victim, dragged her from her shelter, and proceeded to take upon her a most summary and cruel vengeance. . . the wretched Woman shrieked for a moment's mercy. . . The Rioters heeded nothing but the gratification of their barbarous vengeance. They refused to listen to her . . . They tore her from one another, and each new Tormentor was more savage than the former. They stifled with howls and execrations her shrill cries for mercy. . . At length a

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<sup>81</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:141-2.

<sup>82</sup> This poem is included in the Broadview Press edition of *The Monk*, ed. Macdonald and Scherf: 385-7.

Flint, aimed by some well-directing hand, struck her full upon the temple. She sank upon the ground bathed in blood, and in a few minutes terminated her miserable existence . . . the Rioters still exercised their impotent rage upon her lifeless body. (356)

The destruction of the abbess, especially Lewis's use of a mob to exact vengeance, has been compared by Paulson to the excesses of the French Revolution. Lewis prejudices the reader against the mob – they are 'savage', 'barbarous', 'cruel' and 'impotent'. Nor does Lewis allow the reader to sympathise with their motive, referring to them as 'vindictive' and as 'heed[ing] nothing but [their] gratification'. Lewis presents his mob as unstoppable and unreasonable, 'incensed' and, as they plan to attack the convent, as 'confounding the innocent with the guilty' (356-7). This presentation of the mob matches that which Paulson ascribes to Walpole's ambivalent depiction, in a letter to Hannah More in 1789, of mob violence in the French Revolution: 'the predictive cycle from one tyranny to another even greater'.<sup>83</sup>

In the short space of a page, the abbess makes two futile requests for mercy, which remind the reader of Agnes's similar plea, made first to Ambrosio and then the abbess. Ambrosio informs her that '[m]ercy here would be criminal', though Agnes later begs '[l]et not mercy be the only virtue of which your heart is unsusceptible!' (46-7). A favourable response at that point, it is implied, would have avoided the mass violence and endangering of the innocent. This is what Sophia Shedden identifies as Lewis's 'moral'.<sup>84</sup> Agnes points out Ambrosio's hypocrisy when she remarks:

'[Y]ou could have saved me; you could have restored me to happiness and virtue, but would not! . . . God will show mercy, though you show none. . . When shuddering you look back upon your crimes, and solicit with terror the mercy of your God, Oh! in that fearful moment think upon me! (48-9)

This concern with mercy continues to the end of the novel – Ambrosio, tempted by Matilda to make another pact, begins to resist her, saying

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<sup>83</sup> Paulson, *Representations of Revolution* 42.

<sup>84</sup> See 189, below, and Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 267-8.

'[m]onstrous are my crimes, but God is merciful, and I will not despair of pardon' (430). He does, of course, go on to damn himself further. In a warning to those who use power irresponsibly, both the plot and subplot end in destruction - it is evident that in denying mercy to others, the abbess and Ambrosio deny it to themselves.

Mercy is also the 'moral' of *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*, which, like *The Monk*, was first written in 1795. In later works it becomes linked with the subduing gratitude of those receiving it. The seeds of these later works can be seen in the character of Theodore, the son of Marguerite.<sup>85</sup> When Raymond adopts Theodore as a servant, Marguerite's gratitude is mentioned twice within a few lines – and this is shortly after she upbraids herself for the 'ingratitude' she has shown to her father (127 and 126 respectively). Theodore's own gratitude and devotion are shown later, at his master's wedding, as we have seen, and in his having 'attached himself to [Raymond] most sincerely' (127). Raymond's adoption of Theodore and the related quasi-paternal sense of duty is comparable to that of Lewis himself in later life, when he financed William Kelly, as discussed in Chapter Three.

The novel, therefore, as a result of Lewis's experiences of domestic strife and continental war, deals with the need for reason, rationality and mercy, the importance of responsibility on the part of those who hold power and the danger that can ensue if this responsibility is not fulfilled. These become even more prevalent in Lewis's later plays. I will now examine how the novel also demonstrates Lewis's developing skill as a dramatist.

### **The theatricality of *The Monk***

*The Monk* is a highly theatrical novel, as Maclachlan, Miles and Gamer, Townshend and Hogle have observed.<sup>86</sup> The novel is created by the

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<sup>85</sup> Notably, another character whose misfortunes are the result of going against her father's wishes – if, as Paulson suggests, state is family, then Marguerite's misfortunes are another warning against revolution.

<sup>86</sup> The novel has also been adapted for film three times: as *Le Moine*, directed by Ado Kyru (1972); as *Seduction of a Priest*, directed by Francisco Lara Polop (1990, sometimes

interweaving of two threads of theatricality: structurally; identified by Maclachlan, relating to the structure of the novel and the description of characters' speech and movement; and thematically, as characters knowingly 'act' in order to manipulate others. The former is the most important here. Maclachlan notes the fact that drama, especially Shakespeare, not prose, was a crucial formative influence on the young Lewis, noting that '[t]he structure of the novel, with two plots which reflect each other and converge in a final climax, mimics Shakespearean tragedies'.<sup>87</sup> As McEvoy has also claimed, '[t]he most horrifying literature available to Lewis in the English tradition would have comprised Jacobean tragedies'.<sup>88</sup> Thirdly, a little-explored point is that the presentation of Matilda appears to have been heavily influenced by the popularity of Sarah Siddons's interpretation of Lady Macbeth. Fourthly, the novel is 'theatrical' in its descriptive use of set pieces, or *coups-de-theatre*, which foreshadow the spectacular incidents in Lewis's later dramas. These incidents are often revelatory, have a supernatural element which would create a spectacle when staged, or both. Description of these sections is based around the senses of sight and sound, rather than focusing on the psychology of the characters involved. It is in *The Monk* that Lewis first realises his potential to create spectacle and begins to employ influences that are obvious in works stretching to the very end of his career. These 'theatrical' elements

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referred to as *The Last Temptation*); and a remake of *Le Moine*, directed by Dominik Moll and due for release in 2011. *Seduction of a Priest*, like James Boaden's *Aurelio and Miranda*, ends with the repentance of the main character, though he still dies. Unlike Boaden's hero, who gains a happy ending, and Lewis's character, who is killed by Satan, the film's protagonist is punished by death for his transgressions against the Catholic Church.

<sup>87</sup> Maclachlan, 'Introduction' xii. Maclachlan goes on to point out that both plots of the novel rely upon the motif of unmasking and the use of confined settings. This too is common in Shakespeare's work as well as being an important feature, in varying degrees, of Lewis's later *The Castle Spectre*, *Adelmorn*, *Rugantino*, *Venoni*, and *One O' Clock!*.

<sup>88</sup> McEvoy, 'Introduction' xi. *Romeo and Juliet* and *Doctor Faustus* seem to be very strong influence. The influence of *Faust* is significant because it draws on both Lewis's major influences – British Renaissance drama and German literature, both of which Lewis used in *Adelmorn*, *the Outlaw*. The plot device of a Faustian, demonic pact was something Lewis returned to in both *The Wood Daemon* and *One O' Clock* and Lewis's use of Marlowe's plots is therefore discussed in Chapter Four. Maclachlan has also remarked that the rape of Antonia in the crypt is both reminiscent of and a grotesque parody of the ending of *Romeo and Juliet*, though shades of *The Mourning Bride* can also be discerned (*The Monk*, ed. Anderson 379).

are not always distinguishable from each other – for example, many of the *coups-de-theatre*, unsurprisingly, feature Matilda at her most Sidonian, including her admission of her gender to Ambrosio, her first seduction of Ambrosio and her invocation of Satan.

The structure of *The Monk* owes a debt to the theatre. The second volume ends with the now-corrupt Ambrosio waiting ‘with impatience for the approach of midnight’ (279), after a particularly vivid theatrical set-piece in which Matilda invokes Satan – in many ways the climax of the action and the descent of Ambrosio into depravity. It is worth noting that this set-piece, featuring the invocation of Satan occurs in roughly the same position in the novel – just over half-way through – that a tragic hero would seal his fate in a drama (that is, at the end of the third act in a five-act play). When Lucifer appears, his description borders on the humorous and certainly seems to owe much to theatrical effects:

He was perfectly naked: A bright Star sparkled upon his forehead; Two crimson wings extended themselves from his shoulders; and his silken locks were confined by a band of many-coloured fires, which played round his head, formed themselves into a variety of figures, and shone with a brilliance far surpassing that of precious Stones. Circlets of Diamonds were fastened round his arms and ankles, and in his right hand He bore a silver branch, imitating Myrtle. . . .He was surrounded by clouds of rose-coloured light. (276-7)

Attention is paid here to costume and visual spectacle. Lewis also informs his readers that the arrival is accompanied by ‘melodious Music’ (276) and a ‘refreshing air’ (277) making this central incident of the text stand out through its appeal to the senses. As discussed by Jeffrey N. Cox and Michael Gamer, Lewis as a dramatist later used music to heighten the effect of key moments on stage, rather than continuously throughout the work, as was the most common practice.<sup>89</sup> His first use of this technique is found in *The Monk*.

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<sup>89</sup> ‘ . . . Lewis deployed music strategically to punctuate and heighten key moments of action . . . ’ Jeffrey N. Cox and Michael Gamer, eds., *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama* (Ontario: Broadview, 2003) 98.

It is not only the structure of the novel itself which seems theatrical but also the nature of events within the text. The epigraph at the start of the first chapter is taken from *Measure for Measure*. It comments on Lord Angelo, giving the reader familiar with Shakespeare the impression that the main character in the novel is hypocritical – as his later stage villains would prove to be. Lewis uses Shakespeare to prime the reader for the events of the novel and enables them to understand Ambrosio's true nature.<sup>90</sup> With the epigraph fresh in the mind of the reader, the first paragraph of the novel then introduces Ambrosio:

Scarcely had the Abbey-Bell tolled for five minutes, and already was the Church of the Capuchins thronged with Auditors. Do not encourage the idea that the Crowd was assembled either from motives of piety or thirst of information. But very few were influenced by those reasons, and in a city where superstition reigns with such despotic sway as in Madrid, to seek for true devotion would be a fruitless attempt. (1)

Ambrosio does not appear immediately, but the furore surrounding his appearance is chronicled. Lewis positions his readers in the position of an expectant audience, awaiting the arrival of the star actor.

The novel's poetic interludes also have theatrical elements. As Maclachlan notes, they give the reader 'privileged information about the characters and the plot': dramatic irony, in other words.<sup>91</sup> What Maclachlan does not discuss, however, is the *theatrical* function of Lewis's poetic interludes. Unlike the reveries created by Radcliffe's heroines as markers of a psychological reaction to their plight, the interspersed poems in Lewis's text interrupt the narrative or form part of it, rather than sentimentalise it. This is typical of Lewis's later melodramas – for example the duets performed by the servants in *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*, the song of the unseen peasants in *The Castle Spectre* and the songs of *One O' Clock*. Such interruptions in *The Monk* form some light, occasionally comic, relief.

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<sup>90</sup> The significance of this epigraph is discussed more fully by John Drakakis in his 'Introduction', in Drakakis and Townshend, eds., *Gothic Shakespeares*: 1-20, 10-11.

<sup>91</sup> Maclachlan, 'Introduction' xiii.

Lewis's depiction of such incidences suggests the energy and choreography of a stage performance. For example, the movements of the gypsy who foretells Antonia's doom:

She at intervals traced a variety of singular figures upon the ground, round about which She danced in all the eccentric attitudes of folly and delirium. Suddenly She broke off her dance, whirled round thrice with rapidity . . . (34-5)

Lewis here reveals his understanding of the potential for visual impact within his work, as well as the way in which body language and movement can in itself reveal character. Matilda likewise uses music and song when she seduces Ambrosio. She moves from playing a 'soft and plaintive' air on her harp to movements 'bold and rapid', playing 'a few loud martial chords' and chanting the lengthy ballad 'Durandarte and Belerma', about the death of a knight and the grief of his lover Belerma and cousin Montesinos (75). As Ambrosio has only just recovered from a near-fatal poisoning due to the actions of his would-be lover Matilda, there is a thematic link between the song and the action of the plot, anticipating Lewis's later use of music in his dramas.

As Maclachlan has noted, the inclusion of Raymond's story in the novel also allows Lewis to include two set-pieces which seem especially 'designed for the stage'.<sup>92</sup> These are the introduction of the Bleeding Nun and Marguerite warning Raymond about his danger without alerting the suspicion of her stepsons.<sup>93</sup> Lewis's skill at creating stage spectacle can be seen in two of the novel's set pieces which combine elements of ritual and the supernatural – the Wandering Jew and Matilda's invocation of Satan. The Wandering Jew enters the room 'upon the turn of midnight'. He does

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<sup>92</sup> Maclachlan, 'Introduction' xiii.

<sup>93</sup> 'She passed behind the Chairs of her Step-sons, stopped for a moment opposite to me, closed her eyes, and reclined her head upon her shoulder' (115). Marguerite's mime is designed to be copied by Raymond. The actions here are described so minutely that they could easily be stage instructions rather than prose. There is no description or imagery here, but the author, and therefore the reader, must have a very clear idea of where each character is in relation to the others and the contents of the room in order for Marguerite's plans to become successful. This skill is one which Lewis would later employ on the stage. In *Timour the Tartar*, Zorilda spends the much of II (i) assisting the escape of Agib from a window, whilst distracting the attention of Timour and dealing with interruptions.

not speak but his actions are described minutely as he dips a wooden cross in a goblet of blood and draws a circle on the floor which he surrounds with ‘reliques, skulls [and] thigh bones’ in the shape of crosses (171). This performance is a dramatic one, as is the arrival of the feared spectre at one o’ clock. Later in this ritual, the Wandering Jew speaks to the Bleeding Nun using ‘a voice distinct and solemn’, to which she replies ‘in a hollow faltering tone’ (171). The attention to the tone of voice in which lines should be spoken in is also common in Lewis’s dramas, an indication that he was at least partly responsible for the stage directions in the published versions of the plays. The movements of the Wandering Jew and his costume also recall the stage:

[The] band of black velvet which encircled his fore-head, spread over his features an additional gloom. His countenance wore the marks of profound melancholy; his step was slow, and his manner grave, stately and solemn. (168)

The ending of the novel, as the hero is defeated by his own lust, vanity, cowardice and hypocrisy, outlined so expertly by Satan, also recalls Renaissance drama’s use of Classical conventions of tragedy through the depiction of a hero defeated by his own flaw. As some contemporary critics have pointed out, Ambrosio’s vice is held up as an admonitory lesson for the reader, who sees not only the follies of the monk’s actions but also his faulty logic as he attempts to justify his actions throughout the novel. In Ambrosio, Lewis takes a Shakespearean tragic hero and makes him a ‘monster’ in the sense that he forms a warning to readers who may not take their responsibilities – familial or social – seriously. Satan, arriving to take Ambrosio as his prey, point out to him where his worst faults lie:

And you it was who thought yourself proof against temptation, absolved from human frailties, and free from error and vice! Is pride then a virtue? Is inhumanity no fault? Know, vain man! . . . I saw that you were virtuous from vanity, not principle . . . (440)

Ambrosio is the first of Lewis’s villains, who all wield an imperfect form of authority and control over others and whose abuse of his situation results in

his downfall. Satan is right about his flaws – the reader, in another example of dramatic irony, is made aware of the monk’s ‘lust’ and ‘pride’ before they are introduced to Matilda (39). After his performance at the Capuchin church, Ambrosio returns to his cell and the reader is presented with his thoughts there in the form of a soliloquy. He moves from misplaced vanity (‘Religion cannot boast Ambrosio’s equal!’); to an acknowledgement that he may not be perfect (‘Am I not a Man, whose nature is frail, and prone to error?’) to lust for his picture of the Madonna (‘Were I permitted to twine round my fingers those golden ringlets, and press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom!’) to erroneous complacency (‘Reflect that you are now exempted from Humanity’s defects’). Just as he points out to himself, with smugness, that ‘Spirits of Darkness’ will recognise his true self, ‘Rosario’ knocks and enters the room (40-1). This linking of Matilda with dark spirits is akin to a cue and makes Ambrosio the subject of a stagey joke.

*The Monk* also contains the first examples of a processional masque and the use of tableaux in Lewis’s work. He later made use of processions in *Venoni*, *Rugantino*, *One O’ Clock* and *Timour the Tartar*. The procession of *The Monk* is a set piece which prefigures the procession which ends *Rugantino* in its elaborate detail and fancy dress. It also heralds a return to order – as Paul Ranger has pointed out that processions in Gothic drama often do - as it is after this encounter that Agnes is found and the main plot also moves towards resolution.<sup>94</sup> The description of its contents and movements covers almost four pages and includes various nuns in the guise of saints; children habited as seraphs; a ‘Machine fashioned like a throne, rich with jewels, and dazzling with light’, upon which Virginia sits dressed as St Clare, wearing a costly dress and diamond headdress; a girl dressed as St Lucia, holding a bowl containing eyes but having her own bandaged with velvet; a girl dressed as St Genevieve, piously reading whilst children dressed as imps in ‘grotesque attitudes’ try to distract her; some choristers bearing candles and nuns carrying the convent’s relics (346-9). The focus on costume, body language and the device of the throne, which ‘rolled onwards

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<sup>94</sup> Ranger, ‘*Terror and Pity reign in every Breast*’ 75.

upon unseen wheels' and has a 'summit covered with silver clouds' (348) suggests an interest in the practicalities of stage props.

Like processions, tableaux would often be employed by Lewis to represent order, usually in the final scene of a play, when villains have been unmasked, lovers reunited and power restored to the legitimate heir. Precursors of this method are found in *The Monk*, but here tableaux can also disturb, reiterating abuse of power, as in the description of Agnes in her cell:

[B]y the Lamp's glimmering beams [Lorenzo] beheld . . . a Creature stretched upon a bed of straw. . . She was half-naked; Her long dishevelled hair fell in disorder over her face . . . One wasted arm hung listlessly upon a tattered rug, which covered her convulsed and shivering limbs: The Other was wrapped around a small bundle, and held it closely to her bosom. A large Rosary lay near her: Opposite to her was a Crucifix, on which she bent her sunk eyes fixedly, and by her side stood a Basket and a small Earthen pitcher (369).

This section is deserving of notice here due to its theatrical focus on the visual and the way it prefigures similar scenes of incarceration in *The Castle Spectre*, *Venoni*, *The Captive* and *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*.

By contrast, the presentation of female characters is an area of some disconnection between Lewis's novel and his later works. It is particularly complex in *The Monk*, which, as we have seen, is a bridging work. With the exception of *Adelgitha*, Lewis would never return to such extreme female characters after *The Monk*, focussing instead on male characters and their social authority and responsibilities. The later dramas do, however, contain female characters whose traits can be traced back to those of the more complex women in the novel. Women - Matilda, Antonia, Agnes, Virginia, The Bleeding Nun and Elvira - often take centre stage in *The Monk*. With the exception of Elvira, all break society's codes concerning female sexual behaviour or, as is the case with Antonia, are sexual victims. All are punished for their sexual transgressions - with the exception of Matilda, who is a demon, not a woman. Such punishment is conventional in Gothic and romantic texts, but it is not difficult to make comparisons with Lewis's experiences of the scandal surrounding his mother.

Several of the events which involve Matilda can be considered dramatic and theatrical and are set-pieces. They reveal the influence of Sarah Siddons – more particularly, her famous interpretation of Lady Macbeth, first seen by theatre-goers in the 1780s – on the character and the Gothic novel more widely. The importance of Siddons’s presentation of this character has been explored by both E. J. Clery and Paula Backscheider.<sup>95</sup> The influence of Siddons can be seen in Evelina and Angela in *The Castle Spectre*, Sangrida in *One O’ Clock!* and Zorilda in *Timour the Tartar*, the majority of whom wield knives. Aspects of Evelina and Sangrida can likewise be seen in the Siddonian depiction of the ghosts of Elvira and the Bleeding Nun respectively. Due to this, some of these moments need considering here.

Matilda is depicted as a Siddonian character during her appearance when invoking Satan at the end of the second volume. Satan’s own appearance is discussed above. The piece begins with the entrance of Matilda:

She was now cloathed in a long sable Robe, on which was traced in gold embroidery a variety of unknown characters: It was fastened by a girdle of precious stones, in which was fixed a poignard. Her neck and arms were uncovered. In her hand She bore a golden wand. Her hair was loose and flowed wildly upon her shoulders. (274-5)

The description of Matilda’s robe, like that of the Wandering Jew, reads like that of a stage costume. Her clothing is suggestive of practicality in performance: Paul Ranger records Sarah Siddons simplifying costumes for ease of movement.<sup>96</sup> The wild hair is also reminiscent of Siddons allowing her appearance to become disordered during performance.<sup>97</sup> The section of the ritual which follows, involving the blue flames typical of a Gothic narrative and curling smoke are also the sort of visually effective tricks

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<sup>95</sup> E.J. Clery, *Women’s Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*, Writers and Their Work (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2000) 115, and Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 204.

<sup>96</sup> ‘This process of simplification allowed young performers to develop more sprightly personations . . .’. Ranger, *Terror and Pity Reign in Every Breast* 72.

<sup>97</sup> ‘. . . Siddons once remarked that, unlike her brother, she was willing to allow her hair and dress to become disordered during passionate scenes.’ Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 205.

employed in theatres at the time.<sup>98</sup> As is the case with Lady Macbeth's persuasion of her husband to murder King Duncan, Matilda's tempting of Ambrosio is the first step towards his tragic downfall. In *The Castle Spectre*, the influence of *Macbeth* can be seen in the portrayal of guilt; and in *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*, the influence of *Macbeth* can be seen in the play's supernatural content, which indicates the disruption of social order.

The reader is reminded of this coup-de-theatre towards the end of the novel, when Matilda attempts to convince Ambrosio to escape by selling himself to Satan. Her arguments are similar to those Lady Macbeth uses to convince her husband to murder Duncan in Act One of that tragedy.<sup>99</sup> She implies that Ambrosio is a coward, saying 'Dare you spring without fear over the bounds, which separate Men from Angels?' (428). Again, her expression of 'wild imperious majesty' still recalls that of staged tragedy and her costume is described in detail: her hair is 'confined' by roses and she wears a robe upon which 'a profusion of diamonds blazed' (427).

*The Monk*, then, is a work in which Lewis began to experiment with melodramatic and Shakespearean modes of expression in order to explore his concerns about absent and misappropriated paternal authority. He begins to move away from the parodic tone of his juvenilia towards the use of a direct description of appearance and action which prefigures the spectacle his plays became known for. These would be developed further in his plays, first by a greater exploration of the usurping villain as is the case in *The Castle Spectre*, then by considering the qualities of heroes. The presentation of spectacle and exploration of hierarchical relationships, first considered in this novel, would remain prevalent in these later works.

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<sup>98</sup> Stage effects even included fire during this point in history – see Ranger, *Terror and Pity Reign in Every Breast* 48.

<sup>99</sup> See *Macbeth* 1.7.39-41 '... Art thou afeard/to be the same in thine own act and valour/As thou art in desire?' and 1.7.49-51 'When you durst do it, then you were a man;/And to be more than what you were, you would/Be so much more the man.' William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir. The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1951, repr.; 2003) 41.



**Chapter Two:**

**‘Prosperous vice is but triumphant woe’:**

***The Castle Spectre*’s depiction of villainy.**

(10,698 words)



*The Castle Spectre* was Lewis's most commercially successful play.<sup>100</sup> First performed in 1797, it would have been seen by an audience familiar with the scandal concerning *The Monk*. A playbill for the ninth performance on December 27<sup>th</sup> publicised the spectacle that Lewis would be both praised and derided for, advertising the 'Scenery designed by the late Mr. GREENWOOD'. Its popularity is also indicated at the bottom of the bill where the reader is informed that as the play has been 'received with unbounded marks of universal approbation – Those Ladies and Gentlemen who have been disappointed of places, are respectfully informed that the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> nights will be To-morrow, and Friday'.<sup>101</sup> The play was performed forty-seven times, ending its run the following June.

Produced so soon after *The Monk*, *The Castle Spectre* shares many of that work's literary, autobiographical and political influences and was likewise controversial, with Lewis ignoring advice that the eponymous ghost should be omitted and anachronistically including four black servants, whose allegiance to the villain Osmond is mixed with resentment. Though Lewis claimed that he had the play published just as it was performed, recent work by Jeffrey N. Cox has shown that the script was altered in performance, with most of the alterations relating to the use of religious language.<sup>102</sup> This is unsurprising in the light of Lewis's near scrape with the law regarding blasphemy. Lewis defended his use of a ghost on stage by referring to its

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<sup>100</sup> Bertrand Evans referred to *The Castle Spectre* as 'the most successful play of its time'. See Evans, *Gothic Drama* 133. James Robert Allard (2001) has commented on the impressive amount of money that the play earned at the box office, recording that in the first three months of performance it brought in 'profits in the neighbourhood of £18,000'. See James Robert Allard, 'Spectres, Spectators, Spectacles: Matthew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre*. *Gothic Studies*. 3.3. (2001): 246-261, 246.

<sup>101</sup> The playbill is reproduced in *The Hour of One: Six Gothic Melodramas*, ed. Stephen Wischhusen (London: Gordon Fraser, 1975) 33.

<sup>102</sup> Matthew Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, in *Seven Gothic Dramas*, ed. Cox: 150-221. Cox points out that 'the published version still deletes some controversial material' (150). His notes on the text identify that some of the alterations relate to the use of religious language and were made in response to critical reviews, including one in the *Monthly Mirror* (n.35, 158). Cox's notes on Act One Scene One (155) provide some examples of religious references, some removed from the Larpent version of the play, including jokes about Noah and Jonah and a reference to St. Cuthbert made by the irreverent Father Philip. Lewis's jokes are not anti-religious, but they were badly suited to the political climate of 1797. As later chapters reveal, Lewis's ill-judged sense of humour was not restricted to religious matters.

dramatic precedents.<sup>103</sup> He also denied accusations that his ‘sentiments were violently democratic’, made in relation to the comments made by the black character Hassan about the slave trade and which create a great deal of sympathy for this character.<sup>104</sup> Though Lewis does not identify the source of the accusation, Macdonald records that the *Monthly Visitor* accused Lewis of encouraging slave revolts.<sup>105</sup> *The Castle Spectre* is one of only two of Lewis’s plays to be available in a scholarly edition, in an anthology edited by Jeffrey N. Cox, which notes the differences between the original printed text and the manuscript, with Larpent’s demands for deletion.<sup>106</sup> This edition is the one referred to here.

As is the case with *The Monk*, contemporary reviews of *The Castle Spectre* involve political interpretations. On Christmas Eve 1796, Lord Grenville announced that the King would announce a termination of the negotiations for peace with France on the following Monday.<sup>107</sup> The play made its debut during the renewed war with France, shortly before England suspended Habeas Corpus for the second time: a period when the smallest hints at democracy or blasphemy were almost synonymous with sedition and viewed with suspicion. During 1797, this climate of suspicion grew, as attempts to exploit naval mutinies were made by both Irish and French agents, something which had been facilitated by the number of Irish convicts and politically active artisans who had been pushed into the navy, the latter through the quota system.<sup>108</sup> Gothic literature’s depiction of

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<sup>103</sup> Matthew Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, 221-224. He also acknowledges the influence of *Romeo and Juliet* in the characters of Father Philip and Alice.

<sup>104</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 222.

<sup>105</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 51.

<sup>106</sup> See footnote 102.

<sup>107</sup> *Monthly Mirror*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2. May –December 1796: 502. The Monday referred to is December 26<sup>th</sup>. Showing an awareness of unrest in the British populace, Pitt ordered the printing of the bill for the relief of the poor on December 29<sup>th</sup>. See *Monthly Mirror*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 3. January 1797 – June 1797:58.

<sup>108</sup> Additionally, The Irish republican Catholic James Coigly continued to build links between Ireland and France during 1797 through means such as corresponding societies. See Edward Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia? Reflections on the Threat of revolution in Britain, 1789-1848* (Manchester: MUP, 2000) 29.

Catholicism, with its ghosts and rituals, as a common source of threat to order and rationality has nationalistic significance when considered in this context. It was in this era of suspicion that the reviewer for *The British Critic* damned both Lewis and his play:

Youth courts the praise of wit, and despises that of morality. The time will come when Mr. Lewis will find some better distinction, than that of an author of a work, which degrades him in the mind of every man who has one genuine feeling of morality or religion.<sup>109</sup>

Yet again, the politically-forged link between religion and morality was used to criticise Lewis. ‘Sir Barnaby Sketchwell’, a pseudonymous satirist, who referred to Lewis as ‘Mathew Monckton, Esq’ in his work *London Characters*, objected to the presentation of the eponymous spectre and the play’s hint at incest:

[A] mother’s bosom continually pouring a stream of blood creates an horror indescribable, and an uncle being the murderer of his brother, and wading through every sanguinary crime, which nature shudders at, for the possession of his niece, shocks the mind.<sup>110</sup>

‘Sketchwell’, however, though happy to complain about the play’s Gothic trappings, remains coy about its apparently democratic content. Despite this, his comments make an important fact clear: a considerable number of people found aspects of the play tasteless to the point of offensiveness.

As with *The Monk*, not everybody found the play scandalous. *The Monthly Mirror*, ever Lewis’s defender, had given a biographical account of him first place in the edition for October 1796, celebrating his taking a seat in the House of Commons and lauding him as ‘a Gentleman of the first eminence and respectability in the literary world’.<sup>111</sup> In April 1797 it printed a positive review of Farley’s ballet ‘Raymond and Agnes’ as well as ‘An Apology for

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<sup>109</sup> *British Critic*. 40. January – June 1798: 436-7, 436.

<sup>110</sup> ‘Sir Barnaby Sketchwell’, *London Characters; or, Anecdotes, fashions, and customs of the present century*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2 vols. (London: Crosby and Co., 1809) 2: 82.

<sup>111</sup> *Monthly Mirror*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2. May 1796- December 1796, July 1796, 371. The journal also printed Lewis’s ‘The Erl-King’ and ‘The Erl-King’s Daughter’ on the following pages.

The Monk'. In December 1796 it dedicated three pages to a review of *The Castle Spectre* and included its prologue and epilogue in its 'Original Poetry' section. It differs from other positive reviews in its recognition that Lewis's skill went beyond crowd-pleasing spectacle: 'its merit is not that of *novelty* but of *construction*'. Even this journal criticised Lewis's inclusion of a ghost and references to the slave trade, but denied that its objections were politically motivated, suggesting that 'the simplicity of the romance is destroyed' by the inclusion of the Africans. It soon returned, however, to gushing praise of the play's spectacle and music – 'magical, every note of it'.<sup>112</sup> Likewise, *The European Magazine* for the first half of 1798 acknowledges the play's spectacular nature, claiming the spectre's presence is 'unnecessary' but that the play 'cannot be judged by common rules', and, though somewhat grudgingly, 'nothing in the Drama is to be found unfavourable to morality', particularly as 'the tortures of [Osmond's] guilt are well displayed'.<sup>113</sup>

The play continued to attract such contrasting responses. The dramatist James Boaden, writing in 1831 (shortly before the commencement of the process of emancipation) enthuses about the play's spectacle in his biography of Dorothy Jordan. He calls the scene in which the ghost appears 'astonishingly beautiful', the lighting 'perfectly celestial' and the ghost 'majestic and lovely, but melancholy'.<sup>114</sup> Boaden also praises Michael Kelly's use of Jomelli's 'Chaconne' as the spectre's accompanying music,

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<sup>112</sup> *Monthly Mirror*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 4 July 1797 – December 1797, December 1797, 354-6. The fact that the review of the play was not in the 'Memoranda dramatica' section of the journal indicates that the review is of the printed script rather than of a performance, though this is not overtly stated. The *Monthly Mirror*'s approach to the slave trade appears to have matched Lewis's – five months before, in July 1796, it had praised *The Negro Slaves*, a translation of Kotzebue, calling it 'a very affecting appeal to the humanity of Europeans' in which: 'The objections which have been made, not altogether without reason, commercially considered, to a total abolition, have apparently been considered by the ingenious author,' whose focus is not 'the enormity of the traffic' but 'the cruelties which have been exercised by the owners and overseers of estates in the West Indies' (*Monthly Mirror*, July 1796). This indicates that the claim it makes for the aesthetic objection to references to the slave trade is genuine and that the criticism was not, in this case, politically motivated.

<sup>113</sup> *European Magazine, and London Review*. 33. January-June 1798, 42.

<sup>114</sup> James Boaden, *The Life of Mrs Jordan; including original private correspondence, and numerous anecdotes of her contemporaries*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2 vols. (London: Edward Bull, 1831): 1:347.

Charles Kemble's performance as Percy and notes, but does not pass judgement on, the use of black servants.<sup>115</sup> Boaden's work is also the source of an anecdote about Sheridan being unable to afford to bet Lewis the box office takings from the play, but agreeing to bet what it was worth.<sup>116</sup> The age of the anecdote indicates that *The Castle Spectre*'s popular success has long been seen as being distinct from any artistic merit it holds. John Adolphus, in his 1839 biography of the comic actor John Bannister, who played the jester Motley was scornful of the play, describing the language as 'open to censure' and claiming that it was full of 'palpable and avowed blemishes', though he, unsurprisingly, praises the acting.<sup>117</sup>

None of these reviewers considered the *implications* of Lewis's presentation of usurpation and guilt. Osmond's guilt is the key to understanding the nature of his villainy and the play's most prominent link to Shakespeare's work, particularly *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. Syndy M. Conger has noted that Ambrosio demonstrates that 'the criminal is society's victim as much as its victimizer . . . his crimes may be forgivable and justifiable', something which links him to the Germanic Sturm and Drang 'and certainly distinguishes him from Shakespeare and Marlowe' and that the character is not 'a revival of the Elizabethan villain-hero' but 'the advent of that Renaissance type into the Romantic heroic villain'.<sup>118</sup> The same cannot be said, almost two years later, of Osmond, whose gloominess and irrationality are not intended to arouse the pity of the audience.

More recently, Paul Ranger has referred to *The Castle Spectre* as a 'highly conservative' 'Georgian morality play' due to the 'polarisations of virtue

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<sup>115</sup> Boaden, *The Life of Mrs. Jordan*: 1: 348-9.

<sup>116</sup> Boaden, *The Life of Mrs. Jordan*: 1: 351.

<sup>117</sup> John Adolphus, *Memoirs of John Bannister, Comedian*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1839) 2: 10-11. Adolphus's reference to the anecdote about Sheridan and the play's takings, as well as repeating the mistake of calling Lewis 'Matthew George' rather than 'Matthew Gregory', indicate that Adolphus used Boaden's work as an unacknowledged source of information. He does not specify what aspect of the language he found so offensive. Bannister later played the part of the comic servant Lodowick in *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*.

<sup>118</sup> Conger, *Matthew G. Lewis, Charles Robert Maturin and the Germans*: 116.

and wickedness' in the characters of Angela and Osmond.<sup>119</sup> While I agree with Ranger, his assertion omits much concerning the exact nature of Osmond's wickedness and requires more in-depth consideration. The conservatism and morality of the play are not only found in the defeat of Osmond's lust, but in the portrayal of aristocratic duty, which serves as a conduit for the demonstration of Percy's virtue and Osmond's corruption. However, the significance of Osmond's relationship with Hassan has been unexplored. It is the purpose of this chapter to explore Lewis's presentation and exploration of the abuse of social power in the play, specifically his defence of primogeniture and the feudal system, through these two characters and their relationship.

Lewis's exploration of villainy makes it clear that *The Castle Spectre* did not deserve its 'reputation as a subversive play', nor does Lewis encourage slave revolts.<sup>120</sup> However, the play's reputation has remained and has contributed to colouring our understanding of Lewis. The composer and actor Michael Kelly, who devised the music for many of Lewis's plays, including *The Castle Spectre*, discussed the play in his memoirs, claiming that Lewis had the play performed for his slaves in Jamaica. He also claims that they poisoned him in order to gain their freedom, an assertion which D.L. Macdonald plausibly dismisses as fanciful.<sup>121</sup>

The focus here is on Lewis's presentation of villainy and usurpation through the character of Osmond, including his Renaissance influences and his dramatic association with his virtuous brother Reginald, the embittered black slave Hassan and, to a lesser extent, the servant Kenric. In allying Osmond with these characters, Lewis shows his audience traits which are

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<sup>119</sup> Ranger, 'Terror and Pity reign in every breast' 107 and 116 respectively.

<sup>120</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 51.

<sup>121</sup> Michael Kelly, *Reminiscences of Michael Kelly, of the King's Theatre, and Theatre Royal Drury Lane, including a period of nearly half a century; with original anecdotes of many distinguished persons, political, literary, and musical* [ed. Theodore Edward Hook], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1826, repr.: BiblioBazaar, 2010): 2: 127. Kelly does not name his sources, but the performance is not recorded in the *Journal*. The *Journal*, however, was not published until eight years after Kelly's memoir and the references in the latter to Lewis's kindness towards his slaves does suggest that Kelly's sources were not completely inaccurate. See also Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 51.

villainous in their ability to upset social order and which should therefore be avoided to maintain peace: the instability and inflexibility which lead to all committing monstrous actions. The similarity between feudal power structures and the relationship between master and slave have already been explored by Macdonald.<sup>122</sup> This is of particular relevance to *The Castle Spectre*, with its feudal setting and anachronistic African characters. Osmond, who has usurped his brother's property, is a guilt-ridden villain who bears some similarities to Shakespeare's Macbeth and Claudius. In this way he can be seen to develop ideas which are present, though embryonic, in *The Monk*. His psychological complexity has made him the focus of some critical attention, from Bertrand Evans in particular.<sup>123</sup> What have not been considered are the parallels between Osmond and his subordinates, and what this association, a variation of the common dramatic and Gothic device of doppelgangers, tells us about Lewis's perception of villainy. *The Castle Spectre* associates threat with *illegitimate* and therefore corrupt power but reassuringly restores legitimate order and authority at the end.<sup>124</sup>

### **Osmond: the unstable usurper and overreacher**

When identifying contextual factors which influenced the portrayal of Gothic stage villains at the end of the eighteenth century Paula R. Backscheider, as mentioned in the previous chapter, pinpoints the significance of King George III as a monarch who was both prone to periods of perturbing insanity and who also endeared himself to the public because he 'mingled freely' with them. This instability and threat to reason, she

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<sup>122</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 54. See also footnote 25, above.

<sup>123</sup> Evans observes that '[t]he anguish of Osmond seems peculiarly excruciating, and he displays it more ostentatiously than any previous villain', that Osmond 'possesses a high degree of attractiveness and some truly admirable qualities' and '[i]n him the blend of the haughty, the cruel, the pitiable, and the grand was calculated to gratify the actor, the censor, and the public.' Evans, *Gothic Drama* 137.

<sup>124</sup> As Paula Backscheider has noted, in *The Castle Spectre* 'the romance line is strongly subordinated to the story of removing the threat emanating from the protagonist'. Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 156.

argues, makes him the basis for many villains, despite his popularity.<sup>125</sup> It is true that Lewis's villains are often unstable and that his heroes are concerned with public duty. Bakscheider also points out that although Gothic villains were quite often members of the aristocracy, they were often (unlike the king) 'corrupt and in decline and never the legitimate possessor of [their] estate'.<sup>126</sup> Bakscheider asserts that such villains are 'the concentrated locus of anxieties about power and authority' in Gothic drama.<sup>127</sup> All of these statements apply to Osmond, who has attempted to kill his brother in order to possess his wife and his estate. As Bakscheider has observed, the play's low-born characters 'stand ready to help the virtuous and smile approval and pledge loyalty when the tyrant is overthrown . . . conflicts over power give way to a benevolent, humanly orientated moral order'.<sup>128</sup> Lewis's villains are those characters who attempt to disrupt legitimate power selfishly rather than use it for the good of all, as do the heroes.

Little work has considered Osmond in the light of his literary antecedents and the personal and political contexts within which he was created, focusing instead on the dramatic effect of his unstable emotions. Macdonald has touched upon this topic, linking Osmond to a character type originally identified by Ronald Paulson, 'the Duc d'Orleans type', who desires power so much that he overthrows the legitimate ruler, his older brother.<sup>129</sup> What Macdonald does not explore is that both Osmond and Hassan can be considered Gothic monsters, providing a warning for the audience about the results of transgressing society's boundaries.

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<sup>125</sup> Bakscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 161.

<sup>126</sup> Bakscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 165.

<sup>127</sup> Bakscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 190. Bakscheider considers the similarities of Spalatro and Schedoni in *The Italian Monk* to Osmond in their desire for heroines (198). These qualities also apply to Lewis's later (1811) villains Hardyknute and Timour, who are the focus of Chapter Four and who can also be seen as stage representations of Napoleon.

<sup>128</sup> Bakscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 229.

<sup>129</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 184-5.

Osmond's attempted fratricide, committed with the intention of usurping both his brother's social and marital positions, is presented as horrific because it threatens both the family and society through the disregard of primogeniture. In *The Castle Spectre* the structure of the family is a microcosm of that of a patriarchal society. Heroic characters fulfil acts of domestic and public virtue; villains are base and disingenuous both publicly and privately. Lewis's use of the microcosm reveals his debt to Renaissance drama as well as reflecting his experience of domestic and civic unrest. My argument is that Osmond's villainy lies in the disorder he provokes and the act of usurpation; that the portrayal of Osmond as a usurper and the results of this have contemporary resonances, including political ones, of fears concerning the war with France, of Irish republicanism, of slave revolts and of the king's madness and possible revolution in Britain.

Osmond's announcement of hatred, jealousy and resentment towards Reginald is so vicious that it appears unnatural as he announces:

Yet for that hatred had I not cause? – At Tournaments, 'twas on Reginald that each bright eye was bent; at Court, 'twas to Reginald that each noble proffered friendship. Evelina too! – Ha! at that name my expiring hate revives! Reginald! Reginald! for thee was I sacrificed! – Oh! when it strikes a second blow, my poniard shall stab surer!<sup>130</sup>

Osmond's speech is tellingly constructed. His use of symmetrical repetition marks him as a member of the aristocracy – as we shall see when considering Reginald and Percy, and the heroes of his later plays; Lewis's most reasonable, rational and right-thinking characters speak calmly and with a control made evident in patterned rhetoric. However, the rationality that such speech would imply is undermined in this instance by the irrationality and aggression of the accusatory tone created by the use of exclamation marks and language of violence – 'stab' and 'strike', for example. The corruption and degraded nature of this speech signifies the corruption of Osmond's nobility.

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<sup>130</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*, in Cox, ed., *Seven Gothic Dramas*: 149-224, 211; 5. Sc.2.

Osmond moves between terrifying irrationality and reasoned argument, making him an unstable ruler. He spurns reasonable arguments when considering forcing Angela to marry him:

What though her heart be Percy's? . . . Because my short-lived joy may cause her eternal sorrow, shall I reject those pleasures sought so long, desired so earnestly? That I will not, by Heaven! Mine she is, and mine she shall be . . .<sup>131</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Osmond threatens to rape Angela if she will not marry him. Though Angela begs 'I sue to you for mercy, for protection' and points out that as she is in his power, before again begging 'Mercy! Mercy!'<sup>132</sup> Osmond remains determined. His refusal of mercy to someone under his care is, as in *The Monk*, presented as reprehensible and villainous.

By contrast, when confronted by Angela's lover Percy, Osmond appears reasonable, upbraiding Percy's shortcomings as a hero so persuasively that the audience cannot help but agree with Osmond:

Earl, nothing can justify unworthy means. If you were wronged, why sought you not your right with your sword's point? I then should have esteemed you a noble foe, and as such would have treated you: But you have stooped to paltry artifice, and attacked me like some midnight ruffian, privately and in disguise. By this am I authorized to forget your station. . .<sup>133</sup>

The capacity for such moral sentiments throws his less rational speeches into relief, and this highlights how far Osmond, in the manner of a tragic hero, has fallen, as well as how much Percy, though well-intentioned, falls short of being fully 'heroic'.

Osmond oscillates between his desires and guilt. In his status as a 'conscience-stung' villain, as Lewis termed it, lies his resemblance to his Renaissance-era forebears. He is allied to Macbeth through his references to darkness, to Claudius through his sense of guilt and to Milton's Satan in his

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<sup>131</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 169; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>132</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 171; 2. Sc1.

<sup>133</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 144; 2.Sc. 3.

presentation of hell as an internal state. In Act Three, Osmond reveals that he is tortured by the happiness of peasants, because it is the reward of virtue:

How fair, how tranquil, all without! How dark, how comfortless, all within! – Hark! the sound of music! – The peasants are returning from labour: they move with gay and careless steps, carolling as they go some rustic ditty; and will pass the night in rest, for they have passed the day in innocence!<sup>134</sup>

Lewis has supplied Osmond with some effective repetition here, drawing attention to the difference between the castle and its surroundings; a difference which has at its root his own illegitimate occupancy there. The ‘fair, tranquil’ landscape and the ‘dark’ castle have obvious symbolic implications. The latter has been transformed from an emblem of ordered hierarchy into a symbol of the threat posed by disruption of this order. Osmond goes on to confirm his jealousy of the peasants, saying ‘I sicken at the sight of happiness, which I never more must enjoy; I hate the possessors of hearts untainted – hate, for I envy!’<sup>135</sup>

Osmond fails to realise, however, that it was this envy which led him to plot against his brother. The uncorrupted peasantry form a contrast to Osmond – they are infantilised, like Lewis’s later slaves, into an idealised, childlike state of Edenic bliss, whereas Osmond and his ‘dark’ environment appear post-lapsarian. He is at his most Satanic and Macbeth-like when he addresses night:

[F]ly from my eyes, bright Day! Speed thy pace, Darkness!  
Thou art my Love! Haste to unfold thy sable mantle, and  
robe the world in the colour of my soul!<sup>136</sup>

Osmond’s claim that his soul is dark highlights the connection between the usurper and his environment and between the usurper and his slave. He repeats his plea in the final act, exclaiming ‘Away with the light! Its beams

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<sup>134</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 185; 3.Sc. 3.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

are hateful!’<sup>137</sup> The Shakespearean echo is crucial to understanding Lewis’s play. Both *Macbeth* and *The Castle Spectre* dramatise historical usurpation as disastrous in order to uphold the *status quo* in their own era. In making use of Shakespeare’s play, Lewis not only adds artistic gravitas and legitimacy to his own production but also associates himself with a writer who had recently become a symbol of nationalism. Additionally, by using Shakespeare as a reference point, Lewis sets up parallels between the eras of composition: parallels between Elizabethan England, attacked by the Spanish and at risk of religious revolt; and Georgian England, in conflict with France, Ireland and America, at risk of social revolt and facing the possible end of the brutal but lucrative slave trade. Indeed, the idealisation of past order was common. Isaac Kramnick (1968) has commented on the idealisation of the Elizabethan age in the eighteenth century, due to a combination of patriotism and the concerns of the gentry.<sup>138</sup> James Fordyce, in his 1777 address ‘On a Manly Spirit, as opposed to effeminacy’, harks back to both Elizabethan England and Classical Greece and Rome as he condemns the contemporary lust for money.<sup>139</sup> Osmond’s covetousness regarding his brother’s wife and land makes him a villain in this mould.

With their over-reaching monarchs, gloomy settings, murder, portrayal of madness, use of the supernatural and eventual restoration of order, the Renaissance plays *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* are the reference points for several Gothic texts of the late eighteenth century. *The Castle Spectre* makes use of all of these tropes, presenting Osmond’s psychological instability as the result of his guilt. Firstly, he takes Percy prisoner in the hope that he can use him to blackmail Angela:

If she refuse me still, the death of this, her favourite – his death! Oh! through what bloody paths do I wander in pursuit of happiness! Yes! I am guilty! – Heaven! How guilty! Yet

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<sup>137</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 211; 5.Sc.2.

<sup>138</sup> Kramnick, Isaac, *Bolingbroke and his Circle: The Politics of Walpole in the Age of Nostalgia* (Cambridge: CUP, 1968) 34-5.

<sup>139</sup> See James Fordyce, *Addresses to Young Men*. 2 vols. (Dublin: John Exshaw, 1777) ‘Address XIII: On a Manly Spirit, as opposed to effeminacy’ 2:109-149, 146-7.

lies the fault with me? Did my own pleasure plant in my bosom these tempestuous passions? No! . . . Nature formed me the slaves of wild desires; and Fate, as she frowned upon my cradle, exclaimed, 'I doom this babe to be a villain and a wretch!'<sup>140</sup>

Osmond's refusal to take responsibility for his behaviour is one of the key aspects of his villainy. By contrast, Lewis's heroes are marked by their self-control and both public and private virtue. In 'On a Manly Spirit, as opposed to cowardice', Fordyce holds up the Black Prince as an example of masculine virtue, as he 'had all his passions under his command'.<sup>141</sup>

Secondly, Osmond is prone to nightmares and becomes increasingly fearful. Unaware that he is overheard by Kenric, he describes the psychologically disruptive effects of his heavy conscience:

Anguish! endless, hopeless anguish! – Day or night, no moment of rest – When I sleep, dreams of strange horror still fright me from my couch! When I wake, I find in every object some cause for distrust – read the dread change in every eye, 'Thou art a murderer!' – and tremble lest the agents of my guilt should work its punishment.<sup>142</sup>

Later, Osmond describes one of these dreams to Hassan. It is so terrifying that it makes him hope that 'there is not, there cannot be, a world to come':

Let me not hear the damning truth! – Tell me not, that flames await me! – that for moments of bliss I must endure long ages of torture! – Plunge me rather in the thickest gloom of Atheism! – Say, that with my body must perish my soul! – For, oh! should my fearful dream be prophetic! . . . Methought I wandered through the low-browed caverns, where repose the reliques of my ancestors! – My eye dwelt with awe on their tombs. . .<sup>143</sup>

Osmond goes on to describe the rest of the dream, in which he meets Angela, who turns into the rotting corpse of her mother. This dream (which

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<sup>140</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 175; 2. Sc.3.

<sup>141</sup> Such self-control is explored, in relation to Lewis's heroes, in the following chapter. Fordyce, *Addresses to Young Men*, 'Address IV: On a Manly Spirit, as Opposed to cowardice', 2: 151-203, 174.

<sup>142</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 185; 3. Sc.2.

<sup>143</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 197; 3. Sc.2.

does prove prophetic, like those of *The Monk*) is both the result and the reminder of Osmond's guilt, and this makes him irrational – dangerously so, for a ruler. The three examples given above chart the degeneration of Osmond's speech – by the time he recounts the dream, he is barely coherent. He also, like Claudius and Macbeth, fears damnation. His melodramatic mention of Atheism is the absolute opposite of his brother's later calm religious references. Osmond's dread here is so marked that Henry Siddons used it as an example in his acting manual, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action*. Siddons claims that Osmond 'ought . . . to retreat from some object present to his mental eye, which inspires him with terror, and from which he is all anxiety to remove himself'.<sup>144</sup> Hassan warns him against allowing the dream to 'unman' him and he faints like a heroine when Angela confronts him wielding the knife he used to murder her mother.<sup>145</sup> As Fordyce's work suggests and the following chapter explores, a failure to adhere to masculine behaviour codes is a marker of villainy and threat. This depiction of a frightened, irrational, feminised Osmond is what Lewis referred to when he set out his intentions regarding the play's moral lesson in its prologue:

To lay th'exulting villain's bosom bare,  
 And by the torments of his conscience show,  
 That prosperous vice is but triumphant woe!<sup>146</sup>

The final link between Osmond and Shakespearean villainy is his association with the corruption of his surroundings. Shakespeare's 1606 play reiterates the ideology of the Divine Right of Kings. Macbeth's illegitimate reign is the result of a disruption in the Great Chain of Being: he does not rule by Divine Right and this leads to an unnatural darkness over

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<sup>144</sup> Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action; Adapted to the English Drama: From a work on the subject by M. Engel*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1822, repr.; Nabu, 2010) 88.

<sup>145</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 197; 3. Sc.3 and 205; 4. Sc.2 respectively.

<sup>146</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 152.

Scotland and other anomalies in nature. Conway Castle likewise becomes a 'melancholy mansion' under Osmond's illegitimate inhabitation.<sup>147</sup>

It has been noted by Frances A. Chiu (2006) that Gothic villains often share characteristics with the castles they inhabit, which, in their ruinous state, serve as metaphors for the corruption of the inhabiting nobility within.<sup>148</sup> Ranger has likewise identified this, picking up on the preoccupation with the past of Fordyce and Kramnick. He writes that the depiction of the castles observed 'a passing of the old ways . . . In their decrepitude both castle and convent were a symbol of human mutability'.<sup>149</sup> Lewis has set his play when the castle was undamaged, but the illegitimate occupant is still depicted as having a corrupting influence: Ranger notes that the servant Motley's discussion of the castle's gloom is followed by a description of Osmond's introverted and sullen demeanour.<sup>150</sup> It is worth drawing attention to the implications of this link between Gothic villains and the decay and menace of their abodes: a corrupt ruler will cause the corruption and fall of the area under their jurisdiction. As a legislator and heir to two plantations, this decay is exactly what Lewis was keen to avoid.

### **Osmond, Hassan, Kenric: Monstrous Associations**

The accusations of democracy levelled at Lewis refer to the apparently sympathetic portrayal of the black character Hassan. It would be a mistake, however, to perceive this as 'democratic'. By the time Hassan walked onto the stage at Drury Lane, Denmark and France had abolished slavery and there was some co-operation between the French Government and the leader of St. Domingue. Lewis's letters and *Journal*, as Macdonald has confirmed, suggest that he had abolitionist sympathies but he was certainly not in

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<sup>147</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 159; 1.Sc.1.

<sup>148</sup> Chiu, 'Faulty Towers'. [Online]. Access details as footnote 5.

<sup>149</sup> Ranger, *'Terror and Pity reign in every Breast* 64-65.

<sup>150</sup> Ranger, *'Terror and Pity reign in every Breast* 51.

favour of emancipation. In the penultimate entry in his *Journal*, he admits that '[e]very man of humanity must wish that slavery . . . had never found a legal sanction' but that 'its system is now so incorporated with the welfare of Great Britain as well as of Jamaica, as to make its extirpation an absolute impossibility' as this would lead to both violence and financial loss.<sup>151</sup> Earlier, in the entry for April 22 1818, he engages with contemporary debates about racial difference, remarking that [n]aturalists and physicians, philosophers and philanthropists, may argue', but from his observations, 'there does seem to be a very great difference between the brain of a black person and a white one'.<sup>152</sup>

The interrelation of Osmond and Hassan is an important example of a common trope in Lewis's early works. Other pairings include Osmond and his more virtuous brother Reginald; Osmond and Kenric; Kenric and Hassan and the heroic Earl Percy and his grateful, loyal servant Motley. As mentioned previously, the nature of Osmond's crimes make him a Gothic 'monster'. His monstrosity is theatrically reinforced through his association with black servants. Over twenty years before the creation of the most famous monstrous doubles, Frankenstein and his creature, Lewis takes late eighteenth-century concerns about race and slavery, loyalty and revolt, power and duty, and stages them in the interdependency of Osmond and Hassan. Contemporary fears about slave revolt and views of race would make the black servant a spectacular and monstrous character. The association of shocking deeds and abuse of power with physical monstrosity is common in Gothic and Shakespearean texts and, as Kramnick notes, to eighteenth century culture.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Matthew Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica*, ed. Judith Terry (Oxford: OUP, 1999) 249.

<sup>152</sup> Lewis, *Journal* 243.

<sup>153</sup> E.J. Clery has noted this in relation to *Macbeth*: 'In Shakespeare's play, the crimes of regicide and usurpation, outrages against providential order, give rise to a sympathetic revulsion in nature. Unnatural portents and visions are reinforced by the repetitive imagery of outlandish disproportion'. Clery, *Women's Gothic* 72. Kramnick discusses the use of the Leviathan myth and the way it was used to represent Robert Walpole. See Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and his Circle* 21.

Hassan and Osmond are both resentful. Osmond begrudges Reginald his land and wife – reminders of his own lesser status; Hassan resents his position as a slave. Both speak in a way which indicates a dangerous, uncontrollable, corrosive excess of feeling which is contrary to the reason that Lewis advocates throughout his works. Osmond’s instability and distress are discussed above in relation to his disturbing dreams. Lewis builds the parallels between master and slave by giving Hassan a lengthy speech earlier within the same scene. The following exchange between Saib and Hassan takes place after Saib recounts an angry encounter with Osmond and Hassan has referred to ‘[self-]interest’ as ‘the white-man’s god’:

SAIB: I trusted that his gratitude for my past services-

HASS: European gratitude?- Seek constancy in the winds – fire in ice – darkness in the blaze of sun-shine! – But seek not gratitude in the breast of an European!

SAIB: Then, why so attached to Osmond? For what do you value him?

HASS: Not for his virtues, but for his vices, Saib: Can there be for me a great cause to love him?- Am I not branded with scorn? – Am I not marked out for dishonour? – Was I not free, and am I not a slave? – Was I not once beloved, and am I not now despised? – What man, did I tender my service, would accept the negro’s friendship? What woman, did I talk of affection, would not turn from the negro with disgust?<sup>154</sup>

Several aspects of the above speech, in addition to the ongoing concern with gratitude, are striking. Firstly, Hassan uses language associated with the physical signs of slavery (‘branded’, ‘marked’) to refer to the social treatment he has received. He proceeds to list the human relationships now denied him, revealing a high level of sensibility as he does so. This presentation of a black character, especially one who expresses a Christian faith, as Hassan does, may well have been unsettling as well as spectacular for a contemporary audience. The extent of Hassan’s despair is heightened by the speech’s second striking attribute – the structure of his sentences. Hassan contrasts what he now is to what he once was, with great effect (‘free . . . slave’; ‘beloved . . . despised’; ‘affection . . . disgust’). Befitting a

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<sup>154</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 196; 4. Sc.1.

melodrama, the language is strongly emotive and this is emphasised by the antonyms. This adds to the audience's sense of Hassan's isolation as its magnitude becomes apparent. The slave's desperate loneliness can be viewed as a parallel of Osmond's near-incestuous desire for his niece, and his hatred of *all* Europeans appears as unnatural as Osmond's hatred of Reginald.<sup>155</sup> Hassan continues to rage against his position:

Attached to Osmond, say you? Saib, I hate him! Yet viewing him as an avenging Fiend sent hither to torment his fellows, it glads me that he fills his office so well! Oh! 'tis a thought which I would not barter for empires, to know that in this world he makes others suffer, and will suffer himself for their tortures in the next!<sup>156</sup>

The punctuation of the speech, full of exclamation marks and dashes, implies the fervour and emotion with which these lines should be delivered by the actor. Hassan describes Osmond as a 'Fiend' whilst his own words recall the sentiment of John Milton's Satan – 'evil, be thou my good'.<sup>157</sup> This creates a different type of spectacle to that of the ghost – the degradation from greatness that is so often associated with Gothic villains and has its roots in the conventions of tragedy.<sup>158</sup> A shallow reading of Hassan's character would therefore assume that his presence in the drama is sentimentalised and critical of slavery. However, Hassan is more complex than this. Lewis deliberately created a character ruled by his emotions and presented this quality as a monstrous one. He uses a Shakespearean quotation to make his point:

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<sup>155</sup> Lewis's claim that he included black characters solely to create spectacle – 'could I have produced the same effect by making my heroine blue, blue I should have made her' – has been often cited by those critics concentrating on the spectacular nature of Gothic drama. The phrase certainly shows that Lewis was aware of the commercial and marketable aspects of his work - and it should be considered that such a writer would be unlikely to produce anything too contrary to popular sentiment, however much publicity he may court. Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 223.

<sup>156</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 196; 4. Sc.1.

<sup>157</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: Penguin, 1996) 4.110.

<sup>158</sup> Hassan first appears in the second scene of the play, where his regret for his homeland foreshadows Osmond's later bitterness and where, as Osmond will later do, he uses gendered language to express his misery – 'to remember [his past and family] unmans me!' Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 161; 1. Sc.2.

*Hassan* is a man of violent passions, and warm feelings, whose bosom is filled with the milk of human kindness, but that milk is soured by despair; whose nature was susceptible of the tenderest affections, but who feels that all the chains of his affections are broken forever. He has lost every thing, even hope; he has no single object against which he can direct his vengeance, and he directs it at large against mankind. He hates all the world, hates even himself, for he feels that in that world there is no one that loves him [. . .]

But though *Hassan*'s heart is changed by disappointment and misfortune, that heart was once feeling and kind; nor could he hate with such inveteracy, if he had not loved with extreme affection.<sup>159</sup>

Lewis explains *Hassan* here as an example of what H.L. Malchow (1996) has termed the 'dualism' of 'the black's eagerness to please, combined with a propensity, when harmed or scorned, for exacting a bloody vengeance', which Malchow suggests was a 'commonplace of racial discourse by the early nineteenth century', and which was '[s]uggestive of the emotional instability of the child, the woman, and the madman . . .'.<sup>160</sup> Malchow points out that *The Castle Spectre* was one of the earlier plays to have commercial success employing this character type. This 'emotional instability', however, also refers to *Osmond*. He and *Hassan* share characteristics with contemporary views not only of black people but also, as we have seen, George III and Shakespearean and Miltonic overreachers. *Osmond* is also presented as emasculated at various points in the play. They appear as ruined examples of potential greatness, their corruption evident not only in their plans but in the corruption of their speech and the recourse to body language suited to the form of illegitimate theatre. The association of the characters, within the context of the 1790s, serves to reiterate the menace and threat of *Osmond*, whose earlier metaphorical reference to night's 'sable mantle' being the 'colour of [his] soul' makes his connection to his servant

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<sup>159</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 222-3.

<sup>160</sup> H.L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, California: Stanford UP, 1996) 17.

palpable. Osmond, in fact, according to late eighteenth-century mores, is as frighteningly unstable as the woman, the madman and the black.<sup>161</sup>

Though Hassan's function is to act as a mirror for Osmond's villainous qualities, he also expresses the same moral as *The Monk's* Ambrosio and mobs – that ill treatment has led to resentment and rebellion. Of course, if transgressions against a social order can be traced back to an instigating factor, then future transgressions can be controlled. Lewis fuses racial debate, feudal relationships and the dramatic device of contrasted characters here as a tool to critique not contemporary power structures but their management. The complementary pairing of Percy and Motley present the audience with a servant capable of loyalty borne out of gratitude to a master he perceives as kind. Backscheider has considered the relationship between Gothic victims and their servants: low-born, foolish characters that function to express the fear their social and intellectual superiors feel.<sup>162</sup> Hassan and Osmond express not fear but menace. This is apparent in Act Four, when Saib asks Osmond to free Angela. Osmond gives a lengthy speech refusing this and insisting on marrying her, though he is disturbed by his dream and terrified of sleep:

Oh! Faithless Sleep, why are thou too leagued with my foes?  
[. . .] Now, Fear and Remorse thy sad companions, I shudder  
to see thee approach my couch! [. . .] Oh! how I hate thee,  
Sleep! – Friend of Virtue, oh! how I dread thy coming!

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<sup>161</sup> This association of race with moral degeneracy can be found in Lewis's juvenilia. In *The Effusions of Sensibility*, Sophonisba Simper, who is fond of puns, recounts how she tricked a man who tried to kiss her. She describes him using the language of race:

You see, my dear Honoria, it is in vain I labour and *belabour* to make this blackamoor, *black no more*. No pains or instructions of mine can possibly wash him white. You know how earnestly I have endeavoured to efface from his mind the desires for sensual pleasures, which no disfigure it, and convince him how much more noble and refined are the gratifications which result from the system of platonic affection. (Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence 2*: 264)

Sophonisba's criticism of the man as being concerned with sensuality and the physical and her assertion that he is, therefore, impossible to 'wash white' reveal Lewis's familiarity, even as a youth, with the popular belief that black people were less rationale than their white counterparts.

<sup>162</sup> Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 181.

Hassan listens to this triumphantly, then, when Osmond exits, gives a soliloquy:

Yes, thou art sweet, Vengeance! – Oh! how it joys me when the white man suffers! – Yet weak are his pangs, compared to those I felt when torn from thy shores, O native Africa! – from thy bosom, my faithful Samba! – Ah! dost thou still exist, my wife? – Has sorrow for my loss traced thy smooth brow with wrinkles! [. . .] Ha! has my bosom still room for thoughts so tender? Hence with them! Vengeance must possess it all!<sup>163</sup>

Whilst this speech does reveal some of the brutality of the slave trade in a way that could not but be controversial in 1797-8, Hassan is also irrational, veering between vicious oaths of vengeance and wistful questions to his absent wife. He dismisses his misery in favour of gaining retribution in a way similar to Osmond's insistence on pursuing Angela. Osmond speaks in a similar way when he later threatens Angela:

[E]re tomorrow dawns shall Angela lie a bride in my arms, or Reginald a corse at my feet. Nay, spare entreaties! – Why should I heed your sorrows? – You have gazed unmoved upon mine! – Why should I be softened by your tears? – Mine were never dried by your pity! – Cold and inflexible have you been to *my* despair, so will I be to yours.<sup>164</sup>

An understanding of this sentimentalising of Hassan places Lewis in an anti-revolutionary tradition of writing which also includes the authors Maria Edgeworth and Hannah More. Edgeworth's short story 'The Grateful Negro' (c.1801) recounts the story of two differing plantation owners: the brutal Mr Jefferies and the humane Mr Edwards. Jefferies suffers in a slave revolt which his own behaviour has incited and is forced to return to England with his fortune ruined; Edwards is warned and rescued by the eponymous grateful slave, despite threats to his life and that of his wife from an Obeah sorceress. The 'benevolence' of Mr Edwards and 'gratitude' of the slave are often referred to. The rebellion has been organised by the slave Hector, who, like Hassan, becomes obsessed with revenge, which

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<sup>163</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 199; 5. Sc.1 Hassan also wonders whether his son can remember him.

<sup>164</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 204; 4. Sc.2.

‘sleeping or waking, fills [his] soul’.<sup>165</sup> The story reads like a parable for adults, and the moral is clear and equivalent to that of *The Monk*.<sup>166</sup> *The Grateful Slave* compares the work of slaves to that of labourers in Newcastle and Birmingham, anticipating by a decade similar comparisons made by Lewis in his *Journal*. More startling is the narrator’s depiction of Mr. Edward’s view of slavery, which precipitates Lewis’s by over a decade but is almost identical:

He wished that there was no such thing as slavery in the world, but he was convinced, by the arguments of those who have the best means of obtaining information, that the sudden emancipation of the negroes would rather increase than diminish their miseries. His benevolence, therefore, confined itself within the bounds of reason. He adopted those plans for the amelioration of the state of the slaves which appeared to him the most likely to succeed without producing any violent agitation or revolution.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Maria Edgeworth, *The Grateful Negro*. [online]. Project Gutenberg. Available from: [www.gutenberg.com](http://www.gutenberg.com), c.1801. [Accessed 15/06/2009]. Noting the prevalence of colonial characters in Edgeworth’s work, especially in *Belinda*, which features the Creole Mr. Vincent as a possible suitor for the heroine and the marriage of a white farm-girl to the black African Juba, Kathryn Kirkpatrick identifies that there may be a biographical reason for this. Kirkpatrick writes of Edgeworth’s ‘own colonial station in Ireland’. Kirkpatrick, Kathryn, ‘Introduction’, in Edgeworth, Maria, *Belinda*, ed. Kathryn Kirkpatrick (Oxford: OUP, 1994, repr.; 1999): ix-xxxii, xxiii. Kirkpatrick also writes about the implications of this status, which have parallels in the paternalistic responsibility Lewis held towards his slaves and the danger to his livelihood posed by objections to slavery:

A member of the privileged Protestant gentry, a minority that controlled most of the land and wealth in the country, Edgeworth was, as a woman, in the ambiguous position of a disenfranchised member of a powerful class. Moreover, unlike many members of the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland, Edgeworth and her family believed in the Catholic franchise and regarded their own legacy of land, confiscated during the era of plantations in the late sixteenth century, as charging them with the obligation to govern fairly and well. (Kathryn Kirkpatrick, ‘Introduction’ xxiv).

<sup>166</sup> As Boulukos has explored, John Moore engages with this theme by using the character of Hanno, the slave of Zeluco in the novel of the same name (1789). Zeluco is a cruel master, used by Moore to promote a more abolitionist stance than Lewis. However, Boulukos’s comment that ‘Moore, by depicting the slave in question as devoted to revenge, does not entirely depart from the consensus view of slaves as overly emotional and irrational’ (Boulukos 161) reminds us of Hassan, placing Lewis’s character within a literary tradition of difference rather than democracy.

<sup>167</sup> Edgeworth, *The Grateful Negro*. In a footnote, Edgeworth acknowledges *The History of the West Indies* as the source of this idea, though she does not name an author. Lewis’s comments on slavery are discussed on 82.

Hassan too, as Edgeworth's Hector would, attributes his behaviour to the treatment that he has received:

Oh Saib! my heart once was gentle, once was good! But sorrows have broken it, insults have made it hard! I have been dragged from my native land, from a wife who was every thing to me, to whom I was every thing! Twenty years have elapsed since these Christians tore me away: they trampled upon my heart, mocked my despair . . . when the last point of Africa faded from my view, when as I stood on the vessel's deck I felt that all [on earth] I loved was to me lost for ever, in that bitter moment did I banish humanity from my breast . . . vowed aloud endless hatred to mankind. I have kept my oath, I *will* keep it!<sup>168</sup>

Hassan's speech combines the bitter claim for vengeance of Milton's Satan and the sentimentalising of the past and native country that the most famous slave writer, Olaudah Equiano, in 1789, employed. Equiano depicts Africa as Edenic when he claims that 'as we live in a country where nature is prodigal of her favours, our wants are few and easily supplied'.<sup>169</sup> He also writes in understandably emotional terms when he delineates his separation from his sister, writing 'she was again torn from me for ever! I was now more miserable, if possible, than before. . . the wretchedness of my situation was redoubled by my anxiety after her fate'.<sup>170</sup>

By 1797, the figure of the sympathetic slave had become commonplace. It was exemplified by Josiah Wedgwood's medallion of 1787, featuring a kneeling, shackled slave and the words 'Am I not a man and a brother?' However, the character type of the sympathetic slave had been used by those on both sides of the abolitionist debate, with abolitionists using it to garner the pity of their supporters and the anti-abolitionists using the deferential attitude it included to support their own cause. Lewis's presentation of Hassan as potentially loyal but as naturally irrational and

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<sup>168</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 161; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>169</sup> Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*, ed. Angelo Costanzo (Ontario: Broadview, 2004) 51.

<sup>170</sup> Equiano, *Interesting Narrative* 66. His language here is similar to that Hassan uses to discuss his wife.

ruined by ‘scorn’ is the horrific warning which is the flip-side of Edgeworth’s grateful slave – as mercy may be expected to result in the grateful self-sacrifice of slaves, derisive treatment will result in insubordination. Hassan’s revolt is not bloody or violent, but his delight in Osmond’s misery is nonetheless frighteningly insubordinate.

Macdonald has identified the similarities between the feudal order and slavery, writing that ‘‘Gratitude’ was the name Lewis most often used for the feudal loyalty of his slaves’.<sup>171</sup> He acknowledges that Lewis had three models for understanding the master-slave relationship – as being that between a farmer and livestock, as a feudal arrangement and as a paternal one. Lewis’s paternalism is explored more fully in the following chapter, but it is worth noting here that Macdonald claims that this was Lewis’s attempt to improve upon his father’s approach to the slaves as his property, which I would argue parallels his presentation of other social structures in the plays.<sup>172</sup> The use of kind treatment to prevent mutinous behaviour was not a discourse limited to slavery, but was common to a number of late eighteenth-century concerns, including absenteeism and the control of the working classes. Paternalism is advocated by Hannah More’s *Tales for the Common People*, a collection of stories that were part of her *Cheap Repository Tracts*, published between 1795 and 1798, contemporaneously with Lewis’s two best-known, most popular, works. Like ‘The Grateful Negro’, the stories in this collection are written in a very simple style and each contains a moral. ‘The Way to Plenty, or, the Second Half of Tom White’ (1795) consists of a series of anecdotes about the thriftiness and happiness of compliant peasants and the immorality (usually drunkenness) which More claims leads to the penurious misery of the less satisfied. More presents the middle classes as having a charitable duty to the poor, but only to those who do not make trouble. She puts her feudalistic views in the words of the character of the story’s doctor, who addresses the poor:

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<sup>171</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 55.

<sup>172</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 56.

In our gifts we shall prefer, as the farmer has told you, those who keep steadily to their work. Such as come to the vestry for a loaf, and do not come to church for the sermon, we shall mark; and prefer those who come constantly whether there are any gifts or not. But there is one rule from which we will never depart. Those who have been seen aiding or abetting any RIOT, any attack on butchers, bakers, wheat mows, mills, or millers, we will not relieve. With the quiet, contented, hard-working man, I will share my last morsel of bread.<sup>173</sup>

Lewis's dramas, like More's stories, would have been experienced by all classes of society and his presentation of social hierarchy and the relationships between master and slaves is closer to her view of class-informed duty than has previously been acknowledged. Lewis, Edgeworth and More all put their opinions into practice, with varying results. Whereas Edgeworth seems to have had some success in dealing with the peasants who lived on her father's estate, More promoted the literary work of the labouring-class writer Ann Yearsley, but the two argued after Yearsley's success, with More putting subscription money from the sale of Yearsley's poems in a trust fund, which, as Duncan Wu reports, 'effectively made Ann and her children dependent on More for their income', and when Yearsley objected, More accused her of ingratitude.<sup>174</sup> Lewis's *Journal* records his confusion when the productivity of his slaves actually decreased after he implemented improvements to their conditions. The value that all three writers advocate in these works is a sentimental, optimistic feudalism which uses 'gratitude' as a euphemism for 'obligation' and the emotionally loaded term 'ingratitude' to make resistance appear morally reprehensible.

Lewis also explores the effect of poorly used power on the lower social orders through the character of Kenric, who has, unknown to Osmond, saved Reginald from death but kept him incarcerated in the castle. He did

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<sup>173</sup> Hannah More, 'The Way to Plenty', in Hannah More, *Tales for the Common People and Other Cheap Repository Tracts*, ed. Clare MacDonald Shaw (Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2002):15-29, 29. More also used the same sentiments in the long poem *The Sorrows of Yamba*, narrated by a slave who pleads pathetically for the end of the slave trade, but makes much of her adherence to the values of Christianity. Similarly, Maria Edgeworth also reiterated her views about power and responsibility in *The Absentee*, about the effect on an Irish estate of an English absentee landlord.

<sup>174</sup> Duncan Wu, ed., *Romantic Women Poets: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998) 151.

so in order to gain power over Osmond. In a conversation with Hassan and Saib, Kenric reveals that he also hates Osmond but would, with better treatment, have been a loyal servant. His words, like Saib's earlier speech, also suggest that Lewis saw the bargain of kindness and gratitude was one which was reciprocal: 'Saib, the Earl's ingratitude cuts me to the heart! . . . He sees that I can serve him no longer, knows that I can harm him much; therefore he fears, and, fearing, hates me!'<sup>175</sup>

Later, Kenric uses language similar to that of Hassan as he blames Osmond's treatment of him for his moral corruption:

But what, Earl Osmond, what can repay me for the sacrifice of my innocence? – I was virtuous till you bade me be guilty – my hands were pure till you taught me to stain them with blood . . . you promised freedom, riches, independence – you vanquished the resistance of my better Angel, and never since have I known one moment of rest!<sup>176</sup>

Kenric has been guilty of coveting riches and a freedom above his natural station in life, due to the manipulations of Osmond, with whom he shares these vices. As Osmond blames his brother for being the object of his envy, Kenric blames the man who tempted him and who should have taken more responsibility for his servant. The result is that both are prone to the intense guilt of Milton's Satan. When Kenric begs to be freed, saying 'All here reminds me of my guilt – every object recalls to me Reginald and his murdered Lady!' he appears more like an agonised villain than a servant.<sup>177</sup>

Osmond also refers to Kenric as his 'slave', an interesting term given that Kenric is not one of the four black characters and that Lewis sometimes uses slavery as a metaphor but does not usually use it in relation to servant

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<sup>175</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 162; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>176</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 186; 3. Sc.2.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. As discussed in relation to Osmond, Gothic villains often Backscheider has noted that Gothic villains often reveal their misdeeds to the audience by showing an aversion to a place which is associated with their crimes (Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 163). As discussed above, Henry Siddons suggested that, in the case of Osmond, the object which has this function within the narrative should not be physically present, in order to reveal the character's preoccupation and guilt.

characters.<sup>178</sup> To have Osmond use it in such a way reveals his poor understanding of his responsibilities as a feudal Earl. Lewis presents the servants as the measure of the masters.<sup>179</sup> When Saib and Muley accept a bribe from Percy on the understanding that they will free him, they take the money and then claim loyalty to Osmond: such twisted loyalty reflects the nature of Osmond's rule.

### **Reginald and Percy: Moving towards heroism**

Lewis's presentation of the threatening nature of Osmond's usurpation is anti-revolutionary. The character has disrupted social order and tyrannised others, which has led to his own misery and unrest amongst his servants and slaves. His instability and their simmering discontent threaten, throughout the play, to erupt into chaos. This reflects the instability of power in 1797 – the madness of the English king, the effects of the French Revolution and the threat of slave revolts. Lewis had personal experience of these and a vested interest in avoiding revolts. His use of Shakespearean and Miltonic models for villainy places him in a more nationalistic tradition than has previously been considered. This recourse to the past is in keeping with the Georgian interest in the Elizabethan era, allowing Lewis to explore the social and political situation with the licence given by the English literary heritage. His plays tend to have Renaissance-influenced villains – but they are foiled by distinctly eighteenth-century heroes. The next chapter will focus on three of these in depth, but it will be useful here to briefly consider

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<sup>178</sup> It also recalls Macbeth's angry use of the term towards the messenger who informs him that Malcolm's army is approaching. 'Liar, and slave!' (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 5.5.35).

<sup>179</sup> Kenric's revelation of his crimes to Angela reveals the danger that such ignorance of responsibility causes. He sentimentally reiterates his connection with Osmond, saying 'I was brought up with Osmond – was the partner of his pleasures – the confidant of his cares', before describing Osmond's lust for Evelina and status. Kenric remarks that 'Then did Osmond's passion over-leap all bounds. He resolved to assassinate his brother'. (Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 201; 4. Sc.2). The expression 'over-leap' again recalls Macbeth's language, this time his discovery that Malcolm has been made Duncan's heir, drawing attention to the unnatural nature of the crime. Kenric ends his speech by presenting himself as effeminised as he 'yielded to [Osmond's] seduction' and flattery (ibid.). This presentation of Osmond shows the influence of Milton's Satan and foreshadows *Venoni's* friar Coelestino.

ways in which Lewis begins to introduce heroes into his work: firstly because this is his earliest work that can be counted as including (partially) heroic characters; secondly because it is difficult to fully understand the play's presentation of villainy unless it is contrasted with the presentation of heroism; and thirdly because the qualities that these characters exhibit can be seen in greater degrees in Lewis's later heroes. These later heroes are all of noble birth; recognise or come to recognise the importance of mercy; are brave and demonstrate a paternalistic concern with wider social duties and responsibilities. The two characters who introduce these themes to Lewis's work are found in *The Castle Spectre*: Earl Percy and Reginald. The qualities of these characters in relation to their power and social status are presented as the solution to the unrest caused by the disrupting and corrupt power held by the villains of *The Monk* and *The Castle Spectre*.

Macdonald notes that Lewis deploys two character types as his father figures – 'good' ones who are 'marked by a frigid self-righteousness' and 'evil' ones who 'tend to be completely despicable'. Macdonald also identifies the relevance of this to Lewis's life, noting his father's inflexibility when the two argued about Mrs. Ricketts, and that:

Lewis could be as inflexible as his father. Of course, he saw his own inflexibility from the inside, so that it looked like a faithful adherence to principle; he saw his father's from the outside, so that it looked like an irrational insistence [...]<sup>180</sup>

He notes that 'In *The Castle Spectre*, the good fathers are distanced by death or imprisonment'.<sup>181</sup> Reginald is one such 'good' father figure. Macdonald is right about Lewis's view of faithfulness to principle and 'irrational insistence', but these issues arise in Lewis's work before his quarrel with his father, which did not occur until 1803 – six years after the performance of *The Castle Spectre* and two years after the production of *Adelmorn, the*

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<sup>180</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 39.

<sup>181</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 43.

*Outlaw*, originally written in 1795, which features a ruler, Sigismond, who has sworn that he will never pardon murderers.<sup>182</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that although the rift with his father may have exacerbated Lewis's use of good and bad father figures, the concern with the qualities they embody began much earlier. His letters to his mother reveal concern with responsibility. In two letters which Baron-Wilson attributes to 1793, Lewis first acts as a messenger between his parents, stressing the constraints he was under. He passed to his mother verbatim his father's response to her request for more money, adding 'In short, I am ready to do it in any proper mode, but desirous of having that mode settled without my personal interference.'<sup>183</sup> His next letter reveals his difficulty at reconciling feeling with principle, as well as a sense of his responsibilities to his sisters:

My sisters . . . have been taught to regard me almost as attentively as their father . . . You have put me into the most embarrassing situation in the world: you have made me almost an umpire between my parents. I know not how to extricate myself from the difficulty. I can only believe neither of you to be in the wrong; but *I* am not to determine which is in the right. Only believe that my affection for you is as great as ever [.]<sup>184</sup>

This is remarkably even-handed and Lewis's style and pattern of rhetoric – the varying forms of repetition in particular indicate the same emotional control that his heroes share, giving the impression of a balance between his duty to each parent, his sisters and society as well as simultaneously upbraiding and reassuring his mother.

Lewis was concerned, then, with being seen to follow the morally justifiable course of action. Just as Lewis's villains are associated with bitter, disloyal servants, they are also contrasted to the virtuous heroes and their servants.

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<sup>182</sup> Like *The Monk*, *Adelmorn*, *the Outlaw* deals with two of Lewis's common themes – the need for mercy and the problem of sticking to principle if the result seems unjust. Sigismond is a good father but distanced through his estrangement from his daughter and determination never to pardon Adelmorn.

<sup>183</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:102-3.

<sup>184</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 105-7.

Reginald makes a suitably dramatic counterpart to his villainous brother. After a dream (not dramatised) of his wife and child, he delivers a soliloquy which shows him to be the opposite of Osmond:

My child! My Evelina! – Oh, fly me not, lovely forms! –  
They are gone, and once more I live to misery. – Thou wert  
kind to me, Sleep! – Even now, methought, I sat in my  
Castle-hall; - A maid, lovely as the Queen of Fairies, hung on  
my knee, and hailed me by that sweet name, ‘Father!’ Yes, I  
was happy!- Yet frown not on me therefore, Darkness! . . .  
God, thou know’st that I have ever borne my sufferings  
meekly; I have wept for myself, but never cursed my foes; I  
have sorrowed for thy anger, but never murmured at thy  
will.<sup>185</sup>

Like Osmond, Reginald has had a supernatural dream of Evelina and Angela, but, as he has a guilt-free conscience, he views this as a blessing rather than an evil omen. Like all good characters in Lewis’s dramas, he has no need to fear the supernatural, because he is not the one responsible for its instigation. Most importantly, he stresses the importance of patience in adversity.<sup>186</sup> He appears as a parable of beleaguered nobility, in contrast to his envious and irrational brother.

Reginald demonstrates both physical and moral courage. When confronted by Osmond, he reminds him of their part in a past war with Scotland.<sup>187</sup> Reginald recalls his own conduct in battle and Osmond’s shortcomings. He gives the following speech after Osmond jealously accuses him of being his foe:

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<sup>185</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 212; 5. Sc.3. The setting of this scene, ‘a gloomy subterranean dungeon’, with an iron door, and the description of Reginald as ‘pale and emaciated’, dressed ‘in coarse garments’, with ‘hair hanging wildly about his face, and a chain around his body’ reminds the reader of the discovery of Agnes in *The Monk* and foreshadows that of Father Cyprian in *Adelmorn* and Josepha in *Venoni*.

<sup>186</sup> Reginald does not rail against his enemies nor question his unfortunate position. His character can be compared to that of Clara Reeve’s Edmund Twyford, the usurped heir who retains his fortitude when inside the castle of Lovel. Though the wind extinguishes his lamp and he hears noises in the corridor, he then cries aloud ‘What should I fear? I have not wilfully offended God, or man; why, then, should I doubt protection?’ Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron* ed. James Trainer (Oxford: OUP, 2003) 36.

<sup>187</sup> Lewis does not specify which war is being referred to, but, considering the fact that the play is set around the time of the building of Conway Castle, the action may take place in the 1200s, contemporary with Scott’s *Ivanhoe*.

Was I one when my weapon struck the fierce Scot to the ground, whose sword already glittered above your head? Was I one when, as embarrassed by your armour you sank beneath the Severn's waves, I sprang into the flood, I seized, I saved you? – Twice have I preserved your life! – Oh! let it not be for my own destruction! – See, my brother, the once proud Reginald lies at your feet, for his pride has been humbled by suffering!<sup>188</sup>

Lewis suggests here that humility is a virtue. Though he does not mention the word, it is also clear that Reginald is charging Osmond with ingratitude. Reginald's heroic status is also enhanced by his past as a war hero, likely to have been added by Lewis to allude to the conflict with France, which was restarting as the play was drafted. His time as a soldier does not otherwise relate to any other aspect of the play's plot but suggests Reginald's concern with national duty, something which is to be found in all of Lewis's heroes.

It is Reginald who speaks the play's final lines. The content of these and the change to poetry mark them as the moral of the play, which is one of forbearance, mercy and conservative Christianity:

Oh! in his stately chambers, far greater must have been his pangs than mine in this gloomy dungeon; for what gave *me* comfort was his terror – what gave me hope, was his despair. I knew that I was guiltless – knew that, though I suffer'd in this world, my lot would be happy in that to come!<sup>189</sup>

Reginald does not take pleasure in Osmond's suffering for its own sake and does not view his brother's consuming guilt as revenge. He means that he takes pleasure in it as it highlights his own guiltlessness. His later offer to help his brother as he lies dying is further evidence of his charity.

The final type of character association which is common in Lewis's Gothic dramas is that of the older, patrician figure, usually experiencing misfortune, with a younger hero. The older characters can be inflexible, but they can also be wise, like Count Benvolio in *Venoni* and Reginald. The heroes can be rash, but are sometimes permitted to aid their elders and thus prove themselves to be their worthy successors. Earl Percy is Lewis's first such

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<sup>188</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 217; 5. Sc.3.

<sup>189</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 219-20; 5. Sc.3.

hero, and though he is not the play's central figure by any stretch of the imagination, he is important in that he anticipates the later, more central male figures.

In his address 'To The Reader', Lewis is oddly dismissive of Percy, referring to him as 'a mighty pretty-behaved young gentleman with no character at all', perhaps because his unwavering good intentions are less dramatically interesting than Osmond's inner conflict and, indeed, Lewis's later, more complex heroes.<sup>190</sup> Percy, like so many Gothic heroes, is unable to rescue his beloved and is denied a part in the villain's downfall (Michael R. Booth calls him 'a complete failure as a hero').<sup>191</sup> Nevertheless, he is an interesting character whose actions are, dramatically and symbolically, integral to the play. Even though Percy does not demonstrate himself the concern with duty that the later heroes do, merely having his good qualities remarked upon by Angela, he is still one of those characters identified by Backscheider as being 'able to create a new balance of political forces and alliances that will. . . leave state and private institutions basically intact'.<sup>192</sup>

He does so in several ways. Firstly, Percy is a brave young nobleman who does attempt to protect Angela, though unsuccessfully. He has an important role in the play's first set-piece: At the beginning of the second act, to frighten Osmond away from Angela, he dresses, at the behest of the loyal servant Motley, in a suit of armour. The stage directions at the start of this act have informed the reader that the suits of armour all have the names of their owners written beneath them. Percy, therefore, is in the guise of a legitimate landowner and at this stage, successfully foils the illegitimate usurper Osmond. What he terms his 'masquerade' theatricalises chivalrous,

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<sup>190</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 222.

<sup>191</sup> Booth, *English Melodrama* 73.

<sup>192</sup> Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 229.

virtuous masculinity and nobility.<sup>193</sup> It is in this guise that Percy overhears Osmond threaten Angela and confronts him.<sup>194</sup>

Percy's claim to heroism also lies in his association with a common Gothic theme; the love of virtue. It is this that draws him to Angela, in contrast to the lust that drives her uncle. He tells Motley that although he believes her, as do the other villagers, to be a 'cottage-maid' she 'must needs add new lustre to the coronet of the Percies.' He fails to guess her true origin, though he gives the audience a clue when he claims that villagers looked on Angela 'as a being of a superior order'. Inherent in this statement is a message about social class – that it is recognisable, the result of nature rather than nurture. The labourers recognise their superiors and Angela and Percy (who has also disguised himself as a peasant, Edwy) are drawn together through their class consanguinity. Unlike Osmond, who threatens her with rape, Percy affirms his virtue when he confirms that he wishes to marry her – 'Could I mean otherwise, I should blush for myself'.<sup>195</sup>

Though Percy is not permitted to rescue Angela, he does make a brave attempt to do so. In this he is accompanied by the ever-faithful Motley and Allan, the cottager who has raised Angela and whose language concerning her is extremely sentimental. It is here that the audience is presented with a very rosy view of a feudal system – the poor loyal and grateful and the nobility considerate, mannered and rewarding. However, Percy is shown to have a more important virtue than his courtly love. This is his capacity for social good, a result of his noble status and the factor which both proves his legitimacy (no usurping aristocrat in Lewis's dramas is socially benevolent) and contributes to Angela's love for him. She defends Percy to Osmond, using him to highlight Osmond's villainous qualities:

Long ere I knew him, Percy's fame was dear to me. While I  
still believed him the peasant Edwy, often, in his hearing,

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<sup>193</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 167; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>194</sup> Osmond at first assumes Percy is a ghost before having him imprisoned. His later escape, through a window to where the loyal Motley has a boat, is a comic yet tense moment that Lewis later drew upon for the escape scene in *Timour the Tartar*.

<sup>195</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 157; 1. Sc.1.

have I dwelt upon Northumberland's praise. . . little did I think that the man then seated beside me was he whom I envied for his power of doing good, whom I loved for exerting that power so largely! – Judge, then, Earl Osmond, on my arrival here how strongly I must have felt the contrasts! – What person names you his benefactor? What beggar has been comforted by your bounty? what sick man preserved by your care?<sup>196</sup>

Percy's main virtue, then, lies in his delivery of 'good' towards his dependents, as Osmond's villainy lies in the neglect of his. Percy's attitude to his dependents is juxtaposed with Osmond's envy of them, highlighting the latter's villainy and degeneracy. The presentation of the peasants as childlike and predisposed to be grateful for small kindnesses, like the presentation of the black characters, suggests that they require the rule of their superiors.

Percy's relationship with his loyal servant Motley is also part of his heroic status. It is through their interplay that the audience is made aware of Percy's kindness and trustworthy nature; the very things that mark his rank and authority as justifiable. The audience is positioned to see that such leadership results in a loyal, subservient working class and the preservation of social order, both in terms of its hierarchy and peace. This is set up early in the play and is a contrast to the poor relationship Osmond has with Hassan and Kenric. When Percy first meets Motley after several years of separation, Motley is delighted:

MOTL.[ . . . ] Pardon, my dear master, pardon! . . . I must inform you, that he who in your father's service was Gilbert the knave, is [now] Motley the fool in the service of Earl Osmond.

PERCY. [ . . . ] This is fortunate. Gilbert, you may be of use to me; and if the attachment . . . you [formerly] professed for me still exists –

MOTL. It does with ardour unabated, "for" I'm not so unjust as to attribute to you my expulsion from Alnwick Castle: in fact I deserved it . . . old Earl Percy dismissed me from his service, "but I know that it was solely against your inclination . . . I remember well your grief at parting with me,

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<sup>196</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 189; 3. Sc.2.

and that you slipped into my hand the purse which contained the whole of your little treasure. That act of kindness struck to my heart: I swore at that moment to love you through life, and if I ever forget my “oath, damn me!”<sup>197</sup>

There is much of importance here. Firstly, the audience realises that from a very young age Percy was acting in a manner befitting his future patrician status, as he presents the disgraced servant with money. Secondly, the loyalty of Motley is presented: he sees his loyalty to Percy as an ‘oath’. This has almost religious connotations and is a stronger tie than that which binds him to Osmond, whom he serves out of necessity. The young Earl is more merciful and flexible than his father, which turns out in his favour. Percy’s kindness leads to Motley’s unwavering devotion and lack of self-interest.

Motley would be at home amongst Hannah More’s contented peasants, as would Edric, who allows Percy to shelter in his hut, and Allan.<sup>198</sup> Percy is aware that his behaviour towards Motley works in his favour and ends the scene with a moral for the audience claiming that ‘Barons’ would attract greater loyalty if they ceased ‘looking with scorn on those . . . a favour [would] bind for ever’ due to their gratitude.<sup>199</sup> Lewis here combines the feudal and paternal approaches to social hierarchies that Macdonald has identified. As Macdonald claims, ‘feudal loyalty may be the virtue celebrated most often in his works’.<sup>200</sup> However, Lewis’s gratitude is reciprocal: servants, grateful for kind treatment, work happily, and the high-born characters, grateful for loyalty, reward such service. Lewis uses the feudal system in this play as a tool via which he critiques social hierarchies in a world undergoing modernisation and suggests that such hierarchies can be maintained through each party recognising and accepting the roles that this prescribes. Helping others to become financially secure was a behaviour

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<sup>197</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 150; 1. Sc.1. The double quotation marks are Cox’s and indicate that the words were published in the printed version but are absent from Larpent’s performance version.

<sup>198</sup> Adolphus referred to the character of Motley as ‘a good-humoured, frisky, fond, affectionate, and loyal fool’. Adolphus, *Memoirs* 2: 11.

<sup>199</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 160; 1. Sc.1.

<sup>200</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 54.

often exhibited by Lewis himself – he gave much of his allowance to his mother following his parents’ separation and also helped the son of Mrs Isabella Kelly, as the following chapter will explore.<sup>201</sup>

Like Reginald, Percy is physically brave. Though Lewis does not allow this hero to be sullied with the murder of Osmond (who is instead stabbed by Angela), Percy does stage a confrontation with him and he also storms the castle in the final scene.<sup>202</sup> When Angela refers to Percy as ‘the pride of our English youth’ it is clear that her nationalistic sentiment is directed at the audience.<sup>203</sup> Lewis’s Gothic plays following *The Castle Spectre* took the name of the heroes as their titles, and the ways in which those heroes are tested and prove their worth is the focus of the plays. Whilst the war with France and the debate about slavery continued and Lewis remained a Member of Parliament, he turned his attention to exploring his favoured solution to the problem which these early works identify. The following chapter will examine Lewis’s major stage heroes and the way in which they reflect the author’s concern with the management of power.

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<sup>201</sup> MacDonald, *Monk Lewis* 60-61.

<sup>202</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 218; 5. Sc.3.

<sup>203</sup> Lewis, *The Castle Spectre* 215; 5. Sc.3.

### **Chapter Three:**

**‘Let us quit this scene of horror’:**

**Lewis’s heroes and the restoration and revision of order.**

- a) Chapter introduction**
- b) ‘Twas a fearful dream’: the falsity of fears in  
*Adelmorn, the Outlaw***
- c) Rugantino: ‘The Republic’s most devoted slave’**
- d) ‘Summon your fortitude’: *Venoni* and the need for  
rationality**



## **Chapter Introduction.**

(1,193 words)



‘Lewis does not seem concerned with the melodramatic potential of heroes’, wrote Michael R. Booth in 1965. ‘The ghastly and the horrible are Lewis’s trademarks, and what interests him most in melodrama are supernatural effects of the most startling kind’.<sup>204</sup> Booth’s statement is compromised by his metaphor. The supernatural, the ghastly and the horrible *are* Lewis’s trademarks, but a trademark is just that: a sign indicating responsibility for the creation of a piece of work. They are signatures, marks of style, but are not necessarily fully indicative of a text’s content. Lewis was, I contend, very much concerned with the potential for heroism, both in his works and his life. The characterisation of *The Castle Spectre*’s Reginald and Percy, along with the latter’s relationship with Motley, explored in the previous chapter, are the earliest examples of this concern within Lewis’s works. Though Percy is not allowed the success of Lewis’s later heroes, his concern for his dependents does link him with these characters, who always act upon their strong moral principles. *The Monk* demonstrates, through their absence and the ensuing chaos, the need for such benevolently paternal rulers.

William Hazlitt, in the essay ‘Why the Heroes of Romance are Insipid’, asserts that insipidity allows the reader to imagine the perfection of the characters and criticises the blandness of Radcliffe’s heroes.<sup>205</sup> He also criticises the German heroes of Goethe and Schiller, who ‘are a violent paradox from beginning to end: they run a-tilt at established usages and prejudices, and upset all the existing order of society’.<sup>206</sup> Lewis’s heroes fall into neither category, though they are influenced by both: they are unusually proactive but their aim is to avoid society being ‘upset’. Their dramas resemble more closely the ancient ones Hazlitt praises, in which

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<sup>204</sup> Booth, *English Melodrama* 74.

<sup>205</sup> ‘. . . nobody can find any fault with them, for nobody knows anything about them . . . Theodore, Valancourt, - what delightful names! And there is nothing else to distinguish them’. William Hazlitt, ‘Why the Heroes of Romance are Insipid’, in *Men and Manners: Sketches and Essays*. London: The Office of the Illustrated London Library. [online]. Available from Google Books: [http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=bKADAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA225&dq=hazlitt+why+the+heroes+of+romance+are+insipid+men+and+manners&hl=en&ei=gGRbTqrDMcnb4QSo2MisBQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=bKADAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA225&dq=hazlitt+why+the+heroes+of+romance+are+insipid+men+and+manners&hl=en&ei=gGRbTqrDMcnb4QSo2MisBQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false), 1852:208-226: 219. [Accessed 29/08/2011].

<sup>206</sup> Hazlitt, ‘Why the Heroes of Romance are Insipid’ 225.

‘favour was won and maintained by the bold achievements and fair fame of the chosen knight . . . instead of depending, as in more *effeminate* times, on taste, sympathy, and a refinement of sentiment and manners’.<sup>207</sup>

James P. Carson has stated that ‘although’ Lewis was ‘troubled by the lack of authorization for power exercised over . . . others, he presents no real alternative’.<sup>208</sup> This is another example of criticism which does not take into account the entirety of Lewis’s output. In Lewis’s ‘hero’ plays, the ‘imaginative sympathy’ which Carson associates with the *ancien régime* in fact forms the authorisation and legitimisation of power: Lewis does not seek an alternative to hierarchical relationships, he justifies and idealises them.

The middle phase of Lewis’s writing career, spanning the period from 1799 – 1809, included his time as an MP, the commencement of his financial support for the Kelly family, his collaboration with Walter Scott and the development of his rift with his father. This period represents the mid-point of Lewis’s career and is central in terms of the issues he explores, as many of the works he produced over this decade focus on the moral dilemmas, often involving conflict between domestic and public responsibilities, facing a range of eponymous heroes. In addition to *Adelmorn, the Outlaw* (Drury Lane, 1801), *Rugantino, or the Bravo of Venice* (Covent Garden, 1805) and *Venoni, or, the Novice of St Marks* (Drury Lane, 1808), which form the focus of this chapter, Lewis also produced *Rolla; or, the Peruvian Hero* (1799); and his most respected tragedy, the play which most closely ties the image of fatherhood and paternal responsibility to that of civic duty, *Alfonso, King of Castile* (Covent Garden, 1802). This play was admired due to its use of traditionally tragic blank verse and lack of supernatural or melodramatic incident: it proved that Lewis could write a traditional, legitimate, tragedy. *Alfonso*’s Shakespearean tragedy-style plot and its thematically reflective subplot are developed by Lewis into a drama which focuses on two relationships affected by a Gothic ancestral curse: that of

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<sup>207</sup> Hazlitt, ‘Why the Heroes of Romance are Insipid’ 213 (my emphasis).

<sup>208</sup> Carson, *Populism, Gender and Sympathy* 103.

Alfonso and his once-friend, now enemy, Orsino, and that between doomed lovers Amelrosa (Alfonso's daughter) and Orsino's son Caesario. The theme of the importance of gratitude, mercy and forgiveness, both in public and personal relationships, runs throughout the play. The theme of public duty is twinned with that of paternal love and filial gratitude, with rulers presented as patriarchs.<sup>209</sup> *Adelgitha, or the Fruits of a Single Error*, Lewis's second most critically successful work, in which a woman is punished for a single sexual indiscretion of years earlier, was also the product of this period of his career (Drury Lane, 1807). Though the action of this play takes place in a Gothic setting, it lacks the spectacle that Lewis was known for. Such works as *Alfonso* and *Adelgitha* sit comfortably, thematically at least, alongside the more melodramatic works that Lewis produced, but are not discussed in depth. My thesis's overall focus is on the more ostensibly Gothic melodramas and the way in which Lewis used the conventions of this genre to explore issues relating to social control and hierarchies.

Lewis may have followed convention by not allowing his heroes to kill their enemies in order to present them as being totally virtuous, but he does not allow this convention to twist his heroes into becoming powerless. If Lewis's two early works, *The Monk* and *The Castle Spectre*, explore the problems of a world without authority and a world of corrupt authority respectively, then the various heroes of this neglected period of Lewis's career allow an exploration of possible resolutions to the problems identified in those earlier works – they counteract the Gothic sense of threat in the texts, which is usually present in the form of the usurpation of power.<sup>210</sup> Lewis was eventually to trial such resolutions himself, with varying success.

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<sup>209</sup> Orsino, who bears a resemblance to *King Lear*'s Kent, makes a direct link between the concept of a Christian Divine power – God the Father, himself and Alfonso's role as king. Orsino acts as Lewis's mouthpiece when explaining the reasons for peace to Caesario and eventually reveals his heroic nature by putting his duty to his king and country before his personal pride and his son.

<sup>210</sup> It is interesting that the significance of the heroines in the three works discussed in this chapter is considerably different to that of the earlier plays. None have the agency, or potential for subversion, of Matilda, Agnes, Evelina or Angela, nor are they as childlike as

The three plays covered in this chapter will be examined chronologically: first *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*, which was first performed in 1801 but drafted in 1795; secondly *Rugantino*, first performed in 1805; and finally *Venoni*, which, though a translation from *Les Victimes Cloitrees*, an influence on *The Monk*, was not performed until 1809. If, as Hazlitt claimed, the heroes of romances are insipid because such a blandness allows the reader to impose their own ideas of perfection on to the character, then Lewis very much wanted his audience to be in no doubt about which qualities constitute heroism. What the three eponymous characters share is their agency. *Adelmorn* marks, as Evans noted, an ‘evolution of the hero’ as he ‘escapes the insipidness of his forbears by assuming a villain’s pain’.<sup>211</sup> This ‘pain’ is caused by a mistaken sense of guilt for a murder he did not commit. *Adelmorn* is the first of Lewis’s heroes to be responsible for deposing a usurping ruler. The character of *Rugantino* continues this linking of hero and villain by disguising himself as a bravo in order to foil a plot against the Doge of Venice. Finally, *Venoni* is presented as being emasculated by his susceptibility to irrationality, which is exploited by the play’s villain. However, he receives sound advice from Count Benvolio, Lewis’s most idealised dramatic patriarch, and achieves what few Gothic heroes manage – the rescue of the heroine, as does *Rugantino*. This broadly chronological approach thus allows an understanding of the way in which Lewis adapted and developed the stock character of the hero.

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Antonia. With the exception of *Adelgitha* (whom Lewis insisted, because of her sexual indiscretion, was most definitely not a ‘heroine’ in his preface to the published script), most female characters created at this point in Lewis’s career fit into one of three categories: rewards for virtuous heroes; victims to be rescued by men (the unnamed ‘Captive’); or older and foolish (Rosabella’s nurse, Josepha’s mother). The heroines of *Adelmorn, the Outlaw, Rugantino* and *Venoni, or the Novice of St Mark’s* are wholly good, more or less interchangeable, and fall into the ‘reward’ category. These categories are, of course, stock types, but Lewis’s simplified portrayal of women during this stage of his career may be the result of his focus being elsewhere, on issues of heroism, manliness and public duty. He would return, in *One O’ Clock* and *Timour the Tartar*, to presenting a wider range of female characters, and ones with greater agency. These two plays are examined in the final chapter.

<sup>211</sup> Evans, *Gothic Drama* 149-150.

**'Twas a fearful dream':  
Adelmorn and the delusion of guilt.**

(8,610 words)



*Adelmorn, the Outlaw* was first performed at Drury Lane in May 1801, though it was originally drafted six years earlier, in 1795. It shows a mixture of Shakespearean and Germanic influences – Matthew Lewis identified *Cymbeline* and Goethe's *Egmont* in his preface to the play.<sup>212</sup> *Adelmorn*'s murky atmosphere and presentation of the supernatural also owe much to *Macbeth* and the character of Adelmorn resembles that of Schiller's Karl Moor.

Prior to the opening scene, the virtuous Roderic, Count of Bergen, has been killed by his nephew Ulric, who has also usurped his title and framed the rightful heir, another of Roderic's nephews, Adelmorn, for the murder. Even Adelmorn believes himself to be guilty, as he was attacked on the night of the murder and wounded his unseen attacker: he assumes this to have been his uncle and the wound to have been mortal. He has secretly married Innogen, daughter of Sigismond, the Duke of Saxony and they have escaped to Britain. In Germany, Innogen is believed to have died in a convent, though, as with *Venoni*'s Josepha, this is not the case.

The play opens with a song which recreates the chatter and bustle of Ulric's servants as they prepare for a visit from Sigismond, Duke of Saxony; a scenario which allows for exposition of previous events. The servant Orrila is then visited by her husband, Lodowick, who has remained loyal to Adelmorn. Adelmorn and Innogen have returned to Germany as Adelmorn's sleep has been disturbed by the spectral voice of Roderic, instructing him to return and avenge his death. They stay in a woodland cottage, allowing Adelmorn the opportunity of saving Sigismond from a wolf. Sigismond does not recognise his rescuer, but presents him with a ring. The Duke cannot pardon Adelmorn, as he has taken an oath preventing him from pardoning murderers (which he regrets), but Adelmorn does make him promise to show kindness to a woman, if she were to show him the ring. Though Adelmorn is widely believed to be guilty, and his own sense of guilt

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<sup>212</sup> He wrote that 'A Scene in Gothe's [sic] German Tragedy of *Egmont*, (in which the Goddess of Liberty appears to the hero while sleeping, and crowns him with laurel) suggested the idea of Adelmorn's dream; and possibly the original of Egmont's vision was that of Posthumus in *Cymbeline*'. M.G. Lewis, *Adelmorn, the Outlaw: A Romantic Drama, in Three Acts* (London: J Bell, 1801, repr.; Kessinger, n. d.) i.

makes him akin to several Gothic villains, there are also several clues to his innocence.

Eventually, Adelmorn is arrested and condemned to death. Lodowick is also arrested. At the beginning of the third act, the imprisoned Adelmorn experiences a vision, which is also shown to the audience. In this vision, the spectre of a bleeding man stabs Ulric, who is then borne to Hell by two demons. Meanwhile, a storm demolishes one of the prison walls, revealing the dying character of Father Cyprian to Lodowick. Father Cyprian reveals what the audience has suspected all along; that Ulric was the real murderer and, that he, as Ulric's accomplice, was the man Adelmorn wounded. The ghost makes another appearance, miming his forgiveness of Cyprian, who is penitent. Adelmorn is taken to the scaffold but Lodowick arrives and tells Cyprian's story. Ulric begins to deny his guilt but is confronted by the ghost, bearing a flaming dagger. All then ends happily, with Adelmorn returned to his correct social position and Innogen and Sigismond commenting on the virtue of forgiveness.

The play was published, with a preface by Lewis, in 1801 by J. Bell of London.<sup>213</sup> Margaret Baron-Wilson notes that Lewis was so irritated by the differences between the play as it was printed and as it was performed, that he had *Alfonso, King of Castile* printed before it was performed; an action which indicates that he was keen to prevent it being plagued by critical misinterpretations.<sup>214</sup> 1801 also saw an edition of *Adelmorn, the Outlaw* published in Dublin by Thomas Burnwe, though the texts do not contain any real differences in the way that different editions of *The Castle Spectre* and *Venoni* do.

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<sup>213</sup> Bell was also the publisher of Lewis's *The Minister* (1797); *The East Indian* (1800); *Alfonso, King of Castile* (1801); the long poem dedicated to Fox, *The Love of Gain* (1799); and *Tales of Wonder* (1800, though the title page read 1801).

<sup>214</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 223.

### **The critical response to *Adelmorn, the Outlaw***

Though *Adelmorn*'s similarities to *The Castle Spectre* in terms of supernatural spectacle were most likely the reason for its staging, it failed to achieve the same level of commercial success and was viewed derisively by critics. The reasons for its commercial failure are numerous: Lewis admitted that the audience struggled to realise that the vision in the third act, in which Ulric is taken to Hell, was only experienced by Adelmorn and that ensuing scenes including Ulric were therefore a cause of puzzlement; he also admitted that Lodowick's jokes about food, delivered whilst the dying Cyprian and ghost were on stage, caused offence.<sup>215</sup> Lewis's skill for spectacle was also undermined when, on the opening night, the flaming dagger wielded by the ghost set the actor's costume on fire, and his attempts to put out the fire caused laughter rather than awe in the audience. Lewis was forced, as he would later be with *Venoni*, to make hurried alterations, changing Lodowick's lines in the final act and only having the ghost appear during the vision. These alterations do not appear in the printed version of the play and appear to have made little difference to its reception; it was only performed for another eight nights, and Lewis did not have another of his plays performed at Drury Lane for six years.<sup>216</sup>

In addition to the problems of staging and scripting, *Adelmorn* was also criticised for its apparently Jacobinical and blasphemous content. Lewis found himself, upon the publication of the script, in the familiar position of having to defend the morality and politics of his work. He records in the preface the claim that “‘Sigismond’s speech in the third act – *Sovereigns, be warned by what I suffer, how you make laws which exclude mercy* – is the sentiment of a *Jacobin*” - !!!” Lewis does not identify the source of this

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<sup>215</sup> Peck notes that a note explaining the nature of the vision appeared in the *Morning Herald* following the third performance, and suggests that the writer may have been Lewis himself. See Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 84.

<sup>216</sup> Lewis's next – and most respected – play, *Alfonso, King of Castile*, made its debut at Covent Garden in 1802, followed by *The Captive: A Scene in a Private Mad House* and *The Harper's Daughter; or, Love and Ambition* (both 1803) and *Rugantino; or, the Bravo of Venice* (1805). *Adelgitha; or, the Fruits of a Single Error* was first performed at Drury Lane in 1807.

accusation, nor any of the other he responds to in the preface (that he stages representations of Heaven and Hell and that his works are immoral). His response is to affect a tone of martyrdom: ‘I shall not so far insult the sense or the humanity of my readers, as to suppose it necessary to answer such an observation. I am well content that he who should disapprove of the sentiment should disapprove of me’.<sup>217</sup> It may be remarked that Lewis does not overtly deny the accusation and that he certainly defends the focus on mercy, but this should not be taken as a sign of his guilt: the play was written only one year after his criticism of Godwin’s democratic beliefs.<sup>218</sup> If Lewis had any Jacobinical sentiments at all, he would have been likely to discuss them in his personal correspondence.

He maintains the injured tone he sets up throughout the preface. Answering the accusation that, as ‘Hell and Heaven ought not to be publicly exhibited’, and the vision indicates that Ulric and Roderic respectively go to these locations, the play is irreligious, Lewis seizes on the opportunity to demonstrate his own piety. He asserts that ‘I am rather of this opinion too’ and points out that ‘in the vision heaven and hell are not publicly exhibited; and my phantoms are only seen upon the road thither’.<sup>219</sup> Lewis points out that similar incidents occur in several plays, including an adaptation of *The Monk*, for which he was not responsible. These plays do not appear to have been criticised as heavily as *Adelmorn* and Lewis perhaps identifies why when he names another accusation which has been made against the play: that it was ‘witten [sic] by the author of “The Monk”’; therefore it must be immoral and irreligious’.<sup>220</sup> He still maintains his stance of moral indignation, commenting bluntly, ‘I positively deny the accusation’, before making his own plea for mercy and lamenting the fact that he has not received any:

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<sup>217</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* iv. The emphasis and punctuation is Lewis’s.

<sup>218</sup> These are discussed on 44.

<sup>219</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* iv.

<sup>220</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* v.

A fault, were it ever so serious, committed at twenty, and followed during a course of years by no error of a similar nature, might, I should think, be forgiven without exercising any dangerous lenity, or requiring any great exertion of candour. That I have not found such candour, however, I do not very poignantly regret . . . censure is only terrible to me, when I feel it to have been merited.<sup>221</sup>

Though protesting his indifference to criticism – not very convincingly, admittedly – Lewis continues to present himself in martyred terms: ‘I have nearly served a seven years apprenticeship to patience, under attacks of the most uncandid criticism, unmitigated censure, and exaggerating misrepresentation; nor have I ever written a line to right myself’.<sup>222</sup> He ends the prologue irritably, claiming that those who know him well will find his comments ‘superfluous’ and if those less familiar with him fail to be convinced, then he ‘must be contented to leave [them] in error’.<sup>223</sup> There seems to be no specific reason why he ran out of patience at this particular point, other than the fact that he repeatedly faced the same criticisms, which must have been wearing.

Lewis should be believed when he denies that Adelmorn’s vision was intended to ‘make a mockery of the Ascension’ and that its staging was inspired by Raphael’s *The Transfiguration*, which he claims he was unaware of at the time of writing.<sup>224</sup> Although there are some similarities between the painting and the description of the vision (discussed below), Lewis acknowledges his other sources openly, and even added a postscript outlining *Le Diable Amoureux* which has some significant similarities to *The Monk*, but which he was unaware of during its production. It is highly unlikely that such an avowed literary magpie would dishonestly deny knowledge of a similar work.

Lewis employed the humility commonly used in prefaces when he wrote that the humour in *Adelmorn* is ‘flat’, that ‘nothing could be more dull and

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* vi.

<sup>224</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* iv.

insignificant' than the character of Hugo, and that he did 'not think [his] play a good one.'<sup>225</sup> He cannot resist, however, making a comment that recalls the socially dutiful nature of his heroes:

[N]or can I ever consider great genius a merit, except when exerted for the benefit of mankind. – I firmly believe it possible to write extremely ill, yet be a very worthy member of society, and shall not feel much mortified at being known to scribble bad plays, till convinced that a dull author can never be a benevolent man.<sup>226</sup>

The criticism which had led to such a prickly defensive was indeed severe. Much of it was, ostensibly at least, motivated by Lewis's penchant for the tropes of illegitimate drama. The review of the printed version which appeared in the *Poetical Register* for 1801 found the play 'somewhat too romantic', and claimed that the dialogue, though containing 'a great proportion of wit and spirit', remained 'incorrect and inflated'.<sup>227</sup> The disdain shown by this reviewer towards Lewis's choice of genre is moderate in comparison to other reviews. Louis F. Peck records that 'The *Sun* called it one of the most despicable pieces that ever graced a London theatre and felt unequal to describing its dullness, folly, and profanation of what ought to be sacred'.<sup>228</sup> Peck also quotes the review from the *European Magazine*, which attacks *Adelmorn* as 'far below criticism' as a drama, stating that it was 'calculated . . . to degrade the English stage, and vitiate the public taste'.<sup>229</sup> D.L. Macdonald records that the *British Critic* expressed a desire 'to see this writer apply his talents to some more legitimate species of the drama', whereas the *Critical Review* would have preferred Lewis to 'attend half so

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<sup>225</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* iii.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> *Poetical Register, and repository of fugitive poetry, for 1801*.2: 462-3.

<sup>228</sup> Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 84.

<sup>229</sup> Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 85. This review did concede that the play had some potential as a ballet or pantomime.

much to classical study and chaste drama as he has unfortunately done to German absurdity'.<sup>230</sup>

### **Lewis's life and political involvement in 1801**

By 1801, Lewis was living in Hermitage Cottage in Barnes, which would be his home until 1809. He was, as Baron-Wilson records, moving in high social circles; his friends included Earl Grey, Lord Melbourne and Lord Holland.<sup>231</sup> He was also still M.P. for Hindon and would remain so until 1802. Despite his penchant for Whig company, no formal political allegiance of Lewis is recorded and it seems that he was an independent M.P.; his seat was purchased by his father and his actions in Parliament do not indicate an allegiance with either the Tories or the Whigs, nor do his reviewers mention his allegiance to any party. It may even be possible that such an officially undetermined political position facilitated the censure he endured. R. G. Thorne notes that Lewis was the 'son of a warm supporter of Pitt [that is, a Tory], though an admirer of Fox [who] to quote his friend Lord Holland, 'supported the minister and the French war''.<sup>232</sup> Holland would be well positioned to know Lewis's views on the war and government and this anecdote is an important one.

Lewis's father gave him an allowance of one thousand pounds per year and although he was disappointed that his son had become a writer rather than a more active politician, the two men had not yet become estranged.<sup>233</sup> He was relatively inactive as an MP, never delivering a full speech, apparently speaking only once; voting twice and serving on only four committees. The work with committees tells us relatively little: it took place in his first two

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<sup>230</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 182. Lewis's use of the tropes of illegitimate drama is discussed in relation to *Venoni*, in the final section of this chapter.

<sup>231</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:185.

<sup>232</sup> R.G. Thorne, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1790 -1820*. 5 vols. (London: The History of Parliament Trust/Secker & Warburg, 1986) 4:433.

<sup>233</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:184.

years in parliament.<sup>234</sup> On the Fourth of January 1798 he voted with the government in favour of Pitt's assessed taxes, and then made no further contribution until late 1801, when he voted against the government in favour of banning distillation from corn.<sup>235</sup> The speech was made in February 1802 and was his final contribution. Four months later, he left parliament.

The vote in favour of assessed taxes, a forerunner of modern income tax, is significant and an incident that Lewis's biographers have not dwelt on. Although a vote in favour of such a system of taxation means that Lewis was in favour of the rich contributing more to the country's coffers, it should be remembered that Pitt was raising money to finance the war with France. As such, a vote for assessed taxes indicates that Lewis believed that those with the means to do so should contribute their money to a worthy cause. This would be entirely in keeping with the sentiments later expressed in *Venoni* and his own financial support of his mother and Isabella Kelly. Similarly, his sole parliamentary speech, which was in favour of a bill advocating more merciful treatment of those imprisoned for debt, does prove that he practised what he preached and that he felt strongly about this issue.<sup>236</sup>

The fact that the play was originally written in 1795 makes it contemporaneous with *The Monk* and *The Castle Spectre*. It shares themes with the former and character types with both the latter and *Venoni*. Some of

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<sup>234</sup> Three committees, from 1796 to 1797, involved working with election petitions (Thorne, *The History of Parliament* 4: 433). The fourth concerned a petition to open a new street in the region of the Haymarket Theatre to ease the traffic there. (Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 44).

<sup>235</sup> Thorne, *A History of Parliament*: 4:433 and Donald E. Ginter ed., *Voting Records of the British House of Commons 1761 – 1820*. 5 vols. (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1995) 3. There seems to be a discrepancy concerning the exact date of this vote – Ginter records the vote as having taken place in September 1801, but Thorne claims that it took place on December 14<sup>th</sup> of that year.

<sup>236</sup> Peck, Macdonald and Thorne all quote the assertion of the *European Magazine* that 'the severity with which many debtors were treated was a disgrace to civilisation'. See Thorne, *A History of Parliament* 4:433; Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 44 and Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 157. Peck notes that Lewis's 'sentiments were characteristically humane'.

these similarities have been noted by critics.<sup>237</sup> What has not been commented on is the way in which the play shares the theme of mercy with *The Monk* and the likelihood of this being the result of the teenaged writer's experiences of violence in Weimar shortly before the play was first written. Lewis's actions in parliament indicate that these views changed little in the following decade. Adelmorn's supposed guilt and exile, Ulric's act of usurpation and Sigismond's irreversible oath mean that the action of this play, like that of *The Monk*, takes place in a world without adequate paternalistic authority figures. However, also critically neglected has been the way in which the qualities embodied by Adelmorn and Sigismond – acknowledgement of fallibility, bravery and mercy – are those which are notably absent in *The Monk*, leading to the sense of threat and menace in the novel. By contrast, their presence throughout *Adelmorn* is a reassuring one which indicates Adelmorn's innocence and allows for the restoration of order. In this way, *The Monk* and *Adelmorn* can be viewed as being parallel works.

### **Responding to the accusation of Jacobinism**

The *European Magazine* was accurate in its assertion of the similarities between *Adelmorn* and *The Castle Spectre*. However, there is little evidence

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<sup>237</sup> Sigismond, with his admirable morality, can be compared to Count Benvolio; Adelmorn's loyal servant Lodowick can be compared to Percy's comic but faithful Motley (both were played by Mr. Bannister); Brenno, the henchman of the villainous Ulric, can be compared to Osmond's monstrous Hassan – and the master/servant relationships here take a similar form to those of *The Castle Spectre*; Michael Kelly composed the music for both; the imprisoned Father Cyprian recalls Reginald; the vision of a bleeding ghost, implied to be the spirit of the murdered Roderic, is the male counterpart of Evelina's ghost; and Innogen, like Angela, is both principled and forthright. Indeed, the part of Innogen, like that of Angela, was acted by Dorothy Jordan, who also performed the epilogues for each play. Peck lists some of these similarities, as do Irwin and Macdonald. See Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 83 (on the similarities between characters); Joseph J. Irwin, *M. G. "Monk" Lewis*. Twayne's English Authors Series (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1976) 72-4 (on Gothic devices and the use of song); and Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 153 (on casting and the use of Kelly as a composer). Macdonald also notes that a contemporary journal, the *European Magazine* also noted the similarities, wryly suggesting the alternative title of *More Ghosts!* Some similarities with *The Wood Daemon* have also been made – Peck notes that both have dream sequences (Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 94) and Irwin points out that the foolish musician Hugo is revived in the later play's Guelpho (Irwin, *"Monk" Lewis* 87).

in the play of Lewis promoting Jacobin sympathies. Indeed, there is considerable evidence to the contrary, as I discuss below. Quite why the play should have attracted controversy and commercial failure in this way is unclear. Lewis had, of course, made himself an easy target through the excesses of *The Monk* (however misconstrued interpretations of this novel may have been, its enduring reputation for being shocking is easily understood). This had been compounded by his social status as an M.P., and the presentation of the ghost and the black characters in *The Castle Spectre*. Lewis may well have included the latter for theatrical effect, as he later argued; but the fact remains that Hassan was a source of dramatic spectacle precisely because the status of the Slave Trade was a major political concern at the time. Lewis was also moving in fashionable, Whig, social circles. This would, superficially, indicate political principles which were liberal (though far from Jacobinical) and could provide some grounds for politically motivated criticism of his work.<sup>238</sup> The remarks about his snobbery, boring conversation and over-earnestness found in his friends' recollections of him also reveal that he was considered a little ridiculous and easy to mock. For example, William Lamb remarked that Lewis 'might be pleasant enough if he were not always upon the strain'.<sup>239</sup>

There is, however, evidence to suggest that the furore concerning *The Monk* made it more, rather than less, commercially successful and *The Castle Spectre* certainly did not suffer at the box office for the author's supposed political views. An advertisement for books published by Bell is included at the end of the script of *Adelmorn*. The fifth edition of *Ambrosio; or, The Monk* is advertised as being available for twelve shillings, but those who could visit the publisher's would be able to buy the first (that is, unexpurgated) edition for a guinea. The same advert reveals that the

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<sup>238</sup> William Lamb, the future Lord Melbourne, in a letter to his mother dated January 6, 1800, claimed that Lewis was 'certainly enough to drive [distracted] any person of strong nerves', but that if he 'would but give his own abilities fair play he could write a novel fifty times as good' as Godwin's *St. Leon*. Lloyd C. Sanders, ed., *Lord Melbourne's Papers* (London: Longmans, Green, and co., 1889) 7 and 9 respectively.

<sup>239</sup> Sanders, ed., *Lord Melbourne's Papers* 16. This letter was also to his mother and is undated.

published script of *The Castle Spectre* was in its eighth edition, just three and a half years after its first performance.<sup>240</sup>

Something must have changed by the early months of 1801 for *Adelmorn* to fail both critically *and* commercially. Certainly Lewis's reputation for producing works which were of little, if any, literary merit was growing. The first edition of *Tales of Wonder* had appeared towards the end of 1800. This, anthologised by Lewis, includes some original works by him, as well as translations and poems taken from his other works, poems by Walter Scott, Robert Southey and others. It was originally intended to be called *Tales of Terror* and had been mooted since Scott's first meeting with Lewis in 1798. It was not well received by critics, who objected to its surfeit of the macabre.<sup>241</sup> 1801 also saw the publication of a parodic response to this collection: under the pseudonym 'Mauritius Moonshine', the Irish poet Thomas Dermody published *More Wonders: An Heroic Epistle to M.G. Lewis, Esq. M.P.* This refers to Lewis's works as 'degraded virtue' and mentions 'the violated decency of national taste'.<sup>242</sup> Lewis is called 'the grim Scavenger, condemn'd to scrape/Some German rubbish, into form and shape'.<sup>243</sup> Like Coleridge, Dermody attempted to portray the fantastical elements of Lewis's writing as being incompatible with any political judgement, using the belittling expression 'the State's welfare by a Goblin crost'.<sup>244</sup> The same year also saw the publication of *The Old Hag in a Red Cloak*, a parody of *The Grim White Woman* from *Tales of Wonder*. As with *More Wonders*, it mocks Lewis's parliamentary status and Germanic influences, but it mixes both praise and criticism.<sup>245</sup> It is possible that *Tales*

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<sup>240</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 102.

<sup>241</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 152.

<sup>242</sup> [Dermody, Thomas] 'Mauritius Moonshine', *More Wonders: an heroic epistle to M.G. Lewis, Esq. M.P.* (London: J. Barker, 1801) v.

<sup>243</sup> 'Mauritius Moonshine', *More Wonders* 17.

<sup>244</sup> 'Mauritius Moonshine', *More Wonders* 18. Dermody's politics are more evident than Lewis's, however: the poem was published alongside his pro-union *Ode on the Union*.

<sup>245</sup> [G. Watson], *The Old Hag in a Red Cloak: A Romance, inscribed to the author of The Grim White Woman* (London: S. Gosnell, 1801, repr.; British Library, n.d [2011?]).

*of Wonder* could not live up to the hype surrounding its publication. Notably, however, Scott's contributions were singled out for praise by reviewers and Lewis had been actively involved in the production of Scott's poems, advising him strongly: yet another indication that it was not merely Lewis's oeuvre which was objected to, but possibly something about Lewis or his works in particular.<sup>246</sup>

What is it about *Adelmorn, the Outlaw* that could cause such consternation amongst critics? It may have been its political context. Fear of a possible revolution, in relation to that in France, was still acute in 1801: the play was, after all, drafted around the time of the first suspension of Habeas Corpus and first performed just two months after the second suspension had been repealed.<sup>247</sup> Lewis's views on these developments are not recorded, but the events certainly had an effect on him. Though he rarely attended parliament, he did, as Macdonald records, send a letter to Scott in February 1800 by saying he had to visit the House of Commons and also cut short a visit to Holland House – a very unusual action for the sociable Lewis – because of the proposed enquiry into the failure of the invasion of the Netherlands in the Autumn of 1799.<sup>248</sup> *Adelmorn*'s focus on mercy could easily be interpreted as being at odds with the nation's defensive reaction to the threat of disorder, even though the Terror and the actions of Robespierre indicate that the French Revolution itself was not associated with the concept of mercy. It is also true that *Adelmorn* relies on tropes from the tradition of illegitimate drama, including the use of song and the heightened emotions of melodrama, which Jane Moody (2006) has shown to have been a medium associated with social destabilisation.<sup>249</sup> Melodrama 'seemed to display a

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<sup>246</sup> See Scott's *Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad* [online: access information as footnote 30] for the advice – often exacting – he received from Lewis. Lewis's treatment of Scott as a protégé is an act of paternal posturing that is comparable to his financing of William Kelly, though Scott was later to disassociate himself from the Gothic genre.

<sup>247</sup> Habeas Corpus was suspended between May 1794 and July 1795 and again between April 1798 and March 1801. See [http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/british/c\\_habeas.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/british/c_habeas.html) .[Accessed 29/08/2011].

<sup>248</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 152.

<sup>249</sup> See Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000) 236. Moody bases her comments on the writings of William Hazlitt.

lawless disregard for morality, decorum and dramatic tradition'.<sup>250</sup> This may have been enough, in 1801, for a work to be thought of as despicable and degrading to the public taste. This explanation fits easily with the preoccupation of so many reviews with the form of the play or style of performance without reference to the plot or characters. There are a few - and only a few - details of the plot which could lend weight to such an interpretation: Innogen's deception of her father (he is unaware of her marriage to Adelmorn until the denouement) not only goes unpunished, but is unmentioned by her father and therefore arguably a support of rebellion; Adelmorn's guilty torment, which, it has been argued, makes him a troubling combination of hero and villain; the play's presentation of mercy and its Germanic influence. It is to these elements that I now turn.

Innogen and her father Sigismond are reunited just as Adelmorn faces the scaffold. Innogen is distraught as her father cannot alter the judgement on a man believed to be a murderer; Sigismond is distraught because he feels gratitude to Adelmorn for saving his life. Sigismond's inability to reverse Adelmorn's punishment, despite the desirability of this, would appear to make him one of those inflexible father figures so common in Lewis's work, as Macdonald has identified.<sup>251</sup> He is unwillingly so, however, and instead demonstrates the danger of making rash judgements to the audience. In all other respects, particularly his upbraiding of Ulric, he appears as a mild and effective ruler:

Hereafter you may sorrow, that when your Sovereign sued to you, you suffered him to sue in vain: when you may feel, what I now feel so bitterly! that they who show not mercy when others sue, deserve no mercy when they sue themselves.<sup>252</sup>

The sentiment of these lines and the syntactical symmetry of the sentences are very similar to the speeches of the idealised paternal character of

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<sup>250</sup> Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre* 54.

<sup>251</sup> Of the father figures in Lewis's plays, Macdonald writes that 'good fathers tend to be marked by a frigid self-righteousness; the evil fathers tend to be completely despicable.' Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 43.

<sup>252</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 71; 3. Sc.2. See 202 for further discussion of the use of rhetoric in relation to Lewis's classical education.

*Venoni's* Viceroy Benvolio, and the significance of this will be discussed in the final section of this chapter. Sigismund also highlights the cause of fear in *The Monk* and the motivation (partially, at least) behind Lewis's later plantation reforms: that oppression will lead to a dangerous uprising. As I have previously shown when considering *The Monk*, the expression of this fear was also the result of his experiences in Germany, so close to the time of writing *Adelmorn*, but is the expression of a warning, not of Jacobinical sympathies.<sup>253</sup>

Adelmorn's melancholy, the result of his belief in his guilt, as Bertrand Evans has noted, makes him a psychologically complex and dramatically interesting character with much in common with Gothic villains like Osmond.<sup>254</sup> Evans argues that a sense of guilt causes Adelmorn to hear the disembodied, supernatural voice of his uncle urging him to return to Germany; but does not consider Adelmorn closely enough, perhaps because he believed the play to be 'claptrap' and significant only for two reasons: Lewis's influence on canonical Romantic writers like Byron and Shelley and the fact that the development of the Byronic hero can be seen in Adelmorn's misery.<sup>255</sup> I would argue that Adelmorn's unhappiness is important to an understanding of the development of the Byronic hero, but the voice he hears is not a marker of his guilt. Rather, it is used by Lewis to hint at Adelmorn's innocence. Adelmorn believes that he has been ordered to return to Germany to face punishment for Roderic's murder, but the very fact that he has courage enough to go separates him from his villainous forebears. For example, Adelmorn remarks 'Why then in Britain were my slumbers still broken by that dreadful voice, those damning words – "Adelmorn, go home; my blood demands vengeance!"'<sup>256</sup> The supernatural voice, which gives ambiguous instructions to Adelmorn, in fact

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<sup>253</sup> It is worth noting here that Father Cyprian, like Reginald, bears an incarceration of some years (often cited as evidence of Lewis's engagement with the French Revolution) with considerable fortitude.

<sup>254</sup> See Evans, *Gothic Drama* 149-50.

<sup>255</sup> Evans, *Gothic Drama* 146.

<sup>256</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 25; 3. Sc1.

demonstrates the need for Ulric, not Adelmorn, to be punished. The audience and Adelmorn hear the voice give the same order moments later, though Innogen does not. In the first scene, Lodowick announces that Adelmorn has heard the voice for ‘every night for the last six months’.<sup>257</sup> An audience familiar with Gothic conventions could possibly guess at truth more quickly than Adelmorn, especially if they were familiar with Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (1777).<sup>258</sup>

The notion of a spectral voice reminding the melancholic hero of an unfulfilled duty is an aspect of *Adelmorn* which can be related to Lewis’s own life.<sup>259</sup> Lewis’s younger brother Barrington, an invalid since a childhood accident, had died in 1800. Both Peck and Macdonald reference Thomas Medwin’s *Conversations of Lord Byron*, in which it is claimed that ‘Lewis had been, or thought he had been, unkind to a brother whom he lost young; and that when any thing disagreeable was about to happen to him the vision of his brother appeared: he became a sort of monitor’.<sup>260</sup> Macdonald concedes that ‘there is no independent evidence of Lewis’s belief in his brother’s ghost’, but it does suggest that Lewis felt genuine guilt at his earlier neglect of Barrington.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 16; 1. Sc.1.

<sup>258</sup> Eliza Parsons’s *The Mysterious Warning* (1793) also relies heavily on the spectral voice of a murdered paternal ruler contacting the rightful and usurped heir: the device gives the novel its title.

<sup>259</sup> Other aspects of the play relevant to Lewis’s life include the denial of mercy to the innocent hero and the presentation of marriage. The play’s ambiguous presentation of marriage may well also be rooted in Lewis’s life. As Macdonald has noted, Innogen is a loyal and faithful wife to Adelmorn, devoted to him despite his supposed crime and his outlaw status – a stark contrast to the family environment in which Lewis grew up. Although Macdonald does not note it, the servant Orrila demonstrates a similar devotion to Lodowick, agreeing to run away with him. In this way, marriage, though not a major theme in the play, links the plot and the subplot. However, Lodowick jokes that ‘there’s nothing in the world so easy’ as a man running away from his wife (Lewis, *Adelmorn* I (i) 9) and the play’s epilogue, performed by Dorothy Jordan, the actress who has played Innogen, the perfect wife, satirises marriages in differing social classes, using the working-class stereotypes of Kate and Jack and an unnamed Lord and Lady. See Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 10-11, and Lewis, *Adelmorn* 96-101.

<sup>260</sup> Thomas Medwin, *Conversations of Lord Byron*, ed. Ernest J. Lovell Jnr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) 192-3. Cited in Peck, *a Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 59, and Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 150.

<sup>261</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 150.

The final aspect of the text that could possibly make it eligible for a Jacobin reading is the stress upon the virtues of mercy, the quality which, in its absence, enables the tragedy of *The Monk* and which Lewis's sister identified as being of central concern to her brother. His response to criticism of this sentiment in his preface certainly indicates that he felt a matter of principle to be in question (as well as suggesting that it was a virtue he demonstrated more often than he received). This is not enough, however, to make the play one which suggests sentiments threatening to the status quo in Britain, even in 1801, and the few critics who have paid attention to *Adelmorn* since have refuted the accusation, even if they have stopped short of investigating what the real significance of the play's stress on mercy may be.<sup>262</sup>

Adelmorn, as a Germanic heroic outlaw who is innately noble but plagued by guilt, is easily comparable to Friedrich Schiller's Karl Moor and this is another possible reason for its being misinterpreted as being a Jacobinical text. *The Robbers* (1780), as F.J. Lamport has commented, was, like Schiller himself, 'widely regarded as subversive, even revolutionary', despite the action being transferred from the eighteenth to the sixteenth century 'lest the attack on tyranny should seem too topical'.<sup>263</sup> Having been forced to join the army of Duke Karl Eugen of Wurttemberg at the age of fourteen, Schiller had reason to attack tyranny, though the play does not allow Moor to triumph.<sup>264</sup> Even so, in Britain in 1801 the presentation of a hero in conflict with the ruling order rang alarm bells.

Though Lewis acknowledges the influence of Goethe on the play, the influence of *Macbeth* on Lewis's works can also be felt strongly in the works of 1800-1801: *Tales of Wonder* carries an epigraph from it and the murky atmosphere of *Adelmorn*'s forest, the need for the young hero to

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<sup>262</sup> Macdonald, for example, identifies the feudalism of *Adelmorn* but does not delve into the details of the power hierarchies within the play and the qualities, for example mercy and gratitude, associated with this. Macdonald, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 54.

<sup>263</sup> F.J. Lamport, 'Introduction', in Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers and Wallenstein*, trans. F.J. Lamport (London: Penguin, 1979): 7-19, 10-11.

<sup>264</sup> Lamport, 'Introduction' 7.

restore a country to order after a murderous usurpation, also demonstrate this. The influence of *Macbeth* on *Adelmorn* is so marked that Evans is unable to summarise its Gothic elements without paraphrasing one of Shakespeare's most famous lines, 'violent scenes of nature in thunder, lightning, and rain'.<sup>265</sup> Evans does not consider that Lewis uses these 'violent scenes' of turbulent nature to suggest an undesirable disruption of the ruling order, as in *Macbeth*. Had he done so, and had he considered that the Outlaw's life does not bring Adelmorn happiness or a sense of liberty – he feels oppressed until his duty is complete and Roderic's true murderer is found – he would have realised that Lewis uses Shakespeare to anglicise his Germanic material and change its political tenor, and added greater weight to his more general argument that Lewis was important due to the link he formed between British and German literature. As it is, *Adelmorn* has, like its eponymous character, been falsely presumed guilty of an array of literary crimes.

### **Rebuilding *Adelmorn*'s reputation as a drama of restoration**

Considering the current interest in Gothic literature and Romantic-era drama, the lack of scholarship on *Adelmorn* is surprising. Its brief performance history and dismissal by both contemporary reviewers and Lewis's most influential biographer may be to blame for this. Peck, in 1961, identified the relationship between Lewis's dramas in general (and *Adelmorn* and *One O' Clock* in particular) and their historical context, though he finds this an excuse for what he perceives to be 'brainless stories' rather than seriously considering Lewis's engagement with threats to the power hierarchies of parliament and the plantocracy of which he was a part, and as a result, he is only marginally less damning of the plays than his nineteenth-century predecessors.<sup>266</sup> Of *Adelmorn*'s characters, he remarks

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<sup>265</sup> Evans, *Gothic Drama* 147.

<sup>266</sup> Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 68. Throughout his chapter on Lewis's dramas, Peck considers the contemporary fashion for stage spectacle and the relationship between this and the large size of Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres during Lewis's writing career.

that ‘they are generous, on little or no provocation, with speeches of trite, moralizing, humanitarianism, and, in view of the war with France, patriotism’. He goes on to point out that a ‘moral tag of little or no relevancy is sewed on to the last scene in three of Lewis’s plays to convince the audience that they have received a wholesome lesson’, and that ‘one is at a loss to apply’ Innogen’s final words on justice ‘to anything in *Adelmorn*’.<sup>267</sup> It is not really that troublesome to relate her warning to the false accusations suffered by Adelmorn and the vow which prevents him from being treated mercifully:

When an action seems *right*, let us consider only the *effect*, in order to preserve the whole of the merit: when an action seems *wrong*, let us always inquire into the cause, in hopes of finding there some apology for the error.<sup>268</sup>

There is more here, however. It is in these lines that Lewis reveals himself as a would-be pragmatist: an action can only be judged to be morally ‘right’ if its effect is the desired one, but people’s intentions should be taken into account if the effect is undesirable. It is from this sentiment that his later slave reforms would spring. Lewis certainly follows the convention of allowing this moral to be a lesson for the audience; Innogen prefixes these lines with these to Adelmorn: ‘may the world learn from your story, that to judge the conduct of others with candour, is frequently not more *kind* than *just!*’<sup>269</sup> One wonders if Lewis deliberately drew parallels between his treatment by reviewers and his wronged hero when he wrote in the preface that he had been repeatedly judged without ‘candour’.

Macdonald takes Lewis’s political concerns more seriously, noting that tragedy ‘was in Lewis’s hands a frankly counter-revolutionary genre’.<sup>270</sup> He cites *Adelgitha*’s Guiscard and the Lewis’s eponymous Alfonso and Rolla, of 1802 and 1799 respectively, as favourable portraits of George III, though

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<sup>267</sup> Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 112.

<sup>268</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 97; 3. Sc.5.

<sup>269</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 96; 3. Sc.5.

<sup>270</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 182.

he does not elaborate on this.<sup>271</sup> Contemporary reviewers were likewise warmer about these tragedies. A writer with patriotic sympathies in 1799 is unlikely to be a Jacobin in the early part of 1801 then a patriot again by 1802 and I would argue, alongside Macdonald, that *Adelmorn* does, on closer consideration, reveal Lewis to be politically conservative rather than Jacobinical.

*Adelmorn* shares with *The Castle Spectre* and *Venoni* a romanticised view of gratitude as a means of control and manipulation, though here it is not limited to relationships between the social classes, although Lodowick is devoted to Adelmorn. Here gratitude is used to dispel some serious concerns. When Adelmorn rescues Sigismond from the wolf, Sigismond presents him with a ring, remarking ‘refuse not from me this pledge of gratitude’, a pledge Adelmorn makes immediate practical use of by demanding that if a woman should return the ring to Sigismond she should ‘find with you forgiveness and protection’.<sup>272</sup> Sigismond is compelled to agree – and not only has Adelmorn managed to secure his wife’s future but, as that wife’s father is Sigismond, provides evidence that benevolent behaviour will bring its own reward.

Later, when Adelmorn is caught and imprisoned, he muses on whether ‘gratitude to his preserver’ would make Sigismond alter his vow never to pardon murderers, though he is forced to acknowledge that this is unlikely.<sup>273</sup> Comforting Innogen, Adelmorn explains why he has no fear of his dungeon or of his punishment and demonstrates his faith in the controlling power of gratitude:

[E]ven this dungeon whispers to my soul – “Fear not, poor trembler! thou art secure of heavenly pardon.” – In this dungeon was formerly confined Munster’s Abbot, my Uncle’s mortal foe. I pitied his gray hairs, knelt for him to Count Roderic, and the prisoner’s chains fell. Still do I see his reverend form – grateful tears rolling down his silver

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<sup>271</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 183. *Rolla* is Lewis’s translation of Kotzebue’s *Die Spanier in Peru* (1797).

<sup>272</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 42; 2. Sc.2.

<sup>273</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 68; 3. Sc.1.

beard; still sound in my ears, sweet even to agony, his parting blessings. The old man has been long with the angels – the old man will be my advocate above.<sup>274</sup>

This speech reveals much more than Adelmorn's belief in the benefits of gratitude. The action of pleading on behalf of his uncle's enemy, the result of pity, marks him as a sentimental hero, but also one with agency and courage. Adelmorn still believes himself to be guilty at this point – he is informed of his innocence along with the other characters, towards the end of the final scene. Furthermore, Adelmorn's religious faith and the fortitude with which he faces his planned execution do not suggest a genuinely guilty conscience – rather the opposite. Although Adelmorn has previously expressed a fear of purgatory, it is solely because Innogen would not be there. Indeed, he admits that if separation from Innogen were not the result, he would risk further damnation by committing suicide.<sup>275</sup> Adelmorn's lack of fear in this regard is a sure sign of his innocence: all of Lewis's villains of this period – Ambrosio, Osmond, and Ulric - all fear damnation in a way which marks them as descendents of *Hamlet's* Claudius. Ulric's guilt is made evident at the end of the first scene, when the audience realises he is the one to whom supernatural visitations are a threat, not Adelmorn:

Were but Adelmorn in my power, I might bid farewell to all terrors on this side the grave. – But those which menace me on the other, oh! what can banish? ... that dreadful vision which shrieks in my ear that I must one day be like him!<sup>276</sup>

Ulric goes on to admit that he has been guilty of 'ingratitude' towards Father Cyprian, though the audience is as yet unsure why.

The numerous hints at Ulric's guilt and Adelmorn's innocence, especially at the beginning of the second act, create a reassuring sense of dramatic irony. However dramatically attractive Adelmorn's misery may be, the audience is never allowed to doubt that Ulric will be punished and order restored with Adelmorn established as Baron of Bergen. There are too many of these hints for them to be mere inconsistency on Lewis's part. One such hint occurs in

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<sup>274</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 67; 3. Sc.1.

<sup>275</sup> See Lewis, *Adelmorn* 26; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>276</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 19; 1. Sc.1.

Act Two, Scene Two, when Adelmorn walks through the dark forest. Fearing that he has lost his way, he comments on the cold, the way ‘the bleak wind sighs’ and compares the night to ‘the murderer’s bosom’ as it is ‘all dark, all comfortless’.<sup>277</sup> Adelmorn may have forgotten, though the audience has not, that it is but a short while since he referred to Innogen as ‘my comfort’.<sup>278</sup> He fears the appearance of his uncle’s ghost, prays ‘let it not be so, All-merciful’, before reminding himself that he cannot pray as he is a murderer.<sup>279</sup> The fact that he has uttered something very like a prayer in the same soliloquy without ill-effect and that he can repeatedly (and pointedly, given the presentation of Sigismund) refer to the Christian God as ‘All-merciful’ should again be recognised by the audience. Significantly, when Lodowick confronts Ulric with his guilt in the final scene, the usurper is unable to swear his innocence ‘by all that is holy in Heaven, by all that is fearful in Hell’.<sup>280</sup>

The hints in Act Two, Scene Two continue as Adelmorn remarks with trepidation on the thunder and lightning. He is wary and nervous in this *Macbeth*-style landscape:

Peace! peace! ‘twas but the bat which flitted by me; ‘twas but the owl which shrieked from yonder tree! While your heart was unconscious of guilt, Adelmorn, and your hand unstained with blood, you were not thus used to tremble; but now, fool that I am! I shudder at the falling leaf. Guilt! Guilt! oh, what a coward hast thou made of me!<sup>281</sup>

As soon as he ends this speech, Sigismund cries for help off-stage.

Adelmorn’s response is instantaneous and belies his supposed guilt:

‘[drawing his sword] A shriek! – Guide me, good angels!’<sup>282</sup>. Not only does

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<sup>277</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 39; 2. Sc.2.

<sup>278</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 26; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>279</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 39; 2. Sc.2.

<sup>280</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 94; 3. Sc.5. He is unsuccessful when he tries to repeat this phrase of Lodowick’s and then sees the ghost of Roderic.

<sup>281</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 40; 2. Sc.2.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

he demonstrate physical courage here, but has no difficulty in praying to a divine power. The audience, by now, should be in no doubt of his guiltlessness.

The feudal loyalty to Adelmorn demonstrated by Lodowick is likewise a clue to his innocence. When Orrila, Lodowick's wife and believer in Adelmorn's guilt, asks Lodowick to leave his service and points out that Adelmorn's conscience should cause him to suffer, Lodowick replies that '[w]ere I to forsake him, Orrila, as much should I suffer from mine', later adding that he 'must not' leave him.<sup>283</sup> Such disinterested devotion is common to servants of Lewis's worthy heroes, never those guilty of crimes.

It is not enough for Adelmorn to be merely innocent, brave and a commendable master. To restore order to the stormy Bergen, he must also display a range of other virtues. It is hinted that he does have the capacity for mercy that he, like Lewis, looks vainly for in others. He also seeks protection for others, demonstrated by his pleading for the Abbot and his assurance of Innogen's reconciliation with her father. Adelmorn can be considered as a character in opposition to the type of the 'outlaw masculine', identified by Michael Mangan (2003). Though Adelmorn is an 'outlaw-hero', he is not possessed of a 'masculine energy which undermines the social consensus'.<sup>284</sup> Rather, he is a hero-outlaw whose 'masculine energy' undermines a wrongful consensus and reasserts the rightful one.

Adelmorn reveals his concern for the welfare of others, which he shares with Percy and Benvolio, shortly after rescuing Sigismond from the wolf. When Sigismond asks him how he can reward him, Adelmorn replies '[b]y protecting others, as I have protected you'.<sup>285</sup> At this point he is unaware of Sigismond's status and acts in a somewhat patrician manner as he instructs the older man. Adelmorn's concern, throughout the play, is never for himself and he disregards both his status and physical danger, unlike the

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<sup>283</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 49; 2. Sc.3.

<sup>284</sup> Michael Mangan, *Staging Masculinities: History, Gender, Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 136.

<sup>285</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 41; 2. Sc.2.

play's villain. He is physically chivalrous too, 'rushing from his concealment' to help Innogen when she is attacked by Brenno.<sup>286</sup>

His capacity for mercy is revealed when Adelmorn approaches the scaffold and seeks reconciliation with Ulric, whose villainy prevents him from complying:

Now to you, Ulric! – We have long been foes; be in my grave, our enmity forgotten! – Your hand – [*extending his hand – Ulric motions to take it, but starts back in horror, and hides his face in his cloak*] – You will not? You know not how to pardon? – Heaven, amidst all my sufferings I thank thee that my heart never felt like Ulric's! I am ready – lead on!<sup>287</sup>

Ulric's starting and hiding of his face is indicative of his guilt, as he is unable to touch Adelmorn any more than he is later able to swear a religious oath (the fact that Adelmorn is perfectly able to address Heaven in this speech should not go unnoticed). He demonstrates the physical representation of moral aversion identified in Henry Siddons's *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action*.<sup>288</sup> This aversion, as Bakscheider has identified, is common in Gothic villains. It is noticeably absent from Adelmorn, who also reveals fortitude in this speech as he announces 'I am ready – lead on!' He has shown this quality previously in this scene. As he tries to calm Innogen, he asks her 'Does my cheek lose its colour when I speak of the grave? Does my hand tremble while I say that Death's soon must clasp it?'<sup>289</sup> He proceeds to inform Innogen that he dreamt of Roderic the previous night, who forgave him, thus allowing him to enter Heaven. He has misinterpreted the vision, of course, but the point about mercy is made as strongly here as when Sigismond laments 'Fatal,

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<sup>286</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 61; 2. Sc.4.

<sup>287</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 91; 3. Sc.5.

<sup>288</sup> See 80 for a discussion of this in relation to *The Castle Spectre*.

<sup>289</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 90; 3. Sc.3.

fatal oath! Oh! cursed was the moment when I breathed it! when I wantonly threw away a Sovereign's most precious right, the power to pardon!<sup>290</sup>

Adelmorn first demonstrates his combination of mercy and fortitude at the beginning of Act Three, when he gives a soliloquy from his prison cell. Unaware of his innocence, he cannot fully comprehend his resignation to his fate, but he does prove his understanding of the value of mercy:

I have no more to hope, no more to fear! – and methinks again my soul feels resigned and tranquil. Oh! is this calm but the calm of despair? . . . No – not so! Let me not wrong thee, best of all blessings, last of all comforts, my uncorrupted heart! My eye need not blink beneath my Judge's; my breast need not shrink from the searcher's probe. One tear of mercy can cleanse my hand from blood . . . Then shrink not, my soul, from the sunbeams of to-morrow [.]<sup>291</sup>

Adelmorn can refer to his heart as 'uncorrupted' – another indication of his innocence. Although the vision that Adelmorn experiences shortly after this speech reveals Ulric's guilt, the spirit does later demonstrate forgiveness towards Father Cyprian for his part in the murder. The Father then dies imploring Heaven to be 'as merciful'.<sup>292</sup> Adelmorn's concern with mercy marks him as the heir of the forgiving Roderic and provides parallels with the other patriarch in the play, Sigismond.

Adelmorn, then, may be in mortal danger but, unlike the later Venoni, he is never in danger of appearing villainous, cowardly or effeminate. He claims that he was 'unmanned' by the thought of not spending an afterlife with Innogen, but the audience never witnesses him in such a state. The mention of it, however, is enough to alarm Innogen and she prescribes physical exercise:

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<sup>290</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 43; 2. Sc.1. Innogen later echoes her father's words, referring to 'his oath! his fatal oath!' 64; 2. Sc.4.

<sup>291</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 65-6; 3. Sc.1.

<sup>292</sup> See Lewis, *Adelmorn* 81; 3. Sc.3.

Pr'ythee to the chace, sweet love! 'Tis three days since you  
hunted: exercise will make your blood flow brisker, and  
disperse the vapours which cloud your brain.<sup>293</sup>

If Adelmorn's innocence and suitability to rule is confirmed by these factors, Ulric's villainy is equally evident. Not only is he incapable of swearing a religious vow or of facing Adelmorn, he is prey to the dread that Adelmorn only imagines. Unlike his cousin, Ulric does not reveal any courage to belie the terror which is the result of his guilt and ingratitude:

Will this dread never quit me? When I enter this room, must  
my blood run cold? 'Twas here he died! In that chair he sat  
reading, when I rushed upon him, and, while Cyprian stifled  
his shrieks, plunged my dagger in his bosom.<sup>294</sup>

Afterwards, as he ponders the fate of Father Cyprian, he remarks 'I sicken at the thought! my brain turns round!' as he '[s]inks into a chair, and leans his head on the table'.<sup>295</sup> His guilt recalls that of Macbeth when faced with Banquo's ghost.

The influence of *Macbeth* is present not only in the plot of the play (Adelmorn, like Malcolm, has been framed for the murder of a ruling patriarch) but also in Lewis's use of the weather and, to some extent, the presentation of the ghost. Lewis presents the weather as being stormy at two key points in the play: in Act Two, Scene Four, when Adelmorn is seized, and in Act Three, Scene Three, when the storm causes the collapse of part of the dungeon and reveals Father Cyprian to Lodowick. In the former incident, the weather is described rather than portrayed, as Ulric's odious henchman Brenno attempts to menace Innogen after the removal of her husband – 'tis fearful weather; the wind howls, lightning flashes, thunder roars!<sup>296</sup> The second example is more spectacular:

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<sup>293</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 26-7; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>294</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 54; 2. Sc. 2.

<sup>295</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 55; 2. Sc.2. A comparable moment can be found in *One O' Clock!* when Sangrida interrupts a banquet to claim Hardyknute. This is discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>296</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 61; 2. Sc. 4.

*A tremendous burst of thunder – part of the wall, struck by lightning, falls down, and another dungeon is seen, as also a window, much shattered, through which the lightning is frequently seen flashing.*<sup>297</sup>

The collapse of the wall allows for the revelation of the truth. Lewis's use of the weather in this way, however, goes beyond the purpose of expediency of plot and the dramatic use of pathetic fallacy. As is the case with *Macbeth*, nature itself revolts against an unnatural disturbance in the power structures of mankind, here against Ulric's illegitimate power and his treatment of Adelmorn. In other words, this disorder in nature is simultaneously a symbol of disorder in society, the result of this disorder, and part of its solution. *Adelmorn*, like the Shakespearean tragedies discussed by Julia Briggs (1997), depicts a 'society [which] largely depended upon . . . relationships of mutual obligation', often involving paternalistic patronage. As Briggs notes, tragedy arises when these relationships are destroyed – Macbeth kills his cousin, king and benefactor.<sup>298</sup> Lewis's romances reiterate the necessity of these relationships and the significance within these of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century ideals of gratitude and benevolence. Lewis translates such Shakespearean relationships for his audience by focussing on the duty and obligation involved in the roles of servant, master and paternal ruler.

The appearances of the ghost – the supernatural element of the plot – are also the consequences of Ulric's attempt to subvert the natural order. Though Adelmorn may not realise it at the beginning of the play, he has been given instructions from beyond the grave to rectify the 'breach in nature' that is Ulric's usurpation of Roderic.<sup>299</sup> The three appearances of the ghost all occur during the third and final act. The first, in the dream-vision, is certainly designed to be the most dramatic. A 'chorus of invisible spirits' chant as the spectacle develops:

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<sup>297</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 76-7; 3. Sc.3.

<sup>298</sup> Julia Briggs, *This Stage-Play World: Texts and Contexts, 1580 – 1625* (Oxford: OUP, 1997) 26.

<sup>299</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 2.3.111.

*[Part of the wall opens, and discovers (in vision) a blasted Heath by moonlight. The figure of an Old Man, a wound on his bosom, and his garments stained with gore, is seen holding a bloody dagger towards heaven.] . . .*

*[The Moon turns red; a burst of Thunder is heard, and Ulric appears held by two Daemons.]*

Lo! 'tis come! The victim's here!

*[The Old Man plunges the dagger in Ulric's bosom, who sinks into the arms of the Daemons, and is carried off by them.]*

See, he struggles! Vain endeavour!

See, he dies, he's lost for ever!

Mortals, view his fate, and fear!

*[The Heath vanishes; a Glory appears, into which the Old Man is seen ascending upon brilliant clouds.]*

Now from earth his flight addressing,

Upwards see his spirit move:

Youth, receive his parting blessing,

Pledge of pardon, pledge of love.

Sweet his angel-accent swell:

Adelmorn, farewell, farewell!

*[The wall closes; Adelmorn, who, during the vision, expresses the various emotions produced by it upon his mind, starts suddenly from his couch.]<sup>300</sup>*

This is the scene which Lewis claimed was inaccurately considered to be blasphemous and based on Raphael's depiction of the transfiguration.<sup>301</sup> The painting concerned does share elements with this moment in the play. Raphael presents Jesus, with Moses and Elijah, above Mount Tabor, as described in the Gospel of Matthew. The mount divides the painting; the lower half depicts another incident from the same gospel, in which a possessed boy is gripped by powerless apostles awaiting Jesus. Certainly the

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<sup>300</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 69-70; 3. Sc.1.

<sup>301</sup> Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (London: Fortune, 1968) 259. Raphael's painting is reproduced in the appendix.

notion of the distance between good and evil, strikingly demarcated by the physical, spatial and moral extremes of high/heaven/light, low/hell/darkness can be seen, along with their dramatic effect, in Lewis's play as well as in the painting. Lewis's 'brilliant clouds' do not seem dissimilar to the ones behind Raphael's Christ, whilst the apostles are presented against a much darker, foreboding background. However, the spectacular immediacy of Lewis's set-piece (which Evans refers to as 'lurid', 'crude' and 'creaking') does not resemble the complexity of the painting's detail.<sup>302</sup> This could be merely the result of the restrictions of staging; but nor does Lewis's 'blasted heath', so crucial to the meaning of the vision, resemble the delicate, healthy foliage that Raphael associates with his subject.<sup>303</sup>

The influence of Shakespeare, and his use of the supernatural, can, I believe, be seen throughout *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*, including the vision. The 'blasted Heath' not only recalls *Macbeth*'s setting but is also represents the way in which Ulric has disturbed the natural order (represented by nature) that the play supports. Essentially, this set-piece is a dumbshow very much in the tradition of Shakespeare, in which a truth is revealed to the characters and the audience.<sup>304</sup>

The spectacular use of the supernatural in this drama reiterates the twin themes of justice and mercy which run throughout the play. This is introduced by the disembodied voice that Adelmorn reports hearing, which tells him to return to Germany and seek revenge. This second, spectacular, incident suggests that Ulric should face a terrible punishment. When the ghost of Roderic appears on the stage for a second time, it appears to forgive

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<sup>302</sup> Evans, *Gothic Drama* 148.

<sup>303</sup> In the preface, Lewis admitted that there may indeed have been a Shakespearean antecedent for this scene, in *Cymbeline*, in addition to the influence of Goethe's *Egmont*, which he cites as his source. Lewis, *Adelmorn* i.

<sup>304</sup> In *Macbeth* 4.1, for instance, Macbeth sees a representation of future kings of Scotland and England. More famously, Hamlet ascertains Claudius's guilt by having a group of players act out the murder of a king by his brother. That the 'Old Man' is Adelmorn's uncle is evident by his stab wound, which he shares with *The Castle Spectre*'s Evelina. Indeed, this scene, in which the ghost metatheatrically confronts his murderer and offers Adelmorn hope as an unseen chorus chants, can be seen to be a precursor of the appearance of Evelina's ghost.

the dying and, crucially, penitent Father Cyprian, as it ‘raises his hands to heaven’ and looks upon the monk with a ‘mild’ expression.<sup>305</sup> Its final appearance is less benevolent, as it approaches Ulric with a flaming dagger and forces a confession from him. At this point the ghost is in the theatrical mould of Banquo: not only do the other characters seem not to be able to see it, but it creates guilt and a desire to hide from the truth in the murderer – Ulric’s plea ‘Look off me! I cannot bear thy glance’ is reminiscent of Macbeth’s desperate ‘never shake/ thy gory locks at me’.<sup>306</sup> In earlier encouraging Adelmorn to depose Ulric, the ghost has taken on a similar function to that of the ghost of Hamlet’s father.

Justice and mercy are, this play suggests, the essential attributes of an effective ruler. Shakespeare presented piety, fortitude and military ability as desirable qualities in the monarchs from the tenth century which he presented for an early seventeenth century audience affected by changes to national religion and Spanish invasion. Lewis likewise presents to his audience, wary witnesses of foreign revolutions and social change and unrest, that mercy is often the most effective quality for quelling dissatisfaction. However, he suggests (very much in line with Pitt’s policies) that those who choose to upset the existing order could and should be punished. Lewis’s mode of expression occasionally obscures his meaning, but in his adaptation of Shakespearean tragic tropes for an audience expecting ghosts and special effects, as well as his adaptation of the stock character of hero and villain in Adelmorn, there is literary ambition.

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<sup>305</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 81; 3. Sc.3.

<sup>306</sup> Lewis, *Adelmorn* 95; 3. Sc.5.; Shakespeare, *Macbeth*: 3.4.49-50.



**Rugantino:**

**‘The Republic’s most devoted slave’.**

(7,957 words)



*Rugantino: or, The Bravo of Venice*, Matthew Lewis's ninth play, was first performed at Covent Garden on Friday, October 18, 1805, three years after he had left parliament. The following year, 1806, saw the deaths of both William Pitt (which led to a Whig government) and Charles James Fox, as well as the introduction of the Foreign Slave Trade Bill, which prevented Britons trading slaves with people from enemy countries, severely reducing the trade. That Lewis's political views did not always concur with those of his social circle is evident in the jokey letter he sent to Lady Holland in 1806 concerning the new Whig government. He wrote that he 'sincerely rejoice[d] at the prospect of an administration which must give Holland so much satisfaction: You see, I look upon the *National Benefit* as quite a secondary consideration'.<sup>307</sup> In 1803, Lewis had also become estranged from his father due to the latter's affair with Mrs. Ricketts. Though Lewis was no longer an MP when working on *Rugantino*, therefore, the play was nevertheless written and produced during a period of political and personal turmoil and both national and domestic warfare and reflects this.

Lewis adapted the play from his short prose work *The Bravo of Venice: A Romance*, first published earlier in 1805. Lewis's novella, in turn, was a translation of *Abellino der Grosse Bandit* (1793) by the Swiss writer and 'counter-revolutionary propagandist' Heinrich Zschokke.<sup>308</sup> Zschokke had, like Lewis, originally produced a work in prose followed by a version adapted for the stage. Zschokke's play was written in 1795, the year that Lewis first wrote *Adelmorn*. It is a pertinent narrative for the time and the political climate, featuring a hero who has been the victim of a fraud leading to the temporary loss of his estates, only to have his rights reasserted after thwarting a plot to depose another ruler, the Doge of Venice. Joseph J. Irwin notes that the play 'ran for some thirty nights' at Covent Garden in 1805.<sup>309</sup> *Rugantino* was played by Mr. Johnston, to whom Lewis seems to have been

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<sup>307</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 164. Lewis's comments could also, arguably, be a sycophantic joke relating to the regard in which he held his friend: as ever, Lewis is ambivalent his own political views.

<sup>308</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 185.

<sup>309</sup> Irwin, "*Monk*" *Lewis* 82. Irwin also notes that the play was revived at Drury Lane in 1817 before being performed in America in 1826.

grateful for his performance, as the mock diary of Lewis's movements written jokingly by his sister Sophia Shedden indicates:

*Friday.* – Breakfast scarce over, when received an early visit from Harry Johnston – benefit pending – nothing original quite ready for him this season; so in place of a new drama substituted twenty pounds, with my hearty good wishes, and a promise of conducting a monstrous dashing party to the box reserved.<sup>310</sup>

Despite this box-office success, *Rugantino* has a scant publishing history and even scantier critical history, almost wholly neglected during the twentieth century: though it is discussed in biographies of Lewis and mentioned in Bertrand Evans's *Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley* and Montague Summers's *The Gothic Quest*, no other previous critical study has focussed on it in depth. *The Bravo of Venice* was published by J.F. Hughes in 1805 and by Cassell and Company in 1886, edited by Henry Morley.<sup>311</sup>

*Rugantino* was also originally published by J.F. Hughes, with a second edition produced in 1806, reflecting the play's commercial success. Oxberry produced an edition in 1820, which formed the basis of the 1822 American edition published by Wells and Lilly. This American edition does not include Lewis's preface, but has one written by an anonymous but insightful critic, who claims that '[t]he merits of Lewis have been more frequently under-rated than overrated' and defends his recycling of other writers' works by pointing out that it was common practice at the time – 'what writer of modern, or even of the boasted ancient, times, has not done so? Why should that be a sin in Lewis, which, if not a virtue, is at least excused,

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<sup>310</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2:143.

<sup>311</sup> *The Bravo of Venice* was out of print throughout the twentieth century, but is now available as an addendum to the 2009 edition of *The Monk*, published by Vintage, which attributes the novella to 1804 and which does not specify the edition from which the text is taken, though it is clearly a facsimile, reprint of one of the earlier printings without modern editing – the page numbers do not continue from the end of the text of *The Monk* and the typeface also differs. Though the publishers do not acknowledge this, the most likely source of their edition is the Cassell and Company edition of 1886. The page numbers for the two editions match. The small American press Zittaw also recently produced a critical edition of the novella (see n.311). Morley also edited an edition of *Tales of Terror and Wonder* in 1887.

in others?’<sup>312</sup> The only editions of the play now in print are very recent facsimile reproductions of these works.<sup>313</sup>

As was the case with *The Monk*, the popularity of the story also led to several chapbook versions, including *Rugantino, the Bravo of Venice*, an undated version published by the London firm Dean & Munday, which is a testament to the popularity of the play, which it resembles more closely than the novella. Summers notes that the play was not only popular in 1805 but was revived often, including a performance on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1817, when it followed a performance of *Venice Preserved*, with which it shares several features, including the setting, plot against the establishment and the outlaw-hero.<sup>314</sup>

In ‘Black Venice: Conspiracy and Narrative Masquerade in Schiller, Zschokke, Lewis and Hoffmann’ (2006), Victor Sage points out that Zschokke also adapted his work *twice* for the stage.<sup>315</sup> Sage asserts that there are thus four printed versions of this story; he neglects Lewis’s play completely, despite its commercial success.<sup>316</sup> This omission may be due to confusion caused by the protagonist’s name: that of *The Bravo of Venice* is

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<sup>312</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino; or, The Bravo of Venice, A Melo-Drame* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1822) 5.

<sup>313</sup> The second edition of 1806 is reprinted as an appendix to the 2008 scholarly edition of *The Bravo of Venice*, edited by K. Willis Lloyd for Zittaw. This edition of the novella includes some very useful commentary, but the play is treated as an adjunct and Lloyd does not comment on it in depth. The version analysed in this chapter is a facsimile reproduction of the same edition, allowing the original page numbers to be referred to. There are few differences between the 1806 and 1822 versions: some scenes are numbered differently but the scripts are almost word-for-word the same. The style of punctuation occasionally differs (for example, use of brackets rather than parentheses) but such differences are cosmetic and the meaning does not alter. Those changes which are significant are discussed in this section.

<sup>314</sup> Summers: *The Gothic Quest* 271. Summers also notes Eino Railo’s point that the play provides an early example of a ‘double existence’ in drama, but he neither considers other such parallels in Lewis’s work nor the similarities between *Rugantino* and Otway’s *Venice Preserved*, both of which feature a hero caught up in a revolt against the ruling authorities in Venice.

<sup>315</sup> Victor Sage, ‘Black Venice: Conspiracy and Narrative Masquerade in Schiller, Zschokke, Lewis and Hoffmann’, in *Gothic Studies*. 8.1. (May 2006): 52 – 72, 60.

<sup>316</sup> The prose versions of Zschokke and Lewis, plus the drama of the former. Sage also omits the chapbook versions.

named Abellino, but Lewis altered this to 'Rugantino' when he dramatised it, to avoid confusion with the work of Zschokke.

The plot of the play is a simple one in which the eponymous hero spends much of his time in disguise. Prior to the play's opening, Rosabella, daughter of Andreas, Duke of Venice, has fallen in love with a handsome, noble but poor young man, Flodoardo, though the Duke has arranged a marriage between her and the Prince of Milan. At Rosabella's request, Flodoardo has left Venice. The play opens as a group of bravos conspire against Andreas and Rosabella, fuelled by the thwarted lust of their leader, Parozzi, for Rosabella. When one of the bravo attempts to kill her, she is saved by Rugantino, a frighteningly ugly bravo who is the terror of the city. He conducts his rescue disguised as a beggar and escapes dressed as a monk after menacingly informing Rosabella that she will marry him. He later threatens the bravos by blackmailing them.

Flodoardo returns at the beginning of the second act, when the audience becomes aware that he and Rugantino are the same person. The Duke agrees to let Rosabella marry Flodoardo if he can capture Rugantino, who is believed to have killed two of the Duke's friends. Flodoardo agrees and, on the night of a masque, reveals himself as Rugantino. He delivers the bravos to the Duke, explains how he carried out the deception, returns the Duke's friends, who have been in hiding, to the court and confirms his love for Rosabella. Finally, he reveals that *both* 'Rugantino' and 'Flodoardo' are aliases, and that he is in fact the Prince of Milan. Like many of Lewis's plays, *Rugantino* ends with a tableau confirming the return of order to Venice and the Prince's engagement to Rosabella. In this instance, the aristocrat has managed to avert insurrection.

Lewis's play, therefore, must have been a reassuring one in increasingly disturbing times. The nullification of any threat that the conspirators could pose to the Duke and his rule is the central aspect of the play and is achieved in two ways: through the play's central plot device of a joint hero/villain, villainy is diluted and aristocratic masculinity portrayed as innately noble and the dramatic irony occasioned by the audience's

knowledge of the disguise reiterates this; Lewis also ends the play with one of his trademark tableaux, signifying order and hierarchy. This section concentrates on the first aspect.

The play is thus an interesting contrast to *Venoni: or, the Novice of St. Mark's* (dealt with in the following section) as its focus is the maintenance of order rather than a threat to it: *Rugantino* shares the masquerade of danger with the persona of its hero. Like *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*, this play features a hero-villain, though *Rugantino* does not ever fancy himself guilty of any crime. In his assumption of the role of a bravo *Rugantino* demonstrates many of the qualities deemed undesirable in young men by writers such as Vicesimus Knox and James Fordyce in the early nineteenth century, whereas his alter-ego *Flodoardo* demonstrates their opposites.<sup>317</sup> Again Lewis experiments with the device of the doppelganger to express a view about masculinity and duty. The many references to *Rugantino*, supposedly a violent plotter against the traditional order, as a 'monster' are particularly apt. This character is central to Lewis's triumvirate of melodramatic heroes, moving from the noble but supposedly criminal *Adelmorn* and *Rugantino* to the ostensibly noble but flawed *Venoni* who has to learn the value of self-control and duty. It is worth noting that of all Lewis's dramas, these are amongst those which are most influenced by foreign works – *Venoni* and *Rugantino* are both translations and *Adelmorn* is influenced by the works of both Goethe and Schiller.

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<sup>317</sup> For example, in the essay 'Evening XXVIII: On Modern Heroism', Knox comments ironically on young men colloquially referred to as heroic as scorning 'to pore over musty Greek and Latin' whilst at school, but as 'taking the lead in every attempt to revolt against authority'. After leaving school, such men turn to 'the splendid distinctions of the turf, the gaming table, and the whip; not to mention his illustrious emulation of the Grand Seigneur in the establishment of his seraglio'. In a comment which could easily be ascribed to the melodramatic delivery of lines on stage, Knox notes that 'These dashing characters may be compared to a dashing torrent, all noise, all foam, all violence for a moment . . . or to a comet, attracting all eyes for a short time, but cheering no system'. Knox could easily be writing about the guise of *Flodoardo* and the 'real' Prince of Milan when he goes on to assert that '[t]rue heroism is best displayed by acting a RATIONAL, manly, uniform part . . . contrasted with this, the false fire of the *dashing* fellow is like the blaze of a handful of straw compared to the undiminished radiance of the vestal flame'. All emphasis is Knox's. Vicesimus Knox, 'Evening XXVIII: On Modern Heroism', in *Winter Evenings: or, Lucubrations on Life and Letters*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2 vols. (London: Charles Dilly, 1788): 1: 144-7. The quotations referring to school life and life post-school are from 145, the rest from 148 and 149 respectively. Also relevant here is James Fordyce's essay 'On the respect due to young men'. This is discussed on 199 below, in relation to *Venoni*.

### **From *The Bravo of Venice* to *Rugantino*: Adaptation**

Both on the page and the stage, *Rugantino* has more agency than Lewis's other heroes. The differences between the novella and the drama are few, but they are significant, as they contribute to the drama's presentation of *Rugantino* as the perfect citizen, both in public and private.<sup>318</sup> Though the novella defends the same values of public duty, maintenance of power and manliness as the play, it does contain sections in which the conspirators against the Doge defend their actions. These sections are not present in the play – presumably because they would be subject to the same moral criticism as the presentation of rebellion in *The Monk* and would possibly have fallen foul of the censors.

The most tellingly political alteration in the drama is the Anglicisation of the title of 'Doge' to that of 'Duke'. Rosabella, originally the Doge's niece, gains status in the play, becoming the Duke's daughter. Lewis altered the name 'Abellino' to 'Rugantino' as discussed above. This character's real identity in the novella is not the Prince of Milan, but the slightly less impressive Count Rosalvo. Whereas Rosalvo is driven to disguise and despair because of the usurpation of his property by the villainous Monaldeschi and the death of his mistress respectively, not falling in love with Rosabella until he saves her life, the Prince of the drama is driven solely by the desire to restore order to Venice and the love of Rosabella. His previous lover is not dead but has been unfaithful. This alteration frees him from the melancholy expressed by the hero of the novella, whose behaviour

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<sup>318</sup> There are so few differences that the review of the play which appeared in the *Monthly Magazine* for June 1806 consisted wholly of the comment that [t]he melo-drama of "Rugantino", by Mr. M.G. Lewis, in regard to dialogue, is copied almost verbatim from *The Bravo of Venice*'. See *Monthly Magazine* [online], 21. Available from: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:bp:&rft\\_dat=xri:bp:article:e732-1806-021-45-028534](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e732-1806-021-45-028534), July 1806:145 [Accessed 01/09/2011]. The novella is subtitled 'A Romance', whereas the earlier, J.F. Hughes version of the play is subtitled 'A Grand-Romantic Melo-Drama'. The Oxberry edition of 1820 and the American edition of 1822 are both subtitled 'A Melo-Drame'. The relationship between a 'romance', charting unrealistic events, and a 'Melo-Drama' or 'Melo-drame', in which the emotions of the characters are heightened is an interesting one, though one which is outside the scope of a project of this length.

is not dissimilar to that of Venoni and instead allows him to demonstrate idealised masculine qualities.<sup>319</sup>

The novella's Rosalvo kills Monaldeschi, 'in honourable combat' in retribution for the conspiracy against him; but the Prince begins his quest after accidentally finding one of the Duke's friends, Foscari, fatally wounded in a cave and swearing to avenge him.<sup>320</sup> Rugantino thus remains innocent of bloodshed and instead shows a fraternal allegiance to the ruling classes, though, as outlined below, Lewis himself was willing to take part in a duel when he thought himself to be the target of rudeness – he clearly did not find 'honourable combat' an oxymoronic concept, though his alteration of this aspect of the plot is another example of his awareness of the expectations of his genre, which include a hero guiltless of any bloodshed at all, even if, as with *The Castle Spectre*'s Percy, this makes him appear ineffectual. Underlining his moral purity for the audience, the drama's Rosabella cries 'Joy; joy! Camilla, joy! – Rugantino then is *not* a murderer'.<sup>321</sup> The Prince escapes being ineffectual, however, by the success of his plot to save Venice from the bravoes.

The Rugantino of the drama appears more righteous due to there being less contact and more open animosity between him and the bravos than is the case in the romance. Rosabella's rejection of Parozzi seems to form the sole reason for the bravoes' revolt in the play, but the novella does not deal with this topic.<sup>322</sup> Perhaps the most noticeable difference between the versions is the omission in the drama of the defence of a life of crime and revolt, spoken by the bravo Matteo in the novella as he confronts Abellino. It is

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<sup>319</sup> Venoni's desperation results in inarticulacy of speech as early as the third paragraph of the novella; on the third page he cries and 'dashed his forehead against the earth' with his lips 'already unclosed to curse that hour which gave him being'. See M.G. Lewis, *The Bravo of Venice: A Romance, Translated from the German*, ed. Henry Morley (London: Cassell and Company, 1886) 10-11.

<sup>320</sup> *The Bravo of Venice* 187. Rosalvo admits this in the final few pages and although the reader is not informed when their duel took place, it seems to have been towards the end, rather than beginning, of the narrative, thus allowing Rosalvo to announce his true identity at the same time as he rescues Venice.

<sup>321</sup> M. G. Lewis, *Rugantino* 53; 2. Sc.4.

<sup>322</sup> Irwin, "Monk" Lewis 79.

worth quoting at length due to its anomalous nature: it is by far the most democratic of speeches in Lewis's works:

Fool! know, the bravo must be above crediting the nurse's antiquated tales of vice and virtue. What is virtue? What is vice? Nothing but such things as forms of government, custom, manners, and education have made sacred: and that which men are able to make honourable at one time, it is in their power to make dishonourable at another, whenever the humour takes them; had not the senate forbidden us to give opinions [ . . . ] We are men, as much as the Doge and his senators, and have reasons as much as *they* have to lay down the law of right and wrong, and to decree what shall be vice, and what shall be virtue.<sup>323</sup>

Though the plot in no way supports his views they are nevertheless significant. What is implicitly criticised through the characterisation of Matteo, whom the reader is positioned to disapprove of, is a lack of what Lewis would term 'candour' in the moral judgement of those in power and it shares this concern with the *use* of power and authority with the majority of Lewis's other works. It is still remarkable that the mere presence of such a speech did not earn Lewis more infamy, even if it is easy to understand why this speech could not be dramatised in the midst of the Napoleonic Wars. What could be dramatised was the character's downfall: the novella has 'Abellino' stab Matteo in Chapter VI to protect Rosabella and this is repeated in the drama. The leader of the bravoes is now called Parozzi rather than Matteo, but he meets the same fate at Rugantino's hands. Rosabella does not consider this event when she gleefully declares that Rugantino is innocent of murder, with the implication that the action was justified. Lewis also creates sympathy for Andreas in the novella by stressing his long duty to his country, as he points out that he has 'served the Republic faithfully and fervently for many a long year' and 'shed his blood with profusion'.<sup>324</sup>

The final difference between the two versions is the suicide of the villain Contarino in the novella. He stabs himself at the denouement, just after the

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<sup>323</sup> If this speech lacks the violence of *The Monk*, it is more obviously political. The speech continues for most of two pages, as Matteo comments on the supposed virtues of the Republic, of generals, nuns and coquettes. Lewis, *The Bravo of Venice* 30-31.

<sup>324</sup> Lewis, *The Bravo of Venice* 140.

revelation of his guilt, in order to avoid arrest. Again, this could have been too contentious an act to stage in 1805, when suicide was illegal, or Lewis may have felt that such a strong act would detract from the spectacle of the play's ending and the restoration of order that this signified. The play's Contarino is captured by the Duke's guards with the rest of the conspirators and led away. In both versions the cowardly Memmo is shown mercy as he admits his guilt.

Both the novella and the play hint at the hero's innocence (the former includes the disturbed maid Cinthia's frightened response to the disguised bravo's ugliness as 'an absolute mask') in a similar way to *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*, and compare the disguised bravo to Satan: these instances are explored below.<sup>325</sup> Both versions also stress the importance of mercy by having Rosabella plead for the life of the bravo prior to discovering his true identity – again, this recalls Innogen's pleas in the earlier play.

The effect of these alterations is to present the Prince of Milan as a paragon of masculine virtue and public duty. Whereas Rosalvo cannot be united with Rosabella and regain his personal wealth until he has saved Venice; the Prince, by contrast, is motivated by more political and civic concerns. Even his desire to test Rosabella's love through his deception serves to link plot and subplot through the theme of constancy and duty. *Rugantino* is, therefore, like its prose predecessor, a 'doppelganger story', the central device of which, the dual hero/villain, allows Lewis to present and explore contemporary models of masculinity.<sup>326</sup>

### **Lewis in 1803 – 1806**

Just as the heroes of *The Bravo of Venice* and *Rugantino* lead double lives, the comments Lewis made in his letters between 1804 and 1806 inclusively, as well as some of his actions, suggest, at least on the surface, a greater

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<sup>325</sup> Lewis, *The Bravo of Venice* 23.

<sup>326</sup> Sage, 'Black Venice' 60.

ambiguity of political and social views than previously. Though Lewis had left Parliament in 1802, it is not surprising that he was, in 1805-6, ‘not entirely indifferent to national issues’, as D.L. Macdonald phrases it.<sup>327</sup> Macdonald records that in March, 1806, just a few months after the first performance of *Rugantino*, Lewis, realising that the slave trade could end, ‘sent Lord Holland his warning about the manoeuvrings of the anti-abolitionists’.<sup>328</sup> In October 1806, Lewis also corresponded with Lord Holland about the Debtors Laws – the only issue which had prompted him to speak in Parliament.<sup>329</sup> Though this correspondence spans the year *after* the publication of *The Bravo of Venice* and *Rugantino*, it is worthy of note here as it confirms that two of Lewis’s major concerns, both in his life and his works - the maintenance of structures of social order and control and best use of such structures - remained constant throughout his life. Macdonald also notes that Lewis wrote a poem after the funeral of Fox in October 1806, in which he ‘expressed what must have been a common fear, that the two causes most identified with Fox [an end to the war with France and the abolition of the slave trade] would not survive the loss of their leader’.<sup>330</sup> The poem seems to support the abolition of the slave trade, supporting Macdonald’s view that Lewis was an abolitionist though not in favour of emancipation, despite the fact that Lewis’s maternal and paternal relatives were all strongly against abolition and Byron provides anecdotal evidence that Lewis shared their opinions.<sup>331</sup>

Lewis calls Fox ‘The People’s Friend’ in this poem.<sup>332</sup> He also, however, makes the point that those who disagreed with Fox politically still saw his

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<sup>327</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 164.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.* Macdonald does not comment in detail on this, though it does serve to highlight the problems in ascertaining Lewis’s politics, as acknowledged by Sage.

<sup>331</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 49.

<sup>332</sup> The poem is included in full in Baron-Wilson’s biography. Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:387.

worth as a politician.<sup>333</sup> Of even more significance is the stanza, addressed to the ‘shade’ of Fox, which Baron-Wilson identifies as being cut by Lewis himself prior to its original publication in his *Poems* of 1812:

*Illustrious shade! when at the throne of heaven  
Suppliant thou kneel’st, and sue’st to be forgiven;  
While by thy side a dreadful angel stands,  
And grasps the volume in his burning hands  
Which holds thy faults, (for who from fault is free)  
With dauntless eye that stern accuser see;  
His voice be thunder – lightning be his look -  
Whisper “The Slave-Trade”, - and he’ll close the book.*<sup>334</sup>

Baron-Wilson suggests that Lewis made the cut not because of its overt criticism of the slave trade (which was the cause of criticism of *The Castle Spectre*) but because he could be thought blasphemous for depicting such a scene - he ‘feared it might be considered improper’ in the way that the vision in *Adelmorn* was.<sup>335</sup> *Adelmorn* had suffered because some thought the appearance of Roderic’s ghost amounted to presenting heaven and hell on stage. He did not make use of the supernatural again in his dramas until 1807. It is curious that so little critical attention has been paid to this poem. It is possible that Lewis wished for an end to the war without concurring with Fox’s political views – he also expressed this in the poem *War, Victory and Peace*, but the stance expressed in the poem towards the slave trade is more problematic.<sup>336</sup> It fits easily with Lewis’s claims that he wished that the trade had never been begun, and the sentimental depiction of suffering in the poem is similar in tone to parts of his *Journal*; however, it is exactly this sentimentality which perhaps suggests that Lewis did not go so far as to

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<sup>333</sup> Lewis’s description of Viscount Howick (Earl Grey) is an example of this: ‘And courting Fox’s love his proudest boast/Who e’en when most they differ’d, priz’d him most’. Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:385.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid. The italics are Baron-Wilson’s, used to denote Lewis’s cutting of the poem.

<sup>335</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 381.

<sup>336</sup> This was also published in *Poems*, in 1812.

have abolitionist sympathies. For example, his phrase ‘round sable limbs that chains are wound’ does not conjure up the brutality of the slave trade in the way that the anti-slavery poems of Helen Maria Williams and Hannah More do.<sup>337</sup>

Lewis’s praise of Fox arguably contradicts his later statement that he looked upon Jamaica as he would on a man who had come to pay him money.<sup>338</sup> This seeming contradiction is an important one, because it indicates that the attempts to conclusively clarify all of Lewis’s views in purely political, oppositional terms such as Whig/Tory and Democrat/Reactionary which have marked more recent criticism of his works are reductive: he may well have objected to the brutality of the slave trade whilst recognising the importance and necessity of successful management of the Jamaican plantations for his own family. His limited actions when in Parliament, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, voting alternatively with and against the government, suggest that he held strong principles which he was prepared to act on but that this was not necessarily influenced by any sense of allegiance to a particular party. It should also be remembered that Lewis had known Fox, who had flattered his vanity by congratulating him on *The Monk* shortly after its publication and to whom he had dedicated the 1799 poem *The Love of Gain*.<sup>339</sup>

Although all of Lewis’s heroes gain the gratitude of their servants, all also display a sense of responsibility for these characters; indeed, this is the most definite marker of their paternalistic authority. Likewise, Lewis’s *Journal* shows a frustration at the fact that his plantation reforms led to decreased,

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<sup>337</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:386. More, in *Slavery: A Poem* (1788) even included a footnote to the line ‘When the sharp iron wounds his inmost soul’, pointing out that the image was not figurative and that she had seen ‘a complete set of chains . . . together with instruments for wrenching open the jaws’ of slaves. (Hannah More, ‘Slavery: A Poem’, in *Romantic Women Poets*, ed. Wu: 43-50, 47).

<sup>338</sup> Lewis, *Journal* 34. Lewis’s attitude to Jamaica is explored more specifically in the Coda.

<sup>339</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 142. Macdonald notes that the poem, based on Juvenal’s Thirteenth Satire, contains lines which recall Sophia Shedden’s reading of *The Monk* (‘O’er human frailties drop compassion’s veil’) and that Juvenal seems to have been a popular poet for the Whigs, with William Lamb (later Lord Melbourne) and Lord Holland both writing imitations of his works.

rather than increased, productivity, but there is no indication that his opposition to the use of physical force on his slaves was motivated by anything other than humane reasons. Lewis may have sympathised, therefore, with some of Fox's views, but this does not make him a democrat, or even a Whig.

Not only does this period highlight the complexity of Lewis's notion of responsibility through his response to political events, but also in his response to more personal ones. Lewis remained estranged from his father at this time over the latter's mistress Mrs. Ricketts. In letters to his mother, dated by Baron-Wilson from between September 1804 and February 1805, Lewis's sense of personal and domestic duty and responsibility is particularly evident. Lewis maintained his antipathy to Mrs Ricketts (which was at least in part occasioned by his belief that she had expressed a desire for his mother's death in order to marry his father) despite the fact that his father reduced his allowance considerably and he ran the risk of being completely disinherited. In a letter which Baron-Wilson dates from August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1804, Lewis quotes a letter from his father to his sister Maria, condemning him. He reacts angrily to his father's assertions:

Your brother is still in my house, pursuing the same *steady* conduct as before. His indifference to the pain he has occasioned me, and continues to give, is brutal, and must operate to convince me that he wants not only the proper feelings of a son, but the generosity of a man.' Would not any body think that I had committed some great crime? or, at least, that I had disobeyed some command of his? On the contrary, I have never disobeyed him.<sup>340</sup>

Lewis is here accused by his father of the sort of behaviour – judgement without candour – that he complained of receiving from the critics in the preface to *Adelmorn*.<sup>341</sup> Father and son appear identical in their concern with familial duty here – the elder Lewis evidently feels that his son is

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<sup>340</sup>Baron-Wilson *Life and Correspondence* 1: 297. Lewis's father later called on the support of his son-in-law, Lord Lushington, which only served to exacerbate Lewis's irritation. Though Lewis and his father were eventually reconciled, their relationship never fully recovered.

<sup>341</sup> Lewis used the term 'candour' often as a synonym for 'kindness'.

guilty of disloyalty, and the younger Lewis is quick to point out that he has always been obedient. Lewis's belief that he had, in fact, acted with 'the proper feelings of a son' whilst being accused of the opposite, forms an interesting parallel with Rugantino/Abellino, who cultivates the reputation of a Bravo whilst in fact ensuring the safety of the Venetian Republic and its patriarch. His father's bitter stressing of the word 'steady' also implies that he found his son's strict moral code difficult to reconcile with reality, just as Lewis himself would later struggle to understand why his plantation reforms did not lead to greater productivity. Lewis also revealed his sense of duty to other members of his family during this period of time, cautioning his mother against his half-sister Miss Lacey's attempt to begin a career as an actress, and passing comment on his contemporaries as he did so.<sup>342</sup>

A later letter to his mother includes Lewis's reaction to the reduction in his allowance, originally one thousand pounds per year. Lewis does not state the extent of the cut, but Baron-Wilson records anecdotal evidence that the sum was halved, with his father's reasoning being that as Lewis was subsidising his mother with roughly five hundred pounds per year, he was presumably able to live on this amount.<sup>343</sup> Like his socially dutiful heroes, Lewis laments his financial position only briefly in the letter, concentrating instead on the emotional 'mortification' of the decision and his 'great pain' at his inability to continue to pay for the education of William Kelly and to assist his mother further.<sup>344</sup> The letter which follows this is the bitterest, as

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<sup>342</sup> See Baron-Wilson *Life and Correspondence* 1:305-6 :

She will find the theatre a very dangerous place for a young person. . . . You ought also to be made aware that not only Sheridan is the most abandoned libertine that probably ever existed, but that Graham . . . passes for having very few scruples when women are in the case. If, therefore, she is to have any thing to do with the theatre, you ought to take care of providing some elderly and discreet woman, to accompany her there and protect her. Otherwise, however good may be her own principles, and regular her conduct, she will be continually exposed to a thousand insults. A theatre is, in fact, a place in which no woman of delicacy ought to set her foot (behind the scenes, I mean), unless protected by the presence of a husband. I hope you will find this kind of life answer for Miss L.; but I fear the contrary, much. For a man, the case is very different.

<sup>343</sup> See Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 309.

<sup>344</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 307-8.

Lewis reveals that he believes Mrs. Ricketts to be eagerly awaiting the death of his mother and his jealousy of the favour his father showed to Mrs. Ricketts's son, Frederick.<sup>345</sup> As the quarrel progressed, Lewis continued to present himself as a victim of his own sense of duty, insisting that 'if [his father] chooses to *command* me to stay in Mrs. R----'s society, I should obey him'.<sup>346</sup> Paternal authority in both Lewis's life and work was absolute.

Although history records Lewis as a snob, it was during this time that Lewis wrote a letter to his mother claiming:

I care nothing about rank in life, nothing about what other people may think or may say; and have always, both in my public writings and private life, shown (what Mr. Pitt was pleased to call) a pleasure in spitting in the face of public opinion. I live as much with actors, and musicians, and painters, as with princes and politicians, and am as well satisfied, and better indeed, with the society of the first, as with that of the latter.<sup>347</sup>

This assertion is interesting for many reasons. Firstly, it is true that Lewis would necessarily have spent time with performers and his reputation as a snob may be as overblown as his reputation for the licentious and the radical. However, his correspondence contains few references to these people compared to his engagements in high society (shortly afterwards, he wrote a letter gleefully recording a meeting with the Duke of Clarence). Secondly, Lewis was commenting on some of his mother's acquaintances and the tone is defensive. It may also be possible that Lewis had realised, if his allowance was to be cut, that some circles of society would be closed to him.

One of the most interesting and mysterious accounts in Baron-Wilson's biography of Lewis is contained in a letter from an unnamed acquaintance of Lewis's to another relative. The writer of this records a visit to Lewis's

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<sup>345</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:310-4. Macdonald also notes this jealousy – see Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 36-8.

<sup>346</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 316.

<sup>347</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 362.

home, during which Lewis almost cries as a flower is destroyed by the wind. The pair discuss Lewis's decorative statue of Fortune:

‘Her favoured ones often prove more blind than herself’, observed Lewis; ‘hands may grasp yon all-coveted purse, and its enjoyment still slip through the fingers.’

“I thought that moment of the eyes *his* had so often dried, and the hearts it has contributed to lighten; and instead of the terrible, the proscribed ‘Monk,’ by heavens! I seemed better to recognise a character by no means so popular, though occasionally *spoken* of as the *Good Samaritan*.<sup>348</sup>

The correspondent identifies both the public image of Lewis, then as now – the blasphemous creator of *The Monk* and the image which he tried insistently and vainly to project – that of a misunderstood character who did his best to help others. It is not surprising that someone with such views and experiences should be attracted to the story of Abellino.<sup>349</sup>

It is shortly after this period of domestic disorder that Lewis came near to fighting a duel. Macdonald attributes this to the effect that his argument with his father had on him, though the reasons remain unclear.<sup>350</sup> Though Lewis was of a notoriously prickly disposition and prone to taking offence easily, especially on matters of principle, the ‘affair of honour’, as Baron-Wilson terms it, still appears odd. The duel never took place – Lewis wrote to his mother that:

Captain Percy, Lord Beverly's son, being drunk at a masquerade (at least every one says that he was drunk), was personally rude to me and I was obliged to call him to account. Luckily, he was well advised; and the business was

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<sup>348</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:338.

<sup>349</sup> Baron-Wilson *Life and Correspondence* 1: 345-6. The same letter contains an anecdote in which Lewis discussed the slave trade and William Wilberforce with the Duchess of York, though no particulars are given. The correspondent's surname is not given: he either signs himself simply ‘Frederick’ or Baron-Wilson, whose editing of the correspondence is not always reliable, has omitted his surname. It could, of course, be Frederick Ricketts, - despite his jealousy, Lewis does not seem to have held any personal antipathy towards him - but he does not mention a friendship with him, and Frederick was not an unusual name. Lewis later met with William Wilberforce to discuss the management of his slaves: this is discussed in the Coda.

<sup>350</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 163.

at length settled by his sending a very full apology in writing, with permission to make it public.<sup>351</sup>

Reading between the lines, it seems that Lewis was also well-advised to avoid a duel but chose to ignore such advice (the insistence of others that Percy was drunk reads like a plea for Lewis to make allowances) and he admits that he might have lost such a duel to his mother. She was clearly anxious about the situation; his next letter to her reiterates the fact that the affair was over and he includes the note from Percy to assure her. Despite this, he did not choose to make the affair public – possibly because to do so would be deemed indiscreet, possibly because of the nature of the comments made by Percy. Lewis's actions at this point, in being willing to physically confront an enemy when he felt affronted, do appear closer to those of his Venetian Bravo than any of his other heroes and his high sense of morality and duty is evident in the fact that he considered himself 'obliged' to challenge Captain Percy.

### **The reception of *The Bravo of Venice* and *Rugantino***

It is crucial to an understanding of Lewis that this play and the novella which is its source appear to have escaped the accusations of immorality that have marked his image in popular culture. Despite the contentious nature of some sections of the novella, both of Lewis's versions of this story met with a kinder reception than *Adelmorn*, though the praise is not as strong as that reserved for *Alfonso* and *Adelgitha*. The acceptance of Lewis's skill but implicit criticism of his favoured genres of melodrama and Gothic that met both the novella and the play in some quarters recalls the reception of *The Castle Spectre*. Macdonald records that the *Critical Review* viewed *The Bravo of Venice* more favourably than Lewis's other works, though the review uses a conceit throughout – referring to the genre as 'electric', the reviewer claims that 'every chapter contains a shock', that 'the reader . . . stares and starts' and compares a bookshelf containing

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<sup>351</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 357.

Lewis's works to 'a galvanic battery'.<sup>352</sup> Macdonald also records that the *Critical Review*, commenting on the performance of *Rugantino*, concentrated on the spectacular masque in the final scene, as did *The Morning Chronicle*, and that although the play's popularity led to several chapbook versions, Lady Harriet Cavendish, after seeing the play, complained that the dialogue was superficial and it relied on spectacle for effect.<sup>353</sup> Macdonald also concludes that there was a disparity between the popular and critical success of the play.<sup>354</sup> However, one review of *Rugantino* which Macdonald does not cite is the brief but favourable one from *The Poetical Register* of 1805, which praises *both* the literary merit and the crowd-pleasing spectacle: 'Mr. Lewis . . . has, however, produced a piece which, *independently of its theatrical effect*, is superior to many compositions of the same kind'.<sup>355</sup>

*The Poetical Register* seems to have been in favour of Lewis in general; the same issue of the journal described *The Venetian Outlaw*, by R.W. Elliston, also based on Zschokke's play, as having only 'slight pretension to literary merit' though its spectacle was 'sufficiently bustling and full of astonishing incidents'. This description recalls that of the *Critical Review* concerning *The Bravo of Venice*. Interestingly, Elliston's play was 'dedicated, by permission, to His Majesty' – that is, George III.<sup>356</sup> The reviews, then, share a focus on Lewis's use of special effects and spectacle but do not consider

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<sup>352</sup> Cited in D.L. Macdonald: *Monk Lewis* 162. Matteo's speech, which is certainly more Jacobinical than anything in *Adelmorn*, is oddly omitted from this review.

<sup>353</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 163-4.

<sup>354</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 164.

<sup>355</sup> *Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1805*:508 (my italics). Not all periodicals agreed with this view, with others claiming that the spectacle was superior to the play's literary merit. Spectacle is discussed in a sub-section beginning on 152; lengthier reviews demonstrating this view are presented in footnote 384 in this section.

<sup>356</sup> *Poetical Register for 1805*. 5. 506. Later editions of this journal would praise *One O' Clock* and *Venoni*, and criticise the Lord Chamberlain for censoring Lewis's poem *Monody on the Death of Sir John Moore*, as explored elsewhere in this thesis. K. Willis Lloyd that Elliston's play was very similar to Lewis's, and that both were preceded by James Powell's *The Venetian Outlaw, His Country's Friend*, which had been translated from a French version of Zschokke's play. See K. Willis Lloyd, 'Introduction', in Matthew G. Lewis, *The Bravo of Venice: A Romance*, ed. K. Willis Lloyd (n.p.: Zittaw, 2008):7-35, 32-3.

the work morally shocking, unlike *Adelmorn*. The paucity of academic attention to these works has led to the over-emphasis on *The Monk* as a deciding factor in Lewis's contemporary reputation.

The little attention that these works have subsequently received has focused on the use of the hero-villain and the literary connections between Lewis's hero(es) and those of the texts' antecedents as well as the significance of disguise and setting. Evans has commented on the influence of Schiller on Lewis's translation: '*Rugantino* is a version of a popular German and French tale of "Abellino", a figure who started a vogue which compared to that of Karl Moor'.<sup>357</sup> There *are* similarities between Karl Moor and Lewis's hero – especially the prose romance's more overtly melancholic Abellino – but to focus too closely on these would be misleading. As Evans notes, 'Schiller's was a social drama. It demanded justice for the oppressed, freedom from any established social order'.<sup>358</sup> Evans does not go on to explore what this assertion rightly implies: that *Rugantino*, like the earlier *Adelmorn*, *the Outlaw*, is a different type of 'social drama'; it might have a Schilleresque hero, but one who is ultimately associated with moral rectitude and the restoration and safeguarding of a social order. This has also been persuasively identified by Macdonald, who has written of the play, its leading character, its source and early critical reception:

The relation between the revolutionary appearance and the reactionary reality of Lewis's melodramas may be illustrated by the only one in which, as in his tragedies, the revolution is crushed: *Rugantino*, which is based on *The Bravo of Venice*, Lewis's translation of the Swiss counter-revolutionary propagandist Zschokke [Macdonald summarises the plot here] The apparently subversive trickster is really a sexually reactionary figure . . . as well as a politically counter-revolutionary one . . . Lewis's melodrama itself, like *Rugantino*, puts on a revolutionary disguise for a counter-revolutionary purpose (and the critics who denounced it were all part of the disguise): *it appropriates for the cause of legitimacy the thrill of the illegitimate*.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Evans, *Gothic Drama* 155.

<sup>358</sup> Evans, *Gothic Drama* 120.

<sup>359</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 185 (my italics).

The final clause in this quotation is a neat summary of Lewis's drama and intentions throughout his writing career. Rugantino appears to have all the shallow but attractive glamour of a rebel but is really a champion of the Republic all along, shoring up the Duke's reign rather than threatening it and the plot mirrors this: seemingly about the machinations of a bravo, it is really concerned with the *foiling* of conspiracies. The reviews of *Rugantino* were more ambivalent than damning, but Macdonald is right when he identifies that Lewis used the thrills of illegitimate theatre to support the 'legitimate' order.<sup>360</sup>

Sage pinpoints the effectiveness of Venice as a Gothic setting for Lewis's novella, and in doing so acknowledges the difference between appearance and reality identified by Macdonald – 'the labyrinth of architecture is added to the exclusiveness and secrecy – the closed system – of the republic . . . *The paradox is of excessive control residing in the same space as extreme lawlessness*' (my italics). Importantly, Sage also points out that Venice's status as an island and its resistance to the Roman Catholic Church allow for comparisons with England, though he does not explore this possibly patriotic aspect of the play.<sup>361</sup> Sage does note Lewis's status as a 'Whig member of parliament', whose political views were 'difficult to determine'.<sup>362</sup> He also identifies the prose version of the story as 'theatrical' and 'stagy' in its use of disguise and revelations as well as in the way that dialogue is presented on the page, often in the style of a script.<sup>363</sup> It shares this theatrical quality (though not the script-like format) with *The Monk*,

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<sup>360</sup> The conservative subversion of Schiller's template of the bravo by Zschokke and Lewis is not the only attribute that this play shares with *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*. Both also feature the hero's love for a woman who is the daughter of a legitimate and just ruler and, as with *Adelmorn*, the effect of this subplot is to reiterate the values of the main plot – as Innogen stresses the importance of mercy, Rosabella demonstrates constancy. Crucially, *Adelmorn*'s is seemingly an outlaw and therefore also an 'illegitimate' character. Like *Venoni; or the Novice of St. Mark's*, this play is a translation of a foreign work with a political bias (the original version of *Venoni* is revolutionary, rather than reactionary, which Lewis reversed in his translation). Both heavily stress private virtue and public, national duty and feature benevolent, paternalistic rulers.

<sup>361</sup> Sage, 'Black Venice' 52-3.

<sup>362</sup> Sage, 'Black Venice' 61.

<sup>363</sup> Sage, 'Black Venice' 60.

along with its use of comical characters, for example, the cowardly bravo Memmo. It is true that Lewis utilises the dramatic paradox of lawlessness and control that Sage identifies Venice as representing – it is always legitimate control, however, which is presented as desirable and threatened.

**‘Dreadful illusion . . . ‘twas none!’: *Rugantino*’s masquerade of disguise**

As is the case with *Adelmorn*, then, the hero of this play appears villainous to other characters. However, dramatic irony provides the audience with reassuring hints that allow us to see through this masquerade of villainy. Typically, Lewis’s counter-revolutionary theme in *Rugantino* includes a warning against the corruption of the nobility. Both the 1805 and 1822 versions of the play open with the bravo Parozzi explaining Rosabella’s rejection of him to the cowardly Memmo:

[W]hen I taxed her with a passion for Flodoardo, did she not insultingly contrast the virtues by which he dignified his obscurity, with the vices by which [she said] my nobility was disgraced?<sup>364</sup>

Lewis thus introduces not only Flodoardo’s nobility but also the sins which have ‘disgraced’ his rival, which include jealousy, wrath, lust, vengefulness and impatience. The corruption of Parozzi’s nobility marks him as a villain, as is the case with Osmond. Flodoardo’s description of having ‘dignified his obscurity’ recalls the comments made about Angela by Percy, when he still believes her a peasant – Lewis presents nobility as an innate quality which is marked by self-control, physical courage and a sense of duty. They are often presented as modest and even grateful – but this should not be confused with the humility of his low-born characters.<sup>365</sup>

The Prince of Milan, in character as *Rugantino*, creates a spectacle of villainy. He wears a striking and disfiguring disguise, featuring weapons,

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<sup>364</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 1; 1. Sc.1. The brackets are Lewis’s: the 1822 version replaces them with a pair of commas.

<sup>365</sup> For example, Flodoardo is described as declining a favour from the Doge ‘with modesty and respect’ in Chapter III of the novella. See Lewis, *The Bravo of Venice* 95.

scars, a beard, ‘thick eye-brows’ and black ‘enormous mustachoes [sic]’.<sup>366</sup> He also speaks in a terrifying ‘voice of thunder’ and is compared to Satan several times, just as Abellino is in the novella.<sup>367</sup> Baron-Wilson, writing of Mr. Johnston’s performance in the role, claimed that he ‘succeeded in looking superlatively ferocious as the dreaded bravo, and was also acknowledged to be irresistible as the “handsome Florentine”’.<sup>368</sup> His hyperbolic disguise, however, does not fool the audience, and crucially, it is not meant to. The audience is forced to associate him with the virtuous Flodoardo from the beginning of the play – Flodoardo’s ‘Apollo-like form’ (which suggests civilised perfection) and Rugantino’s ugliness (suggesting criminality and corruption) are both mentioned in the first scene by Parozzi, causing the audience to associate the two.<sup>369</sup> The description of Flodoardo’s classically masculine appearance is later echoed by Rosabella when she refers to his actions as being as ‘good and glorious as a Demi-God’s!’<sup>370</sup> The novella likewise makes a comparison between Rosalvo and Hercules. As Ian Kelly has shown, demonstrations of masculinity during the early nineteenth century often made reference to classical ideals.<sup>371</sup>

Rosabella first saves Rugantino in Act One Scene Three, just after he has stabbed Parozzi in her defence. After struggling with her conscience, she tells him to ‘Fly!’ to avoid capture, though he has menaced her by saying ‘thou art mine, Rosabella; thou shalt never be another’s’.<sup>372</sup> In Act Two Scene One, the audience is reminded of this event when Rugantino speaks to her in the guise of Flodoardo. She tries to separate herself from him, but again ‘after a moment’s struggle with herself’ she declares her love for Flodoardo using the expression ‘I am thine’, which recalls Rugantino’s

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<sup>366</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 20; 1. Sc.4.

<sup>367</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 16; 1. Sc.3.

<sup>368</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 34.

<sup>369</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 3-4; 1. Sc1.

<sup>370</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 49; 2. Sc.4.

<sup>371</sup> See Ian Kelly, *Beau Brummell: The Ultimate Dandy* (London: Hodder, 2005) 168-9.

<sup>372</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 16-7; 1. Sc.3.

earlier comments to her. The joke is then on the Duke when he enters, sees his daughter with a man he believes to be penniless and remarks ‘Do my eyes deceive me?’<sup>373</sup> It is difficult to believe that, with such repeated foreshadowing, Rosabella could act differently in the final scene, when she intercedes with the Duke on Rugantino’s behalf, prompting him to reveal the extent of his deception and of the conspiracy against Venice. Her actions reiterate the significance of two major themes in Lewis’s works – gratitude and mercy.<sup>374</sup>

The audience is also aware throughout the play that Rugantino and Flodoardo are the same. It is possible to deduce it from the way in which Rugantino deals with the bravoes, which is also when he appears the most menacing. He takes a more overtly moralistic stance than in the novella: not only is his accusation that the bravoes have ‘stooped to *Vice*’ not met with Matteo’s aforementioned argument from the novella, but Rugantino has much more control over the situation.<sup>375</sup> He threatens the bravoes with exposure if his demands for a list of their ‘associates’ are not met, calling them ‘cowards’.<sup>376</sup> Unlike his counterpart in the novel, refusing to drink with them and confronting them with their crimes:

*[Starting from his chair, and looking at them as they kneel].*  
Ho! ho! Look! how low guilt can reduce the proudest! Rise! rise! Rugantino will not deign to drink with you – (*Dashing down the goblet.*) – Farewell!<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 35; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>374</sup> See Lewis, *Rugantino* 51; 2. Sc.4. Rosabella cries ‘Mercy’ as she defends Rugantino, and he again repeats the expression ‘thou art mine’; also used by *The Monk*’s Bleeding Nun and the ‘Wood Daemon, Sangrida, in *One O’ Clock*. It is, therefore, a term which Lewis often allowed his most menacing characters to use, but it is also interesting that all three of these characters correct a transgression of some sort: the Bleeding Nun incidentally punishes the illicitly sexual behaviour of Raymond and Agnes whilst this character’s history also provides a warning against such behaviour; Sangrida facilitates but punishes Hardyknute’s illicit breaking of the social hierarchy and the Prince of Milan becomes a bravo in order to uphold the senate. The term therefore carries a sense of sexual threat but also of triumph.

<sup>375</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 20; 1. Sc.4.

<sup>376</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 21; 1. Sc.4.

<sup>377</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 22; 1. Sc.4.

This serves to set him apart from the gang of braves in the mind of the audience. Rugantino is commanding and determined throughout this scene and his behaviour in the above quotation appears to be that of disgust at his company. He is then, presented as an admirable example of masculinity – resolute, strong-willed and also cautious when necessary. Again, there is an ironic joke in this scene when the bravo Falieri remarks ‘yet, if he’s honest, he’ll be a powerful ally’.<sup>378</sup>

It is in the final scene of Act I that the Prince, as Rugantino, not only presents the Duke and the audience with more clues to his innocence but also behaviour befitting a pantomime villain. The Duke, musing on news of Rugantino’s exploits, is forced to admit that his apparent adversary is an admirable one:

Yet after all it must be owned, this Rugantino is a singular character! The man, who can do what *he* has done, must possess such talents and such courage, as at the head of an army would enable him to conquer half the world!<sup>379</sup>

Rugantino is both talented and courageous – and grasps the Duke’s shoulder just as the older man expresses a wish to meet him. After the Duke asks ‘who art thou?’ Rugantino offers so many hints at his true identity that this section of the scene could easily be played in a comic, rather than melodramatic fashion:

Thou see’st me, and can’st doubt? Well, then, I am the Bravo Rugantino! Foscari’s murderer. . . . and the Republic’s most devoted slave.<sup>380</sup>

He is not, of course, Foscari’s murderer. He proceeds to announce that he and the Duke are ‘the two greatest men in Venice’.<sup>381</sup> His presentation of himself as a ‘devoted slave’ is an interesting one in light of Lewis’s other work and his life. It suggests an allegiance to the society’s structure which is

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<sup>378</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 23; 1. Sc.4.

<sup>379</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 27; 1. Sc.6.

<sup>380</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 28; 1. Sc.6.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

unquestioning and continues the theme in Lewis's work of sacrificing personal desires for the greater social good, though in the form of double irony.

If these details are not enough to ensure that the audience is in on the joke, the opening scene of Act Two confirms that Rugantino and Flodoardo are the same. The act opens with Rosabella exclaiming excitedly that 'Flodoardo' has returned, followed by the entrance of Rugantino, 'clad in glittering armour . . . every trace of deformity is gone'. He speaks an aside to the audience, too, 'how would the roses of thy cheek grow pale, knew'st thou, that the man now approaching is the dreaded Rugantino !'<sup>382</sup>

It is therefore no revelation to the audience, as it is to Rosabella and Andreas, that the two men are the same. There is, though, a final twist – Rugantino and Flodoardo are *both* aliases of the Prince of Milan. A hint at this is discernable, however. The senators Lomelino and Manfrone, whose deaths are announced at the end of Act One, but who are revealed as living during the denouement, are seen having a secret conversation as early as the opening of Act One Scene Two:

*Man.* Enough, Lomelino, the Prince of Milan may depend on my services.

*Lom.* His plans are daring and romantic, it's true; but still. . .

*Man.* Hush! The Duke.<sup>383</sup>

An astute member of the audience could realise that the 'romantic' plan is that of Rugantino. Even without this link between the character's aliases being made, the reference to the Prince provides another example of trust in a paternalistic ruler.

The tripartite hero of this play, then, is renowned as 'daring' and 'courageous'; is evidently cautious, quick-thinking, chivalrous, 'devoted' to the senate; disgusted by cowardice, plots of rebellion and inconstancy. The play's extravagant use of disguises and not-so-hidden plots presents a

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<sup>382</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 33-4; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>383</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 12; 1. Sc.2.

comforting spectacle of thwarted rebellion, virtuous masculinity and a state preserved.

### ***Rugantino* and spectacle**

Though *Rugantino* is comparable to *Venoni*, *Adelmorn* and to an extent *Percy*, it should be noted that he is also allied with *Evelina* through his function as an agent of restoration and his association with spectacle. Spectacle is the aspect of the play most commented on by critics, both in Lewis's time and now.<sup>384</sup> All of Lewis's Gothic works make some use of spectacle in this way (even the distraught behaviour of *Venoni* can be considered a form of spectacle), but the amount of attention paid to this spectacle by earlier critics is worthy of note. Indeed, it seems that the novella's potential for spectacle was the reason for Lewis adapting it for the stage. Although Peck comments of *Rugantino* that 'the properties manager and machinist deserve[d] praise if they kept pace with Lewis' florid fancy'; Baron-Wilson claims that *The Bravo of Venice*, having been read by the manager of the theatre at Covent Garden, Harris, 'it struck him that the

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<sup>384</sup> The *Universal Magazine* for October 1805 was dismissive of the play but admired the spectacle:

The dialogue throughout teems with *ennui* and heaviness. The scenery, however, it must be allowed, is beautiful, in no ordinary degree . . . the mechanist has contrived to exhibit no small portion of his skill, in the representation of the masque. (*Universal Magazine* [online]. 4:23. Available from: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:bp:&rft\\_dat=xri:bp:article:e875-1805-004-23-001720](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e875-1805-004-23-001720) , October 1805:349-50. [Accessed 01/09/2011]).

The *Quarterly List of New Publications* for the following January was even more impressed by this:

The splendour of this part of the entertainment is beyond description. On the scenery, dresses, &c. immense sums must have been bestowed [. . .] In its present form it has met with much success; but this is certainly to be attributed less to any literary merit that it possesses, than to the splendid dresses and decorations, beautiful scenery, and pleasing music. As a *spectacle*, indeed, the town has scarcely ever been presented with any thing more costly and splendid. (*Quarterly List of New Publications* [online]. 7:14. Available from: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:bp:&rft\\_dat=xri:bp:article:e938-1806-007-14-04263B](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e938-1806-007-14-04263B), January 1806:11-12 [Accessed 01/09/2011].).

incidents were such as might be introduced with good effect upon the stage. Accordingly, at his suggestion, Lewis threw them into dramatic form'.<sup>385</sup> Baron-Wilson claims that 'Harris spared no expense in splendid scenery and decorations'.<sup>386</sup>

Lewis uses spectacle as a vehicle which affirms the restoration of order in his plays. This is the case with *Rugantino*, in which the revelation of the hero's true identity as a prince is accompanied by the actor 'Throwing off his Bravo's habit, and appearing splendidly dressed with several orders'.<sup>387</sup> He takes part in a final masque with Rosabella. Earlier in this scene, she arrives as part of a procession:

*Last a machine representing a rock of red coral floating on a silver sea, whose waves are in motion. On the summit of the rock is a brilliant conch-shell, in which sits Rosabella. Artificial Zephyrs hang over her, some seeming to fan her with their wings, others with their breath to impel the rock forwards, which is drawn by enormous Dolphins, spouting up water; while on the head of each stands a little Cupid, holding golden reins, with which he appears to guide the animal . . . The conch sinks gently, till it touches the earth, when Rosabella quits the machine.*<sup>388</sup>

This is accompanied by music, which stops dramatically when muskets sound and *Rugantino* enters, disguised as Flodoardo. At the end of the scene, when order has been restored, he joins Rosabella and the procession can continue:

*[The Prince and Rosabella enter the conch, which ascends to its former elevation; the machine moves on in triumph, and as it passes along the front of the stage, the curtain falls.]*<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 92; Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 33.

<sup>386</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 34.

<sup>387</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 54; 2. Sc.4.

<sup>388</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 46; 2. Sc.4.

<sup>389</sup> Lewis, *Rugantino* 55; 2. Sc.4. The 1822 version of the play does not have a procession interrupted by *Rugantino*, but introduces the conch at the very end. However, the description of the shell and its movement is exactly the same in both versions, with only the style of punctuation differing. The spectacle is greater in the earlier version because the audience experiences it twice in the same scene. The elaborate nature of the conch and this masque also recalls the procession which introduces Virginia de Villa-Franca to *The Monk*.

The final tableau is clearly symbolic of the high social (and moral) status of Rosabella and the Prince. The raising of the conch suggests the restoration of such status after the threat to the Duke and the Prince's use of disguise. The Duke, Manfrone and Lomellino are observers, making it almost a play within a play. The detail and extravagance of the entire spectacle recalls the procession of the convent in *The Monk* and must have been costly to stage. Rosabella is also part of a procession at the end of the first scene, signifying her association with order. The following chapter, which focuses on two of Lewis's most dramatically spectacular works, will consider the significance of stage spectacle in greater depth.

**‘Summon your fortitude’:**

***Venoni* and the need for rationality.**

(9,289 words)



It is paradoxical that, although Matthew Lewis translated *Venoni, or, the Novice of St. Mark's* (first performed December 1808, published 1809) from Jacques Boutet de Monvel's work of the French Revolution, *Les Victimes Cloîtrées* (1791), the play has not been subject to the accusations of democratic sympathies that have shaped Lewis's reputation up till now. Monvel's play has the hero and heroine imprisoned by nuns and monks on the orders of a corrupt aristocrat. They are rescued by a Republican mayor, wielding a tricolor flag.<sup>390</sup> Lewis revises this character, creating instead Viceroy Benvolio, discussed below. Though the influence of the French Revolution can be seen in Lewis's version, there is little which can be considered liberal, and Lewis even dedicated the published version of 1809 to the Duke of York. This act is certainly not that of a man who has produced a work intended, or perceived, to be liberal or democratic. Lewis's dedication, which mentions his 'respect for [the Duke's] many virtues, and gratitude for many favours' continues the effort to promote gratitude and respect for social superiors which was so important to him throughout his life.<sup>391</sup>

One of the most damning reviews of the printed version of the play was that of the *Monthly Panorama* for 1810, which opens with an extensive quotation from Lewis's preface, proclaiming his intention to retire from writing plays as 'the act of composing [had] ceased to amuse' him.<sup>392</sup> The reviewer likened this to the 'peevish, petulant complaining of a petted little girl', called it 'a trap to catch the lamentations of *monk-loving* misses' and accused Lewis of wanting to be 'courted' to produce further works.<sup>393</sup> Lewis was playing the martyr, and wished to have his vanity flattered through a protest against his retirement. The reviewer's attack, like many on Lewis, is

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<sup>390</sup> Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* new ed. (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1995) 50.

<sup>391</sup> M.G. Lewis, *Venoni, or the Novice of St. Mark's. A drama, in three acts* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1809. Repr.; British Library, 2010) iii. This is the version referred to unless otherwise stated.

<sup>392</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* vi.

<sup>393</sup> *Monthly Panorama*, February 1810:125-7, 126.

personal and invokes *The Monk* as a source of derision, over a decade after its publication. Even so, the reviewer may have been at least partially right: Lewis's retirement was extremely short. His play *Temper* was produced by the Drury Lane Company in 1809.

Lewis's version of the play opens with the servants of Count Benvolio, Viceroy of Sicily, eagerly awaiting his return. The audience discovers that Benvolio's niece, Josepha, has supposedly died in a convent. Her mother, the Marchioness Caprara, was persuaded to place her in this convent by the monk Father Coelestino. The servants and Benvolio disapprove of the latter. Venoni, who is in love with Josepha, interrupts a meeting between Benvolio, the marchioness, her husband and Coelestino. Venoni is 'pale, wild and haggard' with grief and announces his intention to join Coelestino's monastery.<sup>394</sup> Benvolio, a conservative patrician who replaces the Republican mayor of Monvel's original version, is unimpressed by this and, over the course of the play, presses Venoni to change his mind by reiterating the younger man's duty to his country. His advice is in conflict with Coelestino's, who has designs on Venoni's wealth. It transpires that Josepha's death has been a hoax and that she has been imprisoned in the convent as a result of rejecting Coelestino's sexual advances. Eventually, the plot is discovered, the lovers are reunited and Coelestino punished. This formulaic plot was used as a vehicle for a serious political argument: Lewis subverts Monvel's play through the use of Benvolio as a paragon of conservative paternalism, as well as through the altered presentation of corruption. Here, it is not a villain who corrupts the nobility through abusing power but Venoni, who is in danger of appearing corrupt through his lack of self-control and reluctance to accept social responsibilities.

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<sup>394</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 21; 1. Sc.2.

### **Lost in ‘translation’: the negation of Monvel’s revolutionary sympathies in *Venoni***

Because Lewis’s source, *Les Victimes Cloîtrées*, is heavily concerned with the French Revolution, and such a link leaves Lewis open to accusations of democracy, the possibilities of this should be considered. As mentioned above, Monvel’s villains include a corrupt aristocrat and the heroes a republican mayor. Such overt political symbolism would have to have been toned down for a British audience, although perhaps the anti-Catholic sentiment would have been less subject to censorship. Lewis retains a villainous monk, but there are no corrupt aristocrats. Lewis’s crucial alteration was to replace the character of the mayor with that of Count Benvolio, the Viceroy of Sicily. The anonymous writer of the introduction to Cumberland’s undated edition of the play colloquially describes this change as replacing a ‘slang-whanger of patriotism . . . moved by the devil’ with a character in the mould of ‘good old English taste’.<sup>395</sup> The Viceroy is an idealised noble, a patrician figure embodying the values of aristocratic masculine duty in Lewis’s late-Georgian, British world (rather than one in the midst of revolution). As D.L. Macdonald rightly observes, the ‘repeated references to English or British taste suggest that Lewis’s personal reticence was well adapted to the political climate of the Napoleonic wars’.<sup>396</sup> Benvolio’s views concerning national duty would certainly be more to the taste of a war-time audience than Monvel’s stress on revolution and liberation.

This suggests that Lewis was so successful as a commercial playwright partly because he was able to respond to emergent trends in public taste. I would argue that Lewis goes further than this, that his ‘personal reticence’ was also the result of his own experience of patrician responsibility. Lewis’s act of ‘translation’ lies in his knowledge of the society that made up his

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<sup>395</sup> See M.G. Lewis, *Venoni; or, the Novice of St. Mark’s. A Drama, in Three Acts. Printed From the Acting Copy, with Remarks, Biographical and Critical, by D. - G.* (London: John Cumberland, no d.) 5. Though the colloquial term ‘slang-whanger’ is un glossed, its derogatory meaning is evident from the tone of this preface.

<sup>396</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 26.

audience. The incarceration of the lovers in cells beneath the monastery and the neighbouring convent, followed by their liberation, does recall the fall of the Bastille. However, the Viceroy's advice to Venoni about his duty to his country and the use of his wealth is not egalitarian but is in line with the theme of patrician responsibility which we have seen developing in Lewis's work and, crucially, Venoni has to prove his heroic status by foiling Coelestino's plot.<sup>397</sup>

It is true that Venoni demonstrates the sort of desperate, lovelorn grief and the broken speech and hyperbolic body language common in illegitimate theatre. This would have made him an attractively fashionable character in 1809, when the large size of the patent theatres, which distanced much of the audience from the stage and the licensing laws restricting the performance of legitimate, spoken drama had necessitated an acting style which relied on easily recognisable body language.<sup>398</sup> However, Lewis undercuts Venoni's attractiveness (if not his dramatic interest) by making this excessive grief the locus of Coelestino's threat to Venoni and therefore order. The Viceroy's advocacy of reason throws this threatened state into relief. The Viceroy can therefore be considered the most heroic of the characters. Lewis uses the contrast between the acting styles associated with legitimate and illegitimate theatre to draw out the contrast between the reasoned Viceroy and the danger created by Venoni's overly-emotional state.<sup>399</sup>

The play was at first derided in performance, as the staging of the imprisoned Venoni and Josepha in adjoining cells made their misery at

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<sup>397</sup> That Lewis believed that the finances of the wealthy should be used for the national good is evidenced by his vote in favour of Pitt's taxes, as discussed on 120.

<sup>398</sup> Lewis's other plays also utilised aspects of illegitimate drama. However, it is most relevant to a discussion of *Venoni* due to the contrast between the eponymous character, who is presented using the semiotics of illegitimate theatre, and the Viceroy. It is this contrast which most strongly presents Lewis's social message.

<sup>399</sup> In keeping with the tension between the legitimate and the illegitimate, the props of lamp and dagger referenced often in this play are also symbols of legitimate tragedy. The influence of legitimate drama can also be seen in the echo of Shakespearean texts within *Venoni*, a factor it shares with both *The Monk* and *The Castle Spectre*. This echo is partly of *Hamlet*, with the tenuous mental states of Josepha and Venoni resembling those of Ophelia and Hamlet, in particular the indecision of the latter concerning his duty.

separation laughable for the audience. After the third performance, when the audience's 'disapprobation became so loud and so general, that the wall [between the characters] and the drop-curtain came down together' Lewis rewrote the final act in a single night, taking into account the restrictions of setting already in existence at the theatre.<sup>400</sup> This action reveals him to be a pragmatic writer who recognised the importance of giving the audience and critics what they wanted. The revised version of the play then ran for eighteen nights, only ending when the theatre burnt down.

The most persuasive argument for *Venoni* being considered liberal or democratic concerns its ending. The version dedicated to the Duke of York, published by Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme in 1809, contains both the ending derided by the audience and the hastily rewritten version. Lewis's explanation for including the original third act was couched in terms of conventional modesty: 'partiality for my own production does not prevent my thinking the original design infinitely the best of the two'. He points out that this version is 'evidently not so well adapted to the English taste' as the second, though why this should be (other than the problems in staging) is unclear.<sup>401</sup> Both versions end with a speech from Venoni, which is in response to one made by the character of Father Michael. Father Michael denies that vice lurks in every convent, saying that "'tis not the *habit* but the *heart*' which is the cause of corruption. Venoni agrees, making the plea 'let us scorn to bow beneath the force of vulgar prejudice, and fold to our hearts as brethren in one large embrace men of all ranks, all faiths, all professions'. He then concludes the speech and the play with the moral instruction 'BE TOLERANT'.<sup>402</sup> This speech was omitted from the undated version published by John Cumberland, which claims to be the version acted at the 'Theatres Royal'. The final speech printed in the Cumberland edition is that of Father Michael. It is likely that the original ending was, at some point, considered too politically subversive to be presented on the stage, as its

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<sup>400</sup> Baron-Wilson *Life and Correspondence* 2: 57.

<sup>401</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 87.

<sup>402</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 86; 3. Sc.3. See also M.G. Lewis, *Venoni* (Cumberland).

reference to a ‘brethren’ encompassing all social ranks appears egalitarian. Lewis clearly did not, however, believe that it was too subversive to be dedicated to the Duke of York. Even so, it is unusual in the context of the majority of Lewis’s work, including much of *Venoni*, where characters from various ranks of life are presented sympathetically but without their rank being questioned. It has more in common with the sentiment of Monvel’s pro-revolutionary original, in which it does not appear.

### Contemporary reviews

Contemporary reviews of *Venoni* were generally critical and somewhat patronising, but, surprisingly, given the nature of Monvel’s drama, they do not often consider the play as being overtly political. *The Poetical Register* for 1809 claimed that the play ‘excites an interest so strong as to be painful’ and that its dialogue ‘is sometimes turgid’. However, it also grudgingly conceded that ‘on the whole, it is well written’ and that ‘Mr Lewis has very skilfully adapted the original drama for the English stage’.<sup>403</sup>

*The Monthly Panorama*, which had sneered at the notion of Lewis retiring, praised his tragedies but was scornful of *Venoni*: ‘the loss of the author of Alphonso [sic], and of Adalgitha, we might regret, but we could very well spare the author of Venoni’. Although the reviewer overtly pins criticism on the implausibility of the play’s action, the comment that ‘. . . Mr Lewis can do no better than translate such wretched things as “*Les Victimes Cloîtrées*” so wretchedly as this’ may indicate a nationalistic, political objection to Lewis’s source material. This is bolstered by the reviewer’s opinion concerning the cause of the action’s implausibility: ‘whatever the case may be in Italy [such events] are not common enough in Ireland to excite any general commiseration’.<sup>404</sup> What the writer does not notice are the thematic

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<sup>403</sup> *Poetical Register, and repository of fugitive poetry, for 1809*: 617.

<sup>404</sup> The reviewer continues to criticise Lewis for the genre that he worked within: the review ends with an analogy between a poor play and ‘muddy’ alcohol, allowing the writer to pun that it ‘must be thrown away at once, without any of the hasty refining of such spirit manufacturers as M.G. Lewis, Esq’. *Monthly Panorama*, February 1810: 125-7.

similarities between *Alfonso, King of Castile*, which he approves of, and both *The Monk* and *Venoni*, which he does not: both plays focus on the need to sacrifice personal desires for the good of the country and *Alfonso*, like *The Monk*, explores the importance of gratitude, mercy and forgiveness in both public and private relationships.

### **Masculinity and responsibility in *Venoni***

Through Lewis's choice of Monvel's play as source material and his subsequent alterations for British taste, *Venoni* reveals the interest in and withdrawal from social and political issues which Ian Haywood identifies as a defining aspect of Romantic writing.<sup>405</sup> *Venoni* looks critically at power structures, showing corruption to be the failure of an individual to accept their roles and responsibilities within society, either through avoidance or the abuse of power. However, the closing remarks of *Venoni* in the 1809 version serve to lessen the effectiveness of this, through their egalitarian connotations, which are uncharacteristic of Lewis. The play remains ostensibly distanced from real events by not being set within a specified era and by Lewis's removal of the action to Sicily from Monvel's revolutionary France. The play focuses on the themes of public duty and self-control.

There are several reasons, both public and private, why Lewis would return to dramatising these themes in 1808. Firstly, the transatlantic slave trade had been abolished in Britain in 1807, surely reinforcing Lewis's awareness that those slaves currently belonging to his father would need to be managed carefully to ensure the family livelihood. Secondly, Lewis remained estranged from his father, ensuring that matters of paternal duty were still to the fore of his mind. Thirdly, the Lewis family had been personally affected by the consequences of a paternal figure failing in their responsibilities, in the form of the Whitelocke trial. These events cannot but have made Lewis even more aware of the fragile nature of his future livelihood and the material benefit of peaceful familial and public relationships.

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<sup>405</sup> Haywood, *Bloody Romanticism 2*. See also 18, above.

Macdonald deals with slavery in relation to Lewis in impressive depth, but curiously ignores another incident indicating the Lewis family's approach to power, as does Louis F. Peck. Lewis's paternal aunt was married to Lieutenant-General Whitelocke, who was involved in a military disaster in Buenos Ayres on July 5<sup>th</sup> 1807 in which fifty men from the 6<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards and the 9<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons died. Whitelocke was tried by court-martial and cashiered in 1808. Margaret Baron-Wilson records the judge's opening remarks (though not citing her source, despite the quotation marks that suggest a verbatim account) as including an account of the nature of the military event, which was 'the reduction of the province of Buenos Ayres'.<sup>406</sup> She also repeats the extent of the failure, which is distinctly nationalistic in tone:

By this most unfortunate event, all the hopes have been defeated which had been justly and generally entertained of discovering new markets for our manufactures . . . in supplying either the rude wants of countries emerging from barbarism, or the artificial and increasing demands of luxury and refinement in those corners of the globe . . . The disappointment, too, has been cruelly embittered by the disgrace which such a failure, under all the circumstances, have attached to the British arms. A diminution of our military fame must ever be felt as a great national calamity; but at no period so severely as in this crisis of the word, when our military character is become more essential than ever, not merely for our honour and glory, but for the independence, the liberties, the existence of Great Britain.<sup>407</sup>

The speech hints at the war with France in its recognition that the reputation of the army needed to be upheld for reasons other than 'honour and glory'. It also hints at the end of the slave trade in the commercial awareness of foreign markets. Lewis demonstrated an interest in the trial: Baron-Wilson

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<sup>406</sup> Baron-Wilson *Life and Correspondence* 2: 19. Whitelocke was part of an invasion of Buenos Aires intended to reduce the Spanish power there, which was motivated by Spain's allegiance with France. John D. Grainger, in his entry for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, claims that Whitelocke was not as culpable as the result of his trial would suggest, but that as the government had changed since he received his orders, he was made an example of to highlight the failures of the previous administration. See Grainger, John D. *Whitelocke, John (1757-1833), Army Officer* [online]. Available from: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/29300>, 2008. [Accessed 31/08/2011].

<sup>407</sup> Baron-Wilson *Life and Correspondence* 2: 20-21.

claims that Lord Erskine wrote the defence for Whitelocke at Lewis's 'earnest request'.<sup>408</sup>

There are in fact at least four accounts of the trial, one of which was published in Ireland and one which appears to be a chapbook version, suggesting that it generated a sizeable amount of interest.<sup>409</sup> Of these, Baron-Wilson's source is likely to be either that written by a Mr. Gurney, or *Trial of Lieutenant General John Whitelocke, Commander in Chief of the Expedition Against Buenos Ayres*. The latter, by an anonymous 'Student of the Inner Temple', records that the trial was held on Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1808, just over ten months prior to the opening night of *Venoni*. It recounts the four charges against Whitelocke, the content and wording of which are similar in tone to parts of *Venoni*. The first charge against Whitelocke claims that he responded to the Spanish Commander's request to discuss terms with him in a manner which was draconian and counter-productive:

[H]e demanded, amongst other articles, the surrender of persons holding civil offices in the government of Buenos Ayres, as prisoners of war. That the said Lieutenant-general Whitelocke in making such an offensive and unusual demand, tending to exasperate the inhabitants of Buenos Ayres, to produce and encourage a spirit of resistance to his Majesty's arms, to exclude the hope of amicable accommodation, and to increase the difficulties of the service with which he was entrusted, acted in a manner unbecoming his duty as an officer, prejudicial to military discipline, and contrary to the articles of war.

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<sup>408</sup> Baron-Wilson *Life and Correspondence* 2: 24.

<sup>409</sup> These are: 'A Student of the Middle Temple', *Trial of lieutenant general John Whitelocke, Commander in Chief of the Expedition against Buenos Ayres*. (London: Samuel Tipper, 1808); *The Proceedings of a General Court-Martial, Held at Chelsea Hospital, on Thursday, January 28, 1808, and continued, by Adjournment, till Tuesday, March 15, for the Trial of Lieut. Gen. Whitelocke, Late Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in South America. Taken in short-hand by Mr. Gurney. With the Defence, copied from the Original, by permission of General Whitelocke; and all the documents produced on the trial*. 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1808); *Buenos Ayres. The Trial of Lieut. Gen. Whitelocke, before a Court-Martial, composed of General Officers, held in the Dinner-Hall of Chelsea College, on Thursday, January 21, and succeeding Days. Reported at length by an Eminent English Barrister*. (Dublin: N. Mahon, 1808); *Trial of General Whitelocke, Commander-in-Chief of the late expedition against Buenos Ayres. By Court Martial, at Chelsea College, on Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 1808, and succeeding days. As also The Sentence, As delivered in general orders from the Horse Guards. March 24, 1808*. (London: Cradock and Joy, n. d.) (This final account is a chapbook version).

In the irritation of the inhabitants, there are echoes of Lewis's experiences in Weimar fifteen years previously, and the trial must have reinforced the lessons Lewis learnt in his youth about resentment, violence, and the necessity of order. The focus on acting in a manner befitting can be compared to the advice the Viceroy gives Venoni. The second charge against Whitelocke was that he 'unnecessarily exposed [his troops] to destruction'. The third charge again criticises Whitelocke's efficacy as a leader:

[Whitelocke] did not make, although it was in his power, any effectual attempt . . . to co-operate with or support the different divisions of the army under his command, when engaged with the enemy in the streets of Buenos Ayres on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, 1807. . . tending to the defeat and dishonour of his Majesty's arms, to lessen the confidence of the troops in the skill and courage of their officers.<sup>410</sup>

Again, the problem identified here is the responsibility that those with power have over their subordinates – and the crisis that can ensue if this is badly managed. The trial must have been a great embarrassment for the Lewis family. Whitelocke denied any personal wrongdoing and, according to Baron-Wilson, 'reduced the case to one solely important to him as affecting his honour, rather than his military conduct'.<sup>411</sup>

Also of interest is the fact that both Gurney's account of the trial and that by the anonymous student reveal that Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore was a particularly active member of the court: he interjected several times to make a claim concerning the relevance of evidence. He was a friend of the Lewis family but his participation in the trial seems even-handed. After his death

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<sup>410</sup> 'A Student of the Middle Temple', *Trial of lieutenant general John Whitelocke, Commander in Chief of the Expedition against Buenos Ayres* (London: Samuel Tipper, 1808) 1-2. The title page of this work advertises the scandal and unusual nature of the case by quoting the judge's comment that this was the 'first trial by Court Martial, instituted to investigate into the conduct of a General Officer, having the command of an Expedition against a foreign province.'

<sup>411</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2:25.

the following year, Lewis wrote a monody for him, possibly as an act of gratitude for his conduct during the trial.<sup>412</sup>

Baron-Wilson reprints two letters to Whitelocke from a B. Spencer, who had earlier served under him in St. Domingue. The first letter is dated December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1807 and expresses Spencer's regard for Whitelocke in language similar to that of Lewis's grateful servants. Spencer claimed to be grieved that Whitelocke should need his testimony, but willingly supplies it because 'it is a thing that you [Whitelocke] conceive expedient and proper', going on to have 'great satisfaction' in claiming that he 'always admired' Whitelocke as showing 'decision, judgement, and proper firm conduct in the field'.<sup>413</sup> He mentions an earlier letter in which he and other officers thanked him for his leadership. Baron-Wilson also includes this, dated from Port au Prince on June 8<sup>th</sup> 1794, in which the troops 'entertain the hope, that your active and zealous services [. . .] will meet with the reward they merit, and we are convinced will be honoured with his majesty's approbation'.<sup>414</sup>

Though Lewis's family were no strangers to the sort of responsibility that can be considered patrician and his experiences in France and Germany had made him aware of foreign violence, this trial must have had an effect on him: Whitelocke's situation was the first time a member of his family had been publicly called to account for a failure which was considered to have consequences for the nation. The stress on national duty which marks both the prosecution and the defence is also an important feature of *Venoni*. Crucially, the letters from Spencer would have also provided Lewis with a real example of grateful, loyal employees attempting to support a besieged leader. Spencer's attempt was ultimately unsuccessful, as were Lewis's own experiences with William Kelly, and, to an extent, his plantation reforms.

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<sup>412</sup> This monody is discussed at the end of this section.

<sup>413</sup> Cited in Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 28.

<sup>414</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 28-9.

*Venoni*'s focus on duty and self-control develops ideas raised in *The Monk*.<sup>415</sup> As is the case in *The Monk*, the villains are identifiable by the way in which they refuse to show mercy and compassion to others: though Josepha begs 'have mercy on my agony', of a nun acting on Veronica's orders, she is ignored and left alone.<sup>416</sup> Josepha's mother also pleads with Venoni to 'have mercy' when he demands to know why his marriage to Josepha was delayed.<sup>417</sup> She likewise forgives and pardons Venoni.<sup>418</sup> When, at the end of the play, he upbraids Veronica without punishing her, he reveals the return of both his moral sense and compassion:

[S]hrink not at my approach . . . dread no reproaches from me! I shall still respect that sacred habit, though you have felt for it so little reverence; I shall still remember your sex, though you seem yourself to have forgotten it.<sup>419</sup>

Venoni's response to Veronica not only allows him to maintain the moral high ground but also enables him to begin to restore peace and order as the play nears its conclusion; something that would not be possible had he demanded a harsh punishment for her.<sup>420</sup> He thus avoids the type of mistake made by *Adelmorn*'s Sigismond, who vows *never* to pardon murderers and consequently creates further problems for himself. Venoni reveals that mercy has benefits for both parties: something that Lewis could not help but be aware of as the heir to two slave plantations. The transatlantic slave trade had been abolished in Britain in 1807; the year before *Venoni* was staged, leaving the Lewis family with the problem of maintaining its plantation with

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<sup>415</sup> Its links to the plot of the novel lie principally in the incarceration of Josepha in a cell underneath the convent. She is the prisoner of an abbess, like Agnes, though in Josepha's case this is partially the result of Veronica's fear of Coelestino, rather than the result of vanity, which is the cause of *The Monk*'s abbess's desire to impress Ambrosio with her strictness.

<sup>416</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 75; 3. Sc.2.

<sup>417</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 25; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>418</sup> '[M]y beloved son! - I pardon you! - Heaven knows, I pardon you! - And oh! in return may Heaven and you pardon me!' Lewis, *Venoni* 28; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>419</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 83; 3. Sc.3.

<sup>420</sup> Josepha reveals similar values, telling Veronica that she 'will find mercy'. Lewis, *Venoni* 85; 3. Sc.3.

a now limited supply of labour. Keeping the slaves healthy and placated would now be more important than ever to ensure their longevity and acquiescence. The knowledge that healthier workers are more effective ones (as well as the importance of taking care of troops) was not new to the Lewis family: in his position of Deputy Secretary at War, Lewis's father had, in 1793, written a letter requesting that Irish recruits should be provided with 'good soldiers to nurse them' and that as the 'habits of cleanliness and feeding [are] more essential, than the knowledge of marching and drill' they should be taught these by monks, as otherwise they 'are a Burthen not a benefit on actual service'.<sup>421</sup>

An important example of Lewis demonstrating an awareness of his own perceived social responsibilities can be found in his relationship with the Gothic novelist Mrs. Isabella Kelly and her son William, to whom he gave considerable financial aid over several years. Lewis's financing of his mother had ensured that he already understood the importance of both action and discretion when maintaining domestic peace: he provided a similar service to Mrs Kelly when, in 1802, he attempted to obtain the half-pay which her father, after leaving the marines, had left unclaimed.<sup>422</sup>

Lewis's tone remained businesslike when he made her aware of the money's unavailability and later, when making his offer of assistance:

Your disappointment must have been severe; and I have been turning in my mind how I can possibly serve you. It appears to me that, as you have two young boys, to educate one of them, to become an useful and honourable member of society, will best benefit you; I will therefore do so; and, hereafter, I may have interest enough to place him in the War Office.

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<sup>421</sup> Letter from Matthew Lewis (senior), 15<sup>th</sup> May 1793. National Archives. HO42 25. The emphasis is Lewis senior's.

<sup>422</sup> It is clear from Lewis's letter that Mrs Kelly had approached him for help. Only Lewis's response survives, but Peck has conjectured that she turned to him due to his 'influence at the War Office' (Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 63). If she did appeal to him for this reason, it would certainly have appealed to his sense of responsibility and his inability to obtain her father's money on her behalf would have compounded this.

I beg you to spare all thanks. When a person of your feelings and character accepts a kindness, you confer, not receive an obligation.<sup>423</sup>

As later analysis of the character of the Viceroy will support, Lewis's pragmatic generosity seems to have been at least partly motivated by an almost nationalistic desire to form 'useful citizens'. It is a character trait shared with *Venoni's* Benvolio and one which is often skipped over in favour of the controversy created by his works; however, his contemporaries were aware of it. In 'Barnaby Sketchwell's *London Characters*, Lewis's fame is evident in the fact that a chapter in this work focuses solely on him: much of the chapter focuses on *The Castle Spectre* and his financing of Mrs. Kelly. The barbed tone suggests that Lewis was as mocked for this as he was for his snobbery:

His private character is truly amiable; and as free from blame as erring mortality is capable of being. Indeed, instances have occurred, which serve to shew that his virtue, according to the morals adapted in this age, is as romantic as his ideas, though not so visionary. . .<sup>424</sup>

Lewis did eventually obtain employment for William Kelly at the War Office: however, as Peck points out, his 'continued patronage of this youth must establish an endurance record for human patience'.<sup>425</sup> Kelly repeatedly used Lewis's name to obtain financial credit, drank too much and was imprisoned more than once. He eventually left the job Lewis had obtained for him after a disagreement with his superiors. Lewis described Kelly's actions as the result of 'monstrous ingratitude'.<sup>426</sup> To Lewis, whose views on social order focus on maintaining the balance between kindness and the resultant chains of gratitude, this would be a strong but accurate accusation, as Kelly's behaviour would seem unnatural. Macdonald rightly asserts that Lewis's tone is that of a 'disappointed patron'.<sup>427</sup> Despite this ingratitude,

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<sup>423</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 273-4.

<sup>424</sup> 'Sir Barnaby Sketchwell', *London Characters* 2: 79-88, 83-4.

<sup>425</sup> Louis F. Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 64.

<sup>426</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2:102.

<sup>427</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 62.

Lewis did not truly end his patronage: after officially cutting him off, he increased the money he paid to his own mother and she then supported Kelly, ensuring that ‘Lewis satisfied both his indignation and his generosity’.<sup>428</sup> The determination to help others twinned with a sense of moral superiority is the defining feature of heroic characters in Lewis’s work and horror and threat arise from a lack of such compassion. Indeed, when Sophia Shedden identified mercy as a quality ‘exemplified’ by her brother in his behaviour towards William Kelly, and explored in *The Monk*, she not only proved herself to be Lewis’s most astute literary critic but also the first person to identify connections between his life and works.<sup>429</sup>

Though Lewis had to temporarily suspend his financing of Kelly’s education due to his own financial situation (in 1805), he resumed his patronage as soon as he could.<sup>430</sup> Such behaviour indicates that Lewis took his responsibilities very seriously. His behaviour towards the Kellys, like his concern for his family and the presentation of the Viceroy, foreshadows his treatment of his slaves, though within a domestic context.

### **Venoni’s culpability**

The movement of Venoni recalls the acting style of Edmund Kean, who eventually played this role in 1819 and who was, as Jane Moody writes, accomplished in ‘illegitimate’ acting: ‘Kean had perfected those hyperbolic gestural codes, expressive signs and muscular postures which characterised illegitimate performance’.<sup>431</sup> *Venoni* was first performed slightly prior to the height of Kean’s stage success: however, Venoni’s personality, prioritising private emotion over public duty, can also be read as a threat to the ‘political and cultural state’ that the Viceroy represents – such self-indulgence at the

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<sup>428</sup> Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 65.

<sup>429</sup> Letter included in Peck *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 268. This was discussed in greater detail in the chapter focussing on *The Monk*.

<sup>430</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 61.

<sup>431</sup> Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre* 231.

cost of one's country could easily be used as a justification for revolution. It is a lack of fortitude, as displayed by Venoni, which is the largest threat to social order in this play.

Venoni's speech ranges from distracted to impatient to firm over the course of the play, and his movement on stage is important too. Not only does he collapse exhaustedly at the end of Act Two, he also enters the monastery garden 'slowly', with his arms folded, and his head reclining on his shoulder', to represent his melancholic grief.<sup>432</sup> Venoni's emotions dominate the play and the semiotics of illegitimate theatre used to indicate their extremity and apparently uncontrollable illegitimacy suggest that the young noble is acting in an irrational manner which endangers his masculinity.

Indeed, Venoni's first appearance on stage, in the second scene, draws attention to this aspect of his persona. He gives 'a melancholy smile'; shudders upon seeing Hortensia; wears 'a look of gloom' and describes himself as 'one so lost, so wretched'.<sup>433</sup> It is difficult to imagine a greater contrast to the restrained behaviour of the Viceroy. The *Monthly Panorama's* reviewer wrote that 'the language of this piece is energetic but it is frequently the vehicle of false and over-violent sentiments'.<sup>434</sup> In finding this objectionable, the reviewer misses the point: the effect of Lewis presenting such sentiments is to warn against them: Lewis's career as a writer contains several instances when he was criticised for seeming to vindicate unpalatable events, when the narrative presents such events as a warning.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 33;2. Sc.1.

<sup>433</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 21-2; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>434</sup> *Monthly Panorama*, 1810 : 126.

<sup>435</sup> Other examples include Elvira's biblical editing in *The Monk*, which was considered blasphemous when her foolishness was the object, and the fact that Lewis had to repeatedly stress that his objective in writing *Adelgitha* was to demonstrate the long-term effects of 'a single error' and that the eponymous character should not be considered a heroine.

The exchange between Venoni and the Viceroy which takes place at the start of the second act is important in understanding the danger inherent in Venoni's loss of rationality. He is irrational, 'almost frantic' and speaks 'in the most violent agitation'.<sup>436</sup> He can focus only on Josepha:

*She* is here, too! - Nothing separates us except those bars: I am near her grave. . . . I am near her. . . . I live near her. . . . I will die near her!<sup>437</sup>

Venoni's fevered devotion to Josepha within a monastery carries the connotation of idolatry. The obsessional nature of his love and grief, which he temporarily allows to override his reason, is what the *Monthly Panorama* refers to as 'false' and 'over-violent'. Not only does it conform to the semiotics of illegitimate theatre, itself a culturally threatening form, but it is also the sort of behaviour deemed dangerous in the eighteenth century. As James Fordyce wrote in 'On Love':

[Writers] seldom fail to introduce [heroes] worshipping [heroines] as Divinities, and both corrupting each other with perpetual adulation a little more or less disguised . . . no regard from one creature to another can be right, which would exclude, or rival the love of the Creator.<sup>438</sup>

Venoni is thus presented as reprehensible, guilty of failing to recognise both his religious obligations and his social ones. He had already demonstrated this in Act One, when he claimed that 'they who would serve their country must possess their reason in full force and clearness: my reason. . . it is gone' and that 'Heaven cannot blame' his devotion to Josepha, as she is 'an angel'.<sup>439</sup> He proceeds to discuss his love and grief in increasingly broken terms before 'sinking into the Viceroy's arms'.<sup>440</sup> At the end of the scene, he 'sinks totally exhausted on the bosom of the friar', and is led away by

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<sup>436</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 45; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>437</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 38; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>438</sup> James Fordyce, 'On Love' in *Addresses to Young Men* 1: 141-175, 168-170.

<sup>439</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 22-3; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>440</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 24; 1. Sc.2.

Coelestino, unable to speak or walk unaided.<sup>441</sup> Venoni lacks the resolution of Percy, acting like a fainting heroine. In the following act he explains that he is unable to take the Viceroy's advice and leave the monastery because he is a 'wretched creature, quite alone in the wide, wide world. . . . a feeble reed, crushed and broken by the tempest'.<sup>442</sup> Even when he discovers the truth about Coelestino's plot, he remains inarticulate and cannot decide on the best action to take:

[*Alone, and wandering about the garden with a distracted air*] – Where shall I direct. . . . where seek. . . . a cloud obscures my eyes. . . . Despair. . . . Rage. . . . Powers of *vengeance!* Powers of *fury!* guide me. . . . Desert me not. . . . give me strength to. . . . My limbs refuse to bear me. . . . I faint. . . . I die [*he falls upon the ground*]<sup>443</sup>

After being united with Josepha, Venoni rejoices at the end of the play, appearing calmer and speaking in a less ornate manner as he is returned to the masculine roles of rescuer, lover and dispenser of justice, as his comments to the abbess reveal. He offers Father Michael money as a reward for his help, and although this is rejected, it is evident that Venoni has begun to follow the Viceroy's example when dealing with his social inferiors. Josepha becomes his reward for once again daring to be 'a man and citizen'.

### **Viceroy Benvolio**

As is the case with Venoni's weakness, the admirable nature of the Viceroy's personality is made apparent early in the play, positioning the audience to trust his judgement and actions. He dominates the first scene, arriving as part of a 'marine procession'.<sup>444</sup> That he is beloved by his people is evident when his servant Benedetto says that 'the mob are huzzaing' and

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<sup>441</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 28; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>442</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 38; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>443</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 54; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>444</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 5; 1. Sc.1.

that he ‘shall certainly expire at [Benvolio’s] feet for joy’.<sup>445</sup> The form of the procession is a metatheatrical device employed often by Lewis, and as Paul Ranger points out, one which ‘presented a state of order, which could suddenly be thrown into confusion by the arrival of a representation of chaos’.<sup>446</sup> Ranger also notes that a procession marked the recovery of George III from madness in 1789 – an example of the restoration of social and psychological order.

This procession alerts the audience to the status of the Viceroy and the way he is perceived by others, as the accompanying grandees ‘take their leave of him respectfully’. His first lines are directed to the servants, commending their ‘fidelity and attachment’ and rewarding them materially. The first we see of this character alerts us to his benevolence, his power, and the fact that he commands the respect and loyalty both of his peers and dependents:

*The Viceroy. [To the servants, as they go off]. - Farewell, my friends, and for your own sakes, take good care of yonder chests; part of their contents will convince you, that during my absence your fidelity and attachment have still been present to my recollection.*

*[Exeunt Teresa and Servants.]*

Manent the VICEROY and BENEDETTO.

*Benedetto. Aye, aye! just the same kind master! ever attentive to others!*

*The Viceroy. – And without the attention of others, how could I exist myself? Good Benedetto, in imparting pleasure to others, we receive it again in return: to make ourselves beloved is to make ourselves happy; and never can others love that man, who is not capable himself of loving others.*<sup>447</sup>

The first sentence of the Viceroy’s response to Benedetto is absent from Cumberland’s acting edition of the play. Its implication is revisionist rather than revolutionary – that good leaders are those who are kind and reward

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<sup>445</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 4; 1. Sc.4.

<sup>446</sup> Ranger, ‘*Terror and Pity reign in every Breast*’ 75.

<sup>447</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 5-6; 1. Sc.1. Lewis uses the term ‘Manent’ to indicate that the characters remain on stage: it is an unusual term, not used elsewhere in his dramas.

their subordinates. Power used in this appropriate manner justifies and legitimises its own existence and is seemingly safe from what would be needless revolutionary action, as the servants will ‘love’ the master. Also absent from Cumberland’s version is a short addition to the scene, in which two fishermen excitedly announce that any catches they make will ‘bear a treble price’ due to the Viceroy’s generosity.<sup>448</sup>

Count Benvolio is thus a model for the aristocracy, just as Teresa, Benedetto and Pietro are for the lower classes, as they praise their ‘kind master’, but criticise the ‘hypocritical’ Coelestino.<sup>449</sup> The proximity of this procession to the opening of the play, after the imprisonment of Josepha and Venoni’s retreat from society, suggests that the play is concerned with articulating a possible path for the maintenance of order, through a revision of Gothic tropes which presents the portrayal of power structures themselves as virtue under siege. Venoni’s feminisation places the Viceroy in the role of the masculine rescuer of the endangered virtues which Venoni represents. The centrality of the aristocratic Viceroy to the reinstatement of order is where Lewis’s translation subverts Monvel’s original.

The Viceroy’s views mirror the complex ones Lewis held towards his slaves and his own subsequent responsibilities. In his *Journal of a West-Indian Proprietor* (published posthumously in 1834) he often records with satisfaction his improving reforms regarding the treatment of slaves (and of lightening their punishments in particular); their gratitude; their apparent desire to have a ‘massa’ and their joy at his presence on the island. He also, however, bitterly bemoans their supposed laziness; tendency to illness (which he often considers feigned) and lying; their reduced productivity after his reforms; and the deaths of their infants. The latter list reveals a commercial understanding of the slaves’ functions: fewer slaves and less sugar produced would have been dangerous for Lewis’s finances. One anecdote refers to him sending food to a sick slave; such an action recalls his father’s management of the Irish troops. It appears altruistic but is also

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<sup>448</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 15; 1. Sc.1.

<sup>449</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 3; 1. Sc.1.

an act of self-interest. However, what is striking about the journal is the way in which Lewis not only appears genuinely concerned for his slaves but also the way in which he delights in their apparent adoration and flattering subservience. For example, when writing about the reaction of the slaves to the dismissal of a violent bookkeeper, Lewis notes:

The man in question (by his own account) had made himself obnoxious to them; and on hearing of his discharge, they, one and all, sprawled on the ground in such a rapture of joy and gratitude, that now I may safely say with Sir Andrew Aguecheek, 'I was adored once!'<sup>450</sup>

Lewis takes obvious pleasure in the delight of his slaves here; however, the allusion to adoration suggests that his desire to help them was partly the result of vanity. His sentiments recall those of the Viceroy as he explains to Benedetto the importance of pleasing others – if anything, they are even more hyperbolic than those of the fictional character. Despite this, the slaves do not appear to have worked harder, as discussed in the Coda, though it seems that Lewis succeeded in keeping them reasonably quiescent.

Macdonald has identified 'three models' of Lewis's attitude towards his slaves: that Lewis viewed them as human livestock; that 'the relationship between master and slave was feudal'; and that it was also 'paternal'.<sup>451</sup> The latter two are the most relevant to Lewis's drama and are often combined. He also notes that Lewis was easily touched by the 'gratitude' of his slaves towards him, even when this involved (and it would be almost impossible not to) forgoing their own interests.<sup>452</sup> Macdonald acknowledges that a feudal approach is innately paternalistic, but points out that the difference between the two models is that a feudal vassal may officially represent the master, but that a paternalistic approach will infantilise the slaves; maintaining the slave-owners privileged position due to perceived weaknesses on the part of the slaves. These approaches share the

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<sup>450</sup> Lewis, *Journal* 96.

<sup>451</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 53 - 56. Examples of Lewis viewing his slaves as livestock include his regret at the death of several slaves (Lewis, *Journal* 202) and his comments concerning black women and their favourable treatment when 'upon the breeding list' (*Journal* 237).

<sup>452</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 55.

assumption of responsibility and control on behalf of the slave owner – this is integral to an understanding of the way Lewis presents threat, villainy and heroism in his works. There are many comments in his *Journal* which support a reading of his attitude being both feudal and paternal and which also recall the language and views of the Viceroy.

By the end of the first scene, Lewis has succeeded in establishing the aristocratic Viceroy as a paragon of paternalism, embodying idealised masculine values. He has sensibility enough to grieve for the niece he believes dead, but does not do so ostentatiously, ‘hiding his face to conceal his tears’ as the servants tell him of Josepha’s death. Unlike Venoni, whose indulgence in grief he will later criticise, the Viceroy is capable of greater self-control, ‘after a moment’s silence, recovering himself’.<sup>453</sup> The great emotion of the Viceroy is sharply articulated not via the type of hyperbolic gesture which expresses little but the immensity of the feeling but through the greater effort it takes to control it – a large and direct contrast to Venoni’s distress, which is evidenced through body and voice, rather than action. Interestingly in a melodrama, it is the ‘silence’ of the Viceroy in this scene which alerts the audience to both his humanity and integrity. He later remarks that Venoni should not seclude himself from society merely ‘because it contains for him nothing but sufferings; he must remain in it, to preserve others from suffering like himself’. This speech is much more developed than in the acting version; the Viceroy also declares that ‘the man commits a crime, who is virtuous like him, and denies mankind the use and example of his virtues’ and that it is a ‘selfish’ action.<sup>454</sup> The lesson here is that those blessed with social power should accept the duties that accompany it; that this duty should take precedence over personal misfortune. As the scene closes, the audience is thus left with an impression of the Viceroy’s legitimate authority, superiority over other characters (including the hero of the play), and suitability as a leader.

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<sup>453</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 7; 1. Sc.1.

<sup>454</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 8-9; 1. Sc.1.

That the Viceroy is shrewd and honest becomes yet further apparent in the following scene, when he discusses Coelestino with his sister, Hortensia. She appears angry that he wishes to avoid a meeting with Coelestino ‘merely because his countenance and manner happen not to be exactly to your taste’. When he replies, saying that the prior’s conversation ‘uses too much honey’, his language recalls that of Pietro in the preceding scene, who describes Coelestino as ‘He with the humble, hypocritical air – who speaks so softly, and bows so low’.<sup>455</sup> The servant has, therefore, revealed his connection to his master through the adoption of his values and judgement, and the audience is thus presented with a rosy view of a correctly functioning class hierarchy.<sup>456</sup> What is evident is that both the Viceroy and those he employs can recognise that Coelestino’s flattering language, the tone of voice and the ingratiating body language present an untruth. The result of this is that the audience is presented with the impression that the authority of a legitimate patriarch will be reflected in the reasoned and trustworthy state of his inferiors.

The Viceroy’s views on duty and responsibility are made more explicit as he attempts to persuade Venoni not to become a monk. Determined to make Venoni leave the abbey, he refers to religion and nature, as well as Venoni’s ‘sacred duty’. After claiming the right to speak with Venoni in the name of his beloved Josepha and his own ‘paternal friendship’, he remarks:

What reason, nay, what *right* have you to deprive society of talents, bestowed on you by Nature for the benefit of mankind? and what excuse can you make for resigning into the hands of strangers that wealth, which it is your sacred duty to distribute with your own? Heaven has endowed you with talents capable of making your existence *useful*: and your ungrateful neglect renders the gift of no avail: Heaven has bestowed on you wealth, capable of making the existence of others *happy*; and your selfish indolence declines an

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<sup>455</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 17; 1. Sc.2 and 3; 1. Sc.1.

<sup>456</sup> This connection can be seen as an extension of the link which Backscheider identified between servants and their employers in Gothic drama, as the lower characters express the thoughts and feelings of their high-born counterparts, as discussed in Chapter Two in relation to *The Castle Spectre*. See 73 and 82, above, and Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics* 181.

office, which the Saints covet, and for which even the Angels contend!<sup>457</sup>

Again, the 1809 edition presents a lengthier speech than the Cumberland edition, which ends the speech after ‘useful’. The Viceroy suggests that Venoni’s seclusion in a monastery is not only an unreasonable, selfish desire, but something that he has no ‘right’ to do; it is as though he is acting against both ‘Nature’ and ‘Heaven’ by indulging his grief rather than helping others. His duty is to act as we have seen the Viceroy do – make his ‘existence useful’ by helping others. The accusation of ‘selfish indolence’ in this edition strongly reiterates the message of social responsibility. Why it was cut in at least one performance is unknown: it may have been to maintain the sympathy of the audience for Venoni, who would have been the most dramatically striking character. The full speech, however, reiterates Lewis’s concern with the function of gratitude in social relationships and makes Venoni’s status as a hero appear threatened indeed.

It is interesting that religious solitude is presented not merely as an unpleasant and unnatural course, which was not uncommon in anti-Catholic Gothic texts, but as a sinful action in comparison to that of helping others. The fulfilment of a heavenly duty, as advocated by the Viceroy here, is related to social action. As Venoni appeals for ‘pity’, Benvolio interrupts him, with a Stoic argument:

Why then do I find you in this seclusion? What good is to arise from this servile renunciation of yourself, this forgetfulness of the dignity of human nature, this disgraceful sinking under afflictions which are but the common lot of all mankind?<sup>458</sup>

The accusatory tone of the questions places responsibility upon Venoni himself for his predicament. He appears not as an innocent and sympathetic victim of Coelestino but as a victim of his own weak-mindedness. The reasoned approach taken here by the Viceroy is in sharp opposition to

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<sup>457</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 35; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>458</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 36; 2. Sc.1.

Venoni's manner and his advice echoes that of James Fordyce in his address 'On the respect due to young men':

[young men should be] sober-minded, that is to say, regular and considerate, careful to govern their passions, improve their faculties, and prepare for performing with diligence and discretion their duty to society.<sup>459</sup>

The Viceroy also reminds Venoni that he is 'a man and citizen', again with 'a country which requires [his] services' but that he lacks fortitude.<sup>460</sup> The implication is that Venoni, in his grief-inflicted desire for seclusion, has allowed private emotion to obscure public duty. The Viceroy represents exactly what he advocates to Venoni- firmness, a pragmatic response to problems rather than indulgence in sensibility, and a duty to one's country which is bound to one's role as an individual (as a 'man and citizen' as the Viceroy phrases it). Many of his lines are redolent of a conduct book, and he thus takes on the role of mentor not only to Venoni but the audience. The result of this is a conservative view of national duty, appropriate to be held up to a British audience aware that their nation was at war with a post-revolutionary France. The contrast between the Viceroy and his protégée here mimics that between nations as James Whitlark has summarised:

[T]he sexist stereotypes often noted in Burke: Protestant England as masculine and sensible; the Catholic continent as feminine and credulous. In the Gothics, to demonstrate the folly of continental credulity, women in particular embody superstition . . . and suffer as victims of it.<sup>461</sup>

The Viceroy, therefore, is a conciliatory figure in 'English taste', 'masculine and sensible'. He is able to redirect Venoni's grief, which is temporarily debilitating and effeminising, to benevolent social action. Venoni has also

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<sup>459</sup> Fordyce, 'On the respect due to young men', *Addresses to Young Men*:1, 1-19, 7. See also 149 above, especially footnote 317.

<sup>460</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 21-2; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>461</sup> Whitlark, James. 'Heresy Hunting: *The Monk* and the French Revolution', in *Romanticism on the Net*. [online] 8. Available from: <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/1997/v/n8/005773ar.html>, (November 1997). [Accessed 29/08/2011].

been 'credulous' enough to believe Coelestino's lies and, at his most irrational, resembles Lewis's eponymous *Captive* of 1803.

The Viceroy's speech shows an awareness of both Venoni's distressed state and what should, according to this play, be his proper duty as a noble. Though he is to an extent repelled and infuriated by Venoni's behaviour, he has also shown sympathy both to the young man and his own bereaved brother-in-law, the Marquis. His ability to judge what the outcome of this situation should be reveals his intelligence, kindness and fairness, and results in the audience recognising an example of power without tyranny. The threat to this power is revealed when the Prior mentions Josepha's name and Venoni immediately reaffirms his decision to become a monk. The insidious nature of the prior is a threat to Venoni only because he allows himself to be influenced in this way. His lack of attention to wider, social concerns threatens the conciliatory middle way between duty and feeling offered by the Viceroy. What the Viceroy represents, therefore, is the idealised patrician figure: self-control coupled with an empathetic sensibility. He is kindly in his advice, lacking the 'frigid self-righteousness' which Macdonald identifies as the mark of 'good' father-figures in Lewis's works as a result of his difficult relationship with his own father.<sup>462</sup>

In contrast to the melodramatic manner of Venoni, the Viceroy speaks 'indignantly' rather than rashly when he criticises the 'artifice' and 'insidious language' of Coelestino. He draws attention to Venoni's duty as he demands:

Dare to become a man once more, and restore to your native  
land that most precious treasure, a virtuous citizen.<sup>463</sup>

Again, the Viceroy focuses on Venoni's duty to his country. It is also clear that the Viceroy believes that Venoni's descent into grief has emasculated him, and that his true identity is, and should be, bound up with his social duty. His use of the word 'dare' implies his suspicion of emotional

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<sup>462</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 43.

<sup>463</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 42; 2. Sc.1.

cowardice on Venoni's part. His role as a 'virtuous' citizen is portrayed as being bound up with his masculinity and generosity. Prior to this, the Viceroy has berated Venoni for the 'shame' of his lack of manly 'fortitude', as well as remarking 'life may become to man but one long scene of misery, yet, surely, the spirit of benevolence should never perish but with life'.<sup>464</sup> He later stresses the link between domestic and public duty and the paternal roles they necessitate with the comment:

. . . you, who decline the task of distributing your wealth to advantage, how can you expect to find in strangers the spirit of benevolence more active? – Would you have your fortune well administered, at least set yourself an example to your heirs: summon your fortitude'.<sup>465</sup>

Here the Viceroy identifies a key role for the aristocracy in Lewis's Gothic melodramas – that of setting an example, forming a template of desirable behaviour.

It is notable that the speeches made by Lewis's dramatic heroes are often full of classical rhetoric, particularly anadiplosis and anaphora, revealing their control of self and the situation. By contrast, villains' lines often suggest confusion and impotence through their broken, melodramatic nature. Of Lewis's time at university, Macdonald remarks that '[f]or an undergraduate intended for public life, as Lewis was, the classical historians were particularly important'.<sup>466</sup> The records held by Christ Church College

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<sup>464</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 37; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>465</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 38; 2. Sc.1. The views expressed by the Viceroy concerning duty, as well as the controlled and patterned style of his speech throughout, have also been foreshadowed by his brother-in-law, the Marquis Caprara, who remonstrates with Venoni in a similar manner as early as Act One:

Wherefore renounce the world? wherefore adopt a resolution so desperate? Your country has a right to your services. (*Venoni* 22; 1. Sc.2.).

It is worth noting that the Marquis was not responsible for his daughter's stay at the convent – this decision was undertaken by his wife. The Marquis is representative of rationality and reason, and bolsters the authoritative masculine presence of the Viceroy. The conflict between the Viceroy and Coelestino over Venoni and the destination of his wealth engages with what Fordyce identifies as a detrimental shift in values in 'On a manly spirit, as opposed to effeminacy'. See 78-79 for a discussion of this in relation to Osmond in *The Castle Spectre*.

<sup>466</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 98.

inform us that Lewis read works by Homer's *The Iliad* and Horace's *Carmen* and Herodotus in 1790. In 1791, he read Homer's *The Odyssey* as well as studying Thucydides, Xenophon, more Herodotus and some algebra. In 1792 he read Demosthenes and Diodorus before being absent during the Michaelmas term of 1792 and the Hilary term of 1793, when he was in Germany. When he returned in the Easter and Hilary terms of 1793, he read Livy.<sup>467</sup> Lewis did not only use his classical education to inform his presentation of fictional heroes, but also employed classical literary techniques in his own letters, especially when presenting himself as the righteous but injured (and therefore heroic) party in a dispute.<sup>468</sup>

The Viceroy clearly feels that in advising Venoni he is fulfilling a duty. When he confronts Coelestino over the latter's manipulation of Venoni and false claims of friendship, he says 'I think, that I prove my friendship best, when I advise him not to renounce a world, to which he owes the service of his talents'.<sup>469</sup> He then points out that it is evident, that he, at least, has no designs on Venoni's money. This type of disinterested friendship was also something which Fordyce both praised and felt to be increasingly rare:

in this luxurious and effeminate age, where under a polished exterior, and many specious appearances, the heart is at once

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<sup>467</sup> Lewis was awarded his BA in 1794. The records of his subsequent reading have not survived, though he was eventually awarded his M.A.. Record of Matthew Lewis's undergraduate studies. Christchurch College archives. CCA.li.b.2.

<sup>468</sup> For example, in late 1793 wrote a letter to his mother in which he defends his conduct since his parents' separation:

You ask me how much I know of your difference with my father, and whether I could publicly make allowances for you. You suppose my father has been giving me instructions. You accuse him unjustly: he has never said a syllable to me with regard to you; and my behaviour is entirely such as is dictated by my own heart. If that is good, as yourself as often told me, my conduct must be the same; if my conduct is wrong, my heart is the same; and it will be worth no one's while to seek to have a share of it. (Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 104-5)

The anadiplosis and anaphora are as marked here as they are in the mouths of the Viceroy and *Adelmorn's* Sigismund and can be easily compared to the speech of the latter quoted on 125 above.

<sup>469</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 41; 2. Sc.1.

enfeebled, contracted, and warped, a noble Friendship becomes more and more uncommon.<sup>470</sup>

The Viceroy accuses Venoni of that terrible attribute in Lewis's works: ingratitude, and Venoni demonstrates the 'virtue' when he acknowledges this to be the case, though he does so in his usual, lamenting manner, saying 'Benvolio! – Friend! – He is gone! – How abruptly did I quit him! – How ungratefully have I repaid his kindness! – Ah! whither is my reason fled!'<sup>471</sup> The Viceroy's mixed success at nullifying the threat that Venoni represents would be echoed in Lewis's mixed success with first William Kelly and later his slaves. Kelly's behaviour appears to have been particularly ungracious. Lewis gives Venoni a lengthy speech on the topic of gratitude as he addresses Lodovico, who has helped his escape from the monastery. Venoni philosophises that 'if aught in life is sweet, it is when the heart overflows with gratitude, and the hand has the power to perform, what that grateful heart dictates and desires'. Ever hyperbolic, he announces that this 'gives mortals a foretaste of the bliss of angels'.<sup>472</sup> Lodovico has previously charged him with ingratitude for his life when he threatened suicide earlier in this scene. Throughout the play, then, Venoni comes to realise the importance of gratitude, mercy and fortitude and retrieves his masculinity as a result of this.

Running throughout Lewis's life, therefore, as well as in his portrayal of himself in his letters, runs a concern with paternal behaviour – a concern which is developed in his melodramas through those characters that are shown to have inherited social power through legitimate means associated with the practice of primogeniture. They perform a patriarchal role not only in their care of their dependents but also in their instructive, fatherly speeches to their younger counterparts and which thus also seem to form lessons for the audience. Lewis used these works to explore ideas which he would later, after inheriting his father's plantations in 1812, use as tenets to

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<sup>470</sup> Fordyce, 'On Friendship', *Addresses to Young Men* 1:207-263: 235.

<sup>471</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 47; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>472</sup> Lewis, *Venoni* 66; 3. Sc.1.

live by; tenets which attempted to resolve the conflict between the humanitarian problems and self-interest Lewis faced.

Evidence of Lewis's treatment of his servants and dependents is to be found in an undated letter to his mother from his home at Barnes, which Baron-Wilson places just before the account of Whitelocke's trial. He complains that he returned home to find that both his servants had gone out and that his dog Jessy had been left alone for over a day in the cold and with little food. Lewis's tone, when pointing out that 'both – but separately – played [him] this trick before' is that of exasperation. When he continues to explain that they had been warned that the first to repeat the offence, 'should go, as an example to the other', he could just as easily be writing about children – he infantilises them, just as Macdonald notes that his later paternal approach would infantilise his slaves.<sup>473</sup> He almost sacked both servants, but later took pity on one, Betty, claiming 'compassion' for a woman and promising not to tell his aunt Mrs. Blake, whom Betty admired. His manservant, Cartier, remained sacked, however.<sup>474</sup> In Lewis's stress that the servants had received fair warning previously and his concern for the dog it is easy to see a man who was keen to be seen as fair to all dependent on him, human and canine. Such fairness, the hallmark of the heroes in this chapter, is absent from the later Hardyknute and Timour.

Sir John Moore had demonstrated a similar even-handedness during the Whitelocke trial. On February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1809, Lewis's poem *Monody on the Death of Sir John Moore* was recited at Drury Lane by Mrs. Powell. The poem is a nationalistic call to arms against France and laments Moore's death, containing the lines 'A day will come (a day of dread)/When France shall wish the hero's blood unshed'.<sup>475</sup> Despite the poem's nationalism, however, the poem was suppressed after the third night of its recitation, a fact which Macdonald persuasively attributes to Moore being made a

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<sup>473</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2:15.

<sup>474</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 16.

<sup>475</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:378-80, 380.

‘scapegoat for the setback’ in the war.<sup>476</sup> It seems that, once again, Lewis’s writing was considered controversial. However, *The Poetical Register* for 1808-9 criticised the Lord Chamberlain for censoring the poem. The reviewer acknowledges that ‘The Monody seems to be a hasty production, and is not equal to many of Mr. Lewis’s formal productions’, but insists that ‘It is, nevertheless, evidently the work of a man of genius’ and that ‘Were Solomon himself now alive, it would puzzle him to find out any case which could have induced the Lord Chamberlain to prohibit the recitation of these lines. We have not been able to discover a single word capable of giving offence’.<sup>477</sup> In the space of a year, two powerful men of Lewis’s acquaintance were publicly castigated for the way in which they performed public duty. This period seems to have marked a watershed in Lewis’s career: *Venoni* and *The Monody on the Death of Sir John Moore* engage with the topic of civic duties more strongly than any of his earlier works, but Lewis did not return to writing about the efficacy of heroes as overtly after the suppression of the poem. He returned to concentrating on the problems which arise from their absence, but the style of his dramas became more flamboyantly spectacular.

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<sup>476</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 173.

<sup>477</sup> *Poetical Register, and repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1808-1809*: 600-1. Baron-Wilson also claims that the poem is not amongst Lewis’s best. Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 380.



## **Chapter Four:**

**‘Something more than a mere spectacle’.**

- 1) Chapter Introduction**
- 2) ‘Tis a Daemon in human shape’: *One o’ Clock! or, the Knight and the Wood Daemon***
- 3) ‘Sedulously contrived for show’: *Timour the Tartar***



## **Chapter Introduction**

(1,939 words)



*Timour the Tartar* (Covent Garden) and *One O' Clock, or, the Knight and the Wood Daemon* (Lyceum) were first performed, respectively, in April and August 1811, the year of the Regency crisis and the year before the death of Matthew Lewis's father, on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1812. The two remained estranged until just days before the elder Lewis's death. It is unsurprising that both *Timour the Tartar* and *One O' Clock* feature idealised parent figures and return to the earlier theme of the usurpation of authority.<sup>478</sup> The latter is Lewis's revamping of his earlier (unpublished) *The Wood Daemon, or, the Clock has Struck* (Drury Lane). This was first performed in 1807 - the same year as the abolition of the Slave Trade.<sup>479</sup> The former is his final original drama and the one in which the issue of parenthood is most pronounced.<sup>480</sup> Both feature a lower-class usurper and a child as the usurped heir. They are arguably the most 'spectacular' of Lewis's works – *One O' Clock* through its extensive use of music and extensive use of the supernatural and *Timour the Tartar* through its nature as a hippodrama and its Oriental setting: it features acting horses, including a horseback duel. *One O' Clock* begins with a supernatural storm and ends with the removal of the villain by the eponymous spirit in recompense for his failure to make a human sacrifice. It also features moving portraits and the ubiquitous blue flames of Gothic. The villain possesses a magic key and the presence of dwarves and the conquered giant Hacho add to the fantastical spectacle of the drama.

The importance of music and visual spectacle to Lewis's work and its role both in his considerable commercial success and mixed critical reception has long been noted by critics. In 1947, Bertrand Evans wrote that:

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<sup>478</sup> The plays do this to differing extents: both have plots which revolve around usurpation, but whereas the parents in *One O' Clock* are consigned to spectral status and featuring in the explanatory dialogue of on-stage characters, *Timour the Tartar* relies on parental figures and they are the characters responsible for the resolution of the plot.

<sup>479</sup> The earlier version of the play thus predates *Venoni* by twenty-one months.

<sup>480</sup> Lewis's final play was *Rich and Poor*, first performed at the Lyceum in July 1812, just under two months after his father's death. This 'comic opera' is a reworking of his earlier comedy *The East Indian*.

The spectacular appearance of the “real” supernatural, heightened by the organ’s swell and the chorus of voices, the illumination and the mechanical movement of fixtures, was one of Lewis’s specialities.<sup>481</sup>

This fact was only noted, rather than explored, for decades. More recently, however, Jeffrey N. Cox has observed that Lewis’s ‘most successful’ dramas ‘are notable largely for their stage effects’. He argues that Lewis was:

[A] playwright with serious intentions who [was] willing to make full use of a new theatre of sound and sight, where one needed a genius for special effects more than for poetic ones. In many ways he dominated the theatre of the first decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>482</sup>

This ‘genius for special effects’ has, somewhat unfairly, led to Lewis being critically pilloried rather than lauded for his ability to create elaborate and stunning set-pieces. In fact, Cox significantly develops Evans’s observation here by acknowledging that Lewis had ‘serious intentions’. He does not discuss what these may be, however, and so the critical assumption that Lewis’s ‘serious’ tragedies and his ‘spectacular’ melodramas are somehow divisible persists. Even Macdonald, who concedes that they are not divisible, does not fully confront the idea that the spectacular in Lewis’s work is not only linked to his ‘serious intentions’ but may actually be their most evident manifestation. It is surely time that the most infamous but least examined aspect of Lewis’s dramas received further attention: the aim of this chapter is to begin this process.

In *One O’ Clock’s Hardyknute* and the character of Timour, Lewis returns to the overreachers which were so central to his early works. Though these two late plays differ in the form of spectacle they display, as outlined above, they share what may be the least explored element of Lewis’s work: the influence of the Elizabethan playwright Christopher Marlowe alongside that

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<sup>481</sup> Evans, *Gothic Drama* 140-141.

<sup>482</sup> Jeffrey N. Cox, ‘English Gothic Theatre’, in Hogle, ed.: *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*: 125-144, 140-141. Cox lists set pieces from *Adelmorn the Outlaw*, *Rugantino* and *The Wood Daemon* as well as the famous appearance of Evelina in *The Castle Spectre*.

of Shakespeare. Criticism of the Gothic has always acknowledged a Renaissance influence, of course, especially in relation to revenge plots and the use of the supernatural to mark usurpation. Shakespeare, unsurprisingly, has been recognised as an important influence and this fact is marked by the recent publication of two books on this topic but the influence of Marlowe has however been neglected.<sup>483</sup> It is difficult to ascertain why this has been the case generally; in relation to Lewis specifically, it is likely that the widely-acknowledged Germanic influences on his work, especially of Goethe, who also wrote about the Faust myth, have obscured others.

Marlowe and Lewis are not biographically dissimilar. Both missed a considerable amount of time at university whilst working for the Government: the archives of Christ Church show that Lewis' was absent from Oxford during the Michaelmas term of 1792 and the Hilary term of 1793 when he was in Weimar; whereas the fact that Marlowe was only awarded his Cambridge M.A. after intervention from the Privy Council, confirming that he had been employed on national business, has passed into literary legend and fuelled the theory that he was a spy. The two writers therefore share experience in diplomatic involvement in England's conflict with other countries in Europe. The sexuality of both has been debated and both were suspected of blasphemy – Lewis just escaped prosecution and Marlowe was arrested for this offence ten days before his death.<sup>484</sup>

Though Marlowe's influence can be seen in Lewis's earlier works, it is particularly strong in these two plays. Hardyknute's pact with the demon Sangrida and his demise recalls those made by Ambrosio in *The Monk* and Dr. Faustus. Hardyknute, likewise, is an overreacher eventually thwarted by the bargain he makes. *Timour the Tartar* is loosely based on Marlowe's

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<sup>483</sup> The importance of Shakespeare's influence in this area is marked by the recent publication of two very useful books on this topic: *Gothic Shakespeares* (ed. Townshend and Drakakis, 2008) and *Shakespearean Gothic* (ed. Desmet and Williams, 2009). Individual chapters from these two collections have been referred to elsewhere in this thesis.

<sup>484</sup> Parreaux, for example, has written on Lewis and the accusation of blasphemy levelled at *The Monk*. The exact nature of Marlowe's offence, the likelihood of him being framed and whether there was any connection to his death has likely been the subject of much scholarly research and speculation.

*Tamburlaine*; the focus of the plot is Timour, son of a peasant, who comes to power through military success. Neither of these late villains of Lewis demonstrates the integrity of his heroes: both are motivated by lust, neither shows any consideration for the benefit of those over whom they rule. Perhaps more significantly, neither displays the remorseful, troubled conscience of the Shakespearean-inflected Ambrosio and Osmond. Instead they are unrepentant, in the style of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*.

The similarities of Lewis's plays and those of Marlowe go beyond a few details of plot. After exploring the concept of a lack of authority in *The Monk*, Lewis's Gothic plays seem to oscillate in focus between heroic antagonists, as explored in the previous chapter, and villainous ones, as demonstrated by *The Castle Spectre* and the two spectacular plays discussed here. It is in the presentation of such villains that Marlowe's influence is most apparent. Additionally, it is significant that overreachers were popular on the Romantic stage - Philip Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, a Jacobean play charting the machinations and downfall of the social-climbing Sir Giles Overreach, became immensely popular after Edmund Kean took the role in 1816.

In *The Castle Spectre*, *Venoni*, *Adelmorn the Outlaw* and *Rugantino*, Lewis explored the association between the hero's fate and that of their 'polis'. Though this is a device typical of tragedy, Lewis uses it to demonstrate the damage that could be caused by illegitimate and faulty rule *and* the advantages of the restoration of order. He does so again in *One O' Clock* and *Timour the Tartar*, but also, in the latter, returned to the central idea of *The Monk*: that revolution is the result of ineffectual rule. This is also the unrealised threat of *Venoni*, the source material for which, *Les Victimes Cloîtrées*, pre-dates the novel.

Lewis's focus on tyrannical overreachers in 1811 reflects many of the problems facing England in that year. The country had suffered severe financial problems in 1810. Russia, Spain and Austria had already surrendered to France and England was close to both capitulation in that war and going to war with America, which eventually occurred a year later. The

Regency crisis continued as George III experienced periods of insanity brought about by porphyria. By the end of the year, the Luddite riots had begun, resulting in Lord Byron's speech in parliament in 1812. Debating the Framework Bill in February 1812, Byron's comments about the Luddite Riots in Nottinghamshire seem to echo Lewis's early letters and the sentiments of *Venoni's* Viceroy: 'During the short time I recently passed in Nottinghamshire, not twelve hours elapsed without some fresh act of violence . . . whilst these outrages must be admitted to exist to an alarming extent, it cannot be denied that they have arisen from circumstances of the most unparalleled distress'.<sup>485</sup> Later comments in the same speech make this viewpoint even more explicit:

But even a mob may be better reduced to reason by a mixture of conciliation and firmness, than by additional irritation and redoubled penalties. Are we aware of our obligations to a mob? It is the mob that labour in your fields and serve in your houses, - that man your navy, and recruit your army, - that have enabled you to defy all the world, and can also defy you when neglect and calamity have driven them to despair.<sup>486</sup>

Lewis had, of course, given an example of a dangerous mob in *The Monk* and of a more content crowd in *Venoni*. The country's problems were also recorded in Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven, A Poem*, composed before the end of the year and published in February 1812. Barbauld's poem outlined the poverty and famine that came as a result of the war and criticises its continuation. Barbauld warns the British nation that 'The worm is in thy core, thy glories pass away;/Arts, arms and wealth destroy the fruits they bring' and that the 'genius' of civilisation 'turns from Europe's desolated shores'.<sup>487</sup> Duncan Wu has noted the view that the conservative reviewers reacted so strongly against this poem that Barbauld

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<sup>485</sup> *The Parliamentary Speeches of Lord Byron* (London: Rodwell and Martin, 1824, repr.; n.p., n.d.) 6.

<sup>486</sup> *The Parliamentary Speeches of Lord Byron* 13.

<sup>487</sup> Barbauld, Anna Laetitia, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven, A Poem*, in Wu, ed., *Romantic Women Poets*: 10-18, 10 (lines 314-315 and 321-322 respectively).

ceased to write.<sup>488</sup> Lewis's dramas of 1811, though they engage, as ever, with such issues as usurpation, focus even more strongly on the restoration of an ordered society than his earlier works. Neither *One O' Clock* nor *Timour the Tartar* was considered immoral in the same way as *The Monk* and some of the earlier plays, even though their spectacular nature resulted in some critical disapproval, though some reviews were favourable.

The two most important aspects of *Timour the Tartar* in relation to the deployment of spectacle are the presentation of a destabilised society and the exploration of the themes of paternal/maternal and filial duties and behaviour. Both are threads which can be seen throughout Lewis's work and both, in *Timour the Tartar* as in the other plays, are tied to Lewis's staging of the importance of 'gratitude' and mercy. In *One O' Clock*, for example, gratitude and ingratitude are mentioned a total of ten times, five of which occur in the second scene, as the heroine is accused both of ingratitude to her earlier lover and his devotion (because she is now engaged to another man, who has enchanted her) and to her fiancé (because, despite the enchantment, she still loves the first lover). This chapter explores the Marlovian influence on these works; how these works relate to England in 1811; Lewis's concern with familial relationships during his estrangement from his ill father and his awareness that he would be likely to inherit in the region of four hundred slaves in Jamaica. Though *Timour the Tartar* was first performed before *One O' Clock!* it is the focus of the second section of the chapter, due to the fact that *One O' Clock* is a revised version of the 1807 *The Wood Daemon*. This will allow for a consideration of the progression of Lewis's ideas. It is appropriate that *Timour the Tartar* should be the final drama examined here, as it was Lewis's final original drama. It is likely that its commercial success was the reason for the swift rewrite of what was *The Wood Daemon* just a few months later.

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<sup>488</sup> See Wu, ed., *Romantic Women Poets* 9.

**'Tis a Daemon in human shape':**

*One O' Clock! or, the Knight and the Wood Daemon*

(7,948 words)



*One O' Clock* (August 1811) is Lewis's penultimate dramatic work, followed only by *Rich and Poor* (1812). It shares many features with Lewis's earlier works, with even greater hyperbole: it is the most predominantly supernatural of his dramas and, this, along with its female demon, reliance on music and song, helpful peasants, usurping villain and ultimate restoration of order, make it an appropriate finale to Lewis's dramatic career. These features are also the aspects which form the play's spectacle. The absence of a hero who represents some form of social authority is a feature which also looks back to the threat in *The Monk*.

Prior to the opening of the play, Hardyknute, a peasant who is physically deformed in an unspecified manner, has entered into a Faustian pact with the Wood Daemon, Sangrida. In return for becoming physically invincible and eternally young and handsome, he has to make a human sacrifice every year, before one o'clock on the morning of the seventh of August. He has befriended then murdered the Count of Holstein, Ruric. Alexina, Ruric's suspicious widow, fears for the life of Holstein's heir, Leolyn (identifiable by the arrow-shaped birthmark on his wrist). Alexina entrusts the life of the child to Clotilda, dying shortly afterwards. The play begins nine years later, on the sixth of August. Sangrida arrives in the midst of a powerful, supernatural storm, which is followed by the meeting of Rolf and Paulina, two peasants, who find themselves obliged to hide Leolyn from gipsies who have kidnapped him. Meanwhile, Hardyknute has defeated the giant Hacho and enchanted the giant's prisoner, Una (Clotilda's sister) to desert her minstrel lover Oswy and marry him instead. Oswy arrives at Hardyknute's castle but is captured and Leolyn returns. Una experiences a dream-vision in which she is instructed to safeguard Leolyn, who will be in danger if the usurping Hardyknute discovers his identity. Later, at a feast and ballet organised to celebrate the approaching marriage of Una and Hardyknute, Hardyknute recognises the child and Sangrida appears to remind him that a sacrifice is due. Hardyknute takes Leolyn to an underground cavern, to which Una is guided by supernaturally animated portraits of Ruric and Alexina. As she protects Leolyn, Hardyknute attempts to sacrifice her

instead. Leolyn manages to push the hand on the clock forward, it strikes one and Sangrida stabs Hardyknute in place of a sacrifice.

The play is a modified version of Lewis's unpublished 1807 play *The Wood Daemon*. Louis F. Peck observes that this earlier version, '[m]ore than any of Lewis's earlier dramas . . . depends for success upon stage machinery'. The play was so reliant upon spectacle and sensation that its opening night was delayed due to the illness of the mechanic.<sup>489</sup> D.L. Macdonald notes that the 1811 version is 'even more spectacular' than its predecessor.<sup>490</sup> From the storm which opens the play to the Faustian ending, the supernatural is present throughout; the hints and suspense which foreshadow the appearance of the ghost in *The Castle Spectre* are absent. Both *The Wood Daemon* and *One o' Clock* were commercially successful: Macdonald records that *The Wood Daemon* was 'performed thirty-four times [in the 1811] season and five times the next' and that *One O' Clock* 'had a successful run of twenty-five performances'.<sup>491</sup> Its popularity is also evident in the fact that, like *The Monk* and *The Castle Spectre*, the play was subject to emulation: the dramatist J.D. Turnbull wrote a play based on Lewis's for performance in provincial theatres.<sup>492</sup>

*One O' Clock* was published by Lowndes and Hobbes of Drury Lane shortly after it was performed: Lewis dedicated the edition to the Princess of Wales and dated the dedication August 21, 1811. The dedication itself is an indication of Lewis's royalist and nationalistic principles, as well as of his continued presence in high society.<sup>493</sup> The princess's public estrangement

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<sup>489</sup>Peck. *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 94.

<sup>490</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 166.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid.

<sup>492</sup> J.D. Turnbull, *The Wood Daemon, or, The Clock has Struck. A Grand, Romantic, Cabalistic, Melo Drama, in Three Acts: Interspersed with processions, pageants and pantomime* (Boston: n.p., 1808). Turnbull's play relies more heavily on the supernatural than its spectacular source, having Leolyn's parents rise from the grave close to the opening.

<sup>493</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock! or, The Knight and the Wood Daemon: A Grand Musical Romance, in three acts*. (London: Lowndes and Hobbes, 1811. Repr; British Library, n.d. [2010?]) 3. This is the edition referred to throughout this chapter, unless otherwise indicated.

from the Whig-favoured Prince Regent makes this dedication another indication that Lewis's politics stood outside the Whig/Tory divide.<sup>494</sup>

This edition is the most appropriate for critical study for several reasons: it is the version most likely to record the play as it was originally performed in 1811 – or at least how it was *intended* to be performed. It also appears to be the most reliable. A second published version was printed by W. Simpkin and H. Marshall for William Oxberry in 1824. The text of this edition is the same as its predecessor, but it omits Lewis's advertisement and dedication. The play is referred to as 'A Dramatic Romance' on the title page, rather than 'A Grand Musical Romance', as it was previously.<sup>495</sup> The prefatory remarks of 'P.P.' in this edition are useful, as I explore below, as are the list of costumes and the assertion that the play was two hours and forty minutes long in performance. A third version was published by John Cumberland at some time after the play's revival in 1833, and is a little less reliable than the previous two: though it claims to be taken from the acting edition, it contains some evident errors.<sup>496</sup>

As was common with the earlier works, negative criticism seems to have been motivated by the genre of melodrama, not Lewis's morals, as had sometimes been the case previously. Macdonald cites *The British Critic's* comment that the ending of the play, discussed below, was 'all show'. *The British Critic* also notes the play's apparent 'German abruptness', and although Macdonald does not discuss whether this is a politically motivated criticism, he points out that the same review acknowledged that 'some of the songs are pretty'.<sup>497</sup> *The Poetical Register*, as ever, was warmer in its praise:

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<sup>494</sup> The advertisement at the start of this edition acknowledges three sources by Lewis – a 'Romance' called 'The Three Brothers' for Hardyknute's physical deformity, and French and German works for two of the songs. He also admits that '[t]he great length of the Representation has made it necessary to omit several of the Songs'. Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 1.

<sup>495</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock; or, The Knight and the Wood Daemon, a dramatic romance*. Oxberry's English Drama. (London: W. Simpkin and H. Marshall, 1824) i.

<sup>496</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock! or, The Knight and the Wood Demon. A Grand Operatic Romance, in three acts* (London: John Cumberland, n. d. [1833?]) 3.

<sup>497</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 166.

This is something better than a mere spectacle. To splendid stage decorations it adds the more valuable items of a plot highly interesting and well conducted, neat and spirited dialogue, and poetical songs. We know nothing of its kind that is superior to it.<sup>498</sup>

Though the reviews differ in tone, both fit with the pattern of reactions to Lewis in his lifetime – scathing about the genre he worked within but acknowledging that it was a form in which he was highly skilled. It is the latter aspect which has since become obscured. It is no surprise that the majority of the reviews for *The Wood Daemon* also followed this pattern, leading Peck, so dismissive of Lewis’s dramas, to concede that the 1807 play ‘received less derision in the public press than might have been expected. It was accepted for what it was – a brilliant exploitation of stage machinery and spectacular effects’.<sup>499</sup> This chapter argues that the ‘brilliant exploitation’ of spectacle is crucial to, rather than a distraction from or replacement of, the serious sentiment of the drama. It is also worth noting that Hardyknute is, unusually, a usurper of a lower social class. He shares this attribute with Timour, who is a representation of Napoleon. This may be another reason why Lewis chose to follow the commercial success of *Timour the Tartar* with *One O’ Clock!*

The source of the plays has been attributed to Danish legend and, by J.D. Turnbull, to German legend. Turnbull may have been referring to the ballad ‘The Erl-King’, written by Goethe and translated by Lewis for *Tales of Wonder* (1801). In this poem, a child warns his parent of the presence of the eponymous malevolent spirit. The parent cannot sense the spirit and the child dies. The source of the play has also been attributed to another poem from this collection, ‘The Grim White Woman’, by ‘D.G.’, in the ‘Remarks; which form the introduction to the Cumberland edition of the text.’<sup>500</sup> The assertion of ‘D.G.’ and Summers concerning the source of the play has been

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<sup>498</sup> *Poetical Register and repository of fugitive poetry, for 1810-1811*: 640-641

<sup>499</sup> Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 96.

<sup>500</sup> ‘Remarks’, in Lewis, *One O’ Clock! or, The Knight and the Wood Demon* (Cumberland) 5-8: 6. ‘D.G.’ has been identified by Montague Summers as George Daniel (Summers, *The Gothic Quest* 275).

questioned, but there are marked parallels between the play and the poem, which features a woman, Janet, making a pact with an evil female spirit in attempt to seek revenge upon the man who rejects her. The result of the bargain is the death of the couple's children and Janet herself. Another similarity is that the momentous events of 'The Grim White Woman' occur when the clock strikes one; however, this is common in Lewis.

What Summers does not consider is that the minor character of the giant Hacho may be sourced to another poem from *Tales of Wonder*, 'King Hacho's Death Song', translated from Danish by Lewis. Neither Summers nor D.G. note it was actually Baron-Wilson who identified 'The Grim White Woman' as a source, along with a work called 'The Three Brothers' by Pickersgill.<sup>501</sup> Critics have not, thus far, commented on the fact that the play's fairy-tale atmosphere, use of snakes and dreamlike visions and Una's experiences underground aided by sapient portraits also bear similarities to two poems from Lewis's 1808 collection *Romantic Tales* – 'Sir Guy the Seeker' and 'Bertrand and Mary-Belle'.<sup>502</sup> Shades of *The Monk's* Matilda can be seen in Sangrida, not only through her status as an embodiment of, and aid to, the desires of the Gothic villain but also in the ambiguity of her gender.

Sangrida makes her appearance in the first scene of the play, in a 'black cloud' the back of which is 'formed of flames'. As the moon reddens, the scene recalls Adelmorn's vision, though it is more sensational. As Sangrida informs the supernatural creatures she controls (including elves, 'Wood Spirits', fairies and goblins) that she is 'lured by the hopes of forfeit blood',

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<sup>501</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence 2*: 65.

<sup>502</sup> M.G Lewis, *Romantic Tales*, 4 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1808). 'Sir Guy the Seeker' features an aging knight who is tricked into eternally searching for a woman he sees imprisoned in a crystal tomb, which is lit by blue-flame torches held by the still-bleeding arms of dead knights. The dreamlike yet spectacular setting is comparable to Hardyknute's 'necromantic cavern'. 'Sir Guy the Seeker' was based on a British legend which Lewis was familiar with; this is in keeping with the folkloric element of the play, alongside the influence of 'The Erl King' and Danish legend. The heroine of 'Bertrand and Mary-Belle' experiences a warning dream about nine dancing maidens which conspire to be murdered earlier wives of her husband. The device of the warning dream is not only employed by Lewis in *One O' Clock* but also by J.R. Planché in his dramatisation of *The Vampyre*.

the mood is set as one of the supernatural and monstrosity.<sup>503</sup> This scene was added for the 1811 version of the drama – the earlier *The Wood Daemon* opened with the scene presenting Una’s dream which Lewis moved to the opening of Act Two.<sup>504</sup> The red moon and flames not only provide a breathtaking opening but also imagery of hell and bloodshed. Sangrida’s appearance in the play’s opening scene inside a dark and flaming cloud, as discussed above, recalls the advice which Lewis had previously given Scott about the symbolic (and mood-creating) qualities of colour during the composition of *Tales of Wonder*.<sup>505</sup> Before considering the play’s spectacular effects, including the character of Sangrida, it is first necessary to consider Matthew Lewis’s position in 1807-11.

### **Continued Conflict: Lewis in 1807-1811**

The most prominent feature of Lewis’s life in these years is conflict, both public and personal. Not only was England still at war with France, but the rift with his father continued until Cyril Jackson, the man also responsible for his studentship at Oxford, arranged their deathbed reconciliation in 1812. In an undated letter which appears, from its description of his father’s illness, to have been written in April or very early May 1812, Lewis claims

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<sup>503</sup> *One O’ Clock!* 11; 1. Sc.1.

<sup>504</sup> Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 106.

<sup>505</sup> In a letter which Scott dates February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1800, Lewis wrote ‘I Return you many thanks for your Ballad and the Extract, and I shall be very much obliged to your friend for the “Cloud King.” I must, however, make one criticism upon the stanzas which you sent me. The Spirit, being a wicked one, must not have such delicate wings as pale-blue ones. He has nothing to do with Heaven except to deface it with storms; and, therefore, in *The Monk*, I have fitted him with a pair of sable pinions, to which I must request your friend to adapt his stanza. With the others I am much pleased, as I am with your “Fire King”; but everybody makes the same objection to it, and expresses a wish that you had conformed your spirit to the description given of him in *The Monk*, where his office is to play the Will-o’-the-Wisp, and lead travelers [sic] into bogs, etc. It also objected to, his being removed from his native land, Denmark, to Palestine; and that the office assigned to him in your Ballad has nothing peculiar to the “Fire King,” but would have suited Arimanes, Beelzebub, or any other evil spirit as well.’ These concerns suggest that Lewis wrote his own stage directions. How much control he had over characters’ costumes is difficult to ascertain, but the costumes recorded in the two later versions of the script (there are none for the 1811 version) are in keeping with Lewis’s advice in this letter. The source for the letter is online, available from: <http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/works/poetry/apology/essay.html#appendix>, [Accessed 24/04/2011].

that 'it is now above nine years since I have had any intercourse with him that carried with it any kindness'.<sup>506</sup> Lewis characteristically informed his mother that Jackson was 'entitled to gratitude' from those who knew the writer and asked her to write a letter of thanks to the doctor.<sup>507</sup>

Macdonald argues persuasively that Lewis's estrangement from his father may be related not only to the presentation of a troubled father-son relationship in *Timour the Tartar* (though, in that play, it is the son who is presented as inflexible and the father keen to do the morally correct thing) but also to Lewis's play *Temper*, produced by the Drury Lane Company for the Lyceum in 1809. Macdonald differs from Peck here, in his speculation that the play was translated in 1809 rather than seventeen years previously, which would place it right at the beginning of his career. There are no father figures present in *The Wood Daemon* or *One O' Clock*, and that of *Adelgitha* (1807) is sidelined; however, it should be remembered that the idealised Viceroy Benvolio of *Venoni* belongs to the same middle period of Lewis's career as *Temper* and *The Wood Daemon*. Lewis did continue to have a close relationship with his mother until his death. The mother figures in Lewis's works do develop slightly over time. Those in earlier works (*The Monk*, *Venoni* and *Adelgitha* in particular) are well-meaning but flawed. Later mothers, such as Zorilda in *Timour the Tartar*, are presented as being more powerful. We do not meet any living mothers in *One O' Clock*, but Alexina's ghost is a strong protective presence, like the earlier ghost of Evelina. Her actions in passing her child to Clotilda present her as being intelligent and proactive. Leolyn's replacement mother, Clotilda, thinks of little but his safety and is a very different character to the comic, flirtatious older aunt that constituted the role in the play's 1807 incarnation.<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence 2*: 75-78, 77. Lewis goes on to claim that due to the split, his father's death will have little real effect on his life, but still pleads an aversion to seeing him suffer.

<sup>507</sup> Baron-Wilson. *Life and Correspondence 2*: 80.

<sup>508</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 175. The play is a translation of the same seventeenth century work which Goldsmith translated as *The Grumbler*.

Though Lewis's ambivalence towards his father has been explored by previous critics, his similar attitude towards high society has not. Lewis continued to move in high social circles but his approach was that of aspiration, albeit occasionally slightly disapproving. He knew, and stayed with, Lord Bessborough, the brother-in-law of the Duchess of Devonshire, and in late 1806 had referred to the Duke of Clarence as his 'new friend' in a letter to his mother.<sup>509</sup> Indeed, Lewis's delight in this notice paid to him by royalty is evident when he recounts that '[t]he Duke of Clarence (to whom I had never been presented, nor had even dined in his company in my life) came up to me on the race course, called me 'Lewis', *tout court*, talked to me as familiarly as if he had known me all his life'.<sup>510</sup> His tone, unsurprisingly, suggests that he was flattered. More hypocritical, given Lewis's comment quoted in the last chapter that he has a disregard for rank and socialises with people from the theatre, is a throwaway comment he makes about a woman he believed to be too low to socialise with his mother: he sneers that she 'has been a public actress at *Portsmouth* and other blackguard theatres'.<sup>511</sup> Given Lewis's commercial success at the patent theatres, there seems to be an unsympathetic self-satisfaction in his discussion of his own friends and his disapproval of his mother's.

Lewis's revelry in the circle his fame allowed him access to continued: in a letter dated '22d Sept' (1807?), from Inverary Castle, he grumbles about his health, but cannot help criticising the late hours which became a marker for sophistication in the early nineteenth century:

[D]ining at eight, supping at two, and going to bed at four in the morning, cannot possibly strengthen my nerves, my eyes, or my stomach . . . I am very regular in my mode of life, compared to many of the other inhabitants of the castle; for

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<sup>509</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1. The reference to Lord Bessborough is in a letter, also to his mother, dated only 'August 1', which Baron-Wilson orders as being from either 1805 or 1806 (366). The reference to the Duke of Clarence is in a later letter, dated 'Sept. 11': 389-92, 391.

<sup>510</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1: 387-388, 388.

<sup>511</sup> This letter is undated, though placed by Baron-Wilson as being from some time in the middle of 1806 or 1807. Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 1:358.

many of them do not go to bed till between six and seven; and between four and five in the morning is the time generally selected as being most convenient for playing at billiards.<sup>512</sup>

The implication of Lewis's assertion that such a lifestyle could not 'possibly strengthen' him and his pride in being more 'regular' in his habits is telling. It is clear that he revelled in his acceptance into high society, but the fact that he could not approve of all its aspects suggests that he also felt himself to be morally superior to it: in life, he attempted to mirror the rectitude of his heroes. Later in the letter he describes his interruption of a game of billiards by reminding one of their players of their status, shouting 'Shame! Shame! a married man!'<sup>513</sup> Another letter describes a stay with the Duke of Bedford, in which he continues to gloat over his aristocratic acquaintances:

The party in the house was very large, and most of them, not merely people whom I like, but whom I am intimate with; among others, Lord and Lady Holland, and the Duke of Argyle.<sup>514</sup>

There is some inconsistency here between his listing of aristocratic acquaintances and his earlier assertion to his mother that he had little regard for rank. On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1811, after the first run of *Timour the Tartar* but a month before that of *One O' Clock*, Lewis met John Cam Hobhouse, later Lord Broughton, when Hobhouse was awarded his M.A. at Cambridge.<sup>515</sup> Lewis also knew Hobhouse's friend Lord Byron and the latter's acquaintance Percy Bysshe Shelley, who would eventually witness Lewis's will at Villa Diodati.<sup>516</sup> Lewis's pleasure in high society may have led reviewers to abandon referring to him as a democrat. Alternatively, Lewis may have tempered his writing in order to avoid a repetition of such

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<sup>512</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 4-8, 5.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 8-9.

<sup>515</sup> Broughton, Lord [John Cam Hobhouse] *Recollections of a Long Life*, ed. Lady Dorchester. 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909, repr.; Kessinger, 2010) 35. Lewis's reasons for the Cambridge visit are not recorded.

<sup>516</sup> Hobhouse also records that Lewis read stories to him when both stayed with Byron in August 1817 (2: 75 and 76), that Lewis could be egotistical (2:76) and that Lewis read the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* when Byron completed it (2:77).

accusations. Either way, it seems that such accusations did not blight the end of his career, even if his melodramas continued to be denied as a serious art form.

Lewis's works, in fact, demonstrate what must have been a crowd-pleasing awareness of the conflict with France which, by 1811, had left England in severe financial difficulties, though he does not explore these. However, it is notable that Rugantino's virtuous guise is that of a man in the martial service of the Doge – in essence, the army. Likewise, *One O' Clock's* Rolf assures the infant Leolyn of his loyalty in the first scene of the play by remarking that he 'was for twelve years a Sailor'.<sup>517</sup> He also ends this scene with a ballad which reveals that his seafaring role was a naval one, in the Baltic: 'In breeze and battle five long years/I did a Seaman's duty!/When pleasure call'd, I clos'd my Ears,/And turn'd my Eyes from Beauty'.<sup>518</sup> Significantly, Rolf's naming his old occupation is enough to immediately reassure the aristocratic child that his protecting peasant is trustworthy. Though Rolf's ballad is one of the few in the play which does not add directly to the spectacle of the play or the development of its action and plot, it does not, tellingly, appear to have been cut in performance, as it also appears in both later versions of the text. As Rolf's role in the plot has nothing to do with a seafaring past, this aspect of his character seems to have been included as a response to the war with France: his role in protecting Leolyn, the rightful heir is an allegorical one.

### **Music and the Spectacular**

As the subtitles of two of the published versions of the play indicate, much of the spectacle of *One O' Clock* arises from, or is in some way marked by, the use of music. I have already explored the way in which *The Monk* gave an early indication of Lewis's awareness of the way music can heighten dramatic moments and his skill and blending such moments into the plot.

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<sup>517</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 10; 1. Sc.1.

<sup>518</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 14; 1. Sc.1.

The music for *One O' Clock* was again written by Michael Kelly, who does not record the style or arrangement of the music, nor the instruments used. 'P.P.', however, writing the prefatory remarks to the 1824 edition of the play, claims that '[t]he songs, as Lewis's always do, rise far beyond the level of those generally met with in operatic dramas.'<sup>519</sup>

Music is present throughout the drama. Even the child Leolyn has a guitar, which he plays for Clotilda, causing her to fall asleep when she needs to stay awake. As with Matilda's seduction of Ambrosio, the music becomes an aid to the action, rather than merely an 'illegitimate' replacement for it. The most spectacular piece of music and dance is the ballet which takes place at the end of Act Two, just before the arrival of Sangrida:

*Summer, Autumn, and Winter, make offerings to Una, but when Leolyn, who personates Spring, presents a wreath of flowers, Hardyknute starts up suddenly, and the music stops.*<sup>520</sup>

Again, Lewis uses the illegitimate theatrical form in which he was working skilfully, using the ballet not merely as a visual spectacle but also as a means of exposition. The audience becomes aware of the threat to Leolyn just as Hardyknute recognises the child and the threat to his own position. The stopping of the music is more significant, dramatically, than the preceding ballet. The music in this play has three primary functions: to mark confrontation between characters, adding to the tension of the drama; to provide exposition of a character's personality or emotions; and to present a traditional view of the class system. In the case of the first two functions, the music also allows plot development, as the above example of music marking a moment of confrontation reveals. For example, this is true of the confrontation between Rolf, Paulina and the gypsies in the first scene and of the 'Trio' between Hardyknute, Clotilda and Una's spurned suitor Oswy, as the knight recognises that his rival has infiltrated the castle disguised as a minstrel and Clotilda tries to diffuse the situation:

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<sup>519</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock* (Oxberry) vi.

<sup>520</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 58; 2. Sc.3. Leolyn's impersonation of Spring suggests his youth and his association with the re-establishment of order.



his 'Liege-Lord'.<sup>522</sup> This reference to the presence of an authority figure, notably absent from *The Monk*, is one which reassures Clotilda and threatens the usurper.

Moments of confrontation like that above are markedly more dramatic than the music which serves as exposition, examples of which include Oswy's autobiographical song in Act Two, Scene One, prior to his confrontation with Hardyknute, when he sings a song about a betrayed lover to Una, who is unaware of his identity until just before he sings.<sup>523</sup>

Paulina and Rolf often sing of their love for each other, reiterating the play's theme of faithfulness. In one of their songs, cut from Act Two Scene Two, presumably to reduce the length of performance, the first two verses also stress the importance of accepting a lowly place in life, sentimentalising the existence of the peasantry in doing so. A good example of this is Paulina's opening lines: 'Sons of gaudy wealth, I'll not/With envy view your lucky lot'.<sup>524</sup> However, perhaps the most striking instance of this is in Clotilda's ballad, cut from Act One Scene Two. Soon after she upbraids Una for her 'ambition' and 'vanity' in her intention to marry Hardyknute, she tells the audience that her sister will be 'a fresh example, that cloth of gold often *hides* a wounded heart, but never *heals* it', before singing a song about 'Ellen, the Villager's Daughter' who marries 'The Lord of the Glen', delighted at being made a 'Lady', only to regret it later when the Lord loses interest in her, leaving her 'forlorn with reproaches to load/The Morning, which made her a Lady'.<sup>525</sup> The song reinforces the play's thematic concern with overreachers, as does the visual spectacle of the play.

Indeed, it is difficult to fully separate the visual and aural aspects of the play's spectacle, as they are often used simultaneously. One such event is the arrival of Sangrida during the banquet, which provides the cliff-hanger

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<sup>522</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 69-70; 3. Sc.2.

<sup>523</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 40-1; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>524</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 56; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>525</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 25-6; 1. Sc.2.

ending to Act Two. After the music ‘becomes languid, and confused, and at length the Dance ceases abruptly’, Clotilda, Guelpho, Paulina, Una and Rolf sing a finale in which they express their fear of a woman who has just entered and is as yet unseen by the audience. This song builds anticipation in the audience, priming them for the arrival of Sangrida. The music ceases again as Hardyknute speaks to Una, then ‘the Croud [sic] opens – a Female habited in black and covered with a thick veil appear sitting at the Table’.<sup>526</sup> ‘P.P.’ gives a convincing account of the efficacy of both the music and its cessation for heightening the tension of the scene:

Gradually [. . .] the mirth becomes languid, the music grows discordant and dies away, the dance ceases, a mysterious horror takes possession of the revellers, and a chilling silence prevails where just before the tones of mirth and melody were heard.<sup>527</sup>

After Hardyknute follows the woman upstairs, the other five major characters continue their song, until:

*A loud burst of Thunder – Sudden and total darkness – Hardyknute, pale and wild, with his sword drawn, rushes down the staircase.*<sup>528</sup>

The description of Hardyknute’s appearance and movement is typical of the physical characteristics of leading male roles in illegitimate forms of drama. Lewis, however, rather than sentimentalising such irrationality, presents it as endangering order. This leads to the spectacular end of the act:

[*Thunder again – the Great Window bursts open, and Sangrida appears in a Car drawn by Dragons.*]

*Full Chorus.* – ‘Tis the Wood Daemon!

*Sangrida.* – Remember! – [*pointing to Leolyn, who in terror is kneeling near Hardyknute.*]

*Una.* – I die!

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<sup>526</sup> Lewis, *One O’ Clock!* 59; 2. Sc.3.

<sup>527</sup> Lewis, *One O’ Clock* (Oxberry) iv.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

*Clotilda.* – [rushing towards Leolyn, whom Hardyknute at that moment grasps by the arm] – My Child!

*Sangrida* – Remember! – [She ascends in a shower of fire]

*Chorus.* - - Fly, Sorceress, fly!<sup>529</sup>

Here, music clearly reinforces and develops the use of visual spectacle, which is hyperbolic even by Lewis's standards, involving a dragon-drawn carriage (evidence of Sangrida's monstrosity) and fireworks.

'P.P'. was also aware of the effect of lighting in the theatre:

The effect is wrought to a climax by the terrific intrusion of the Wood Daemon, with the subsequent appalling darkness and striking catastrophe. Description, however, can convey but a faint idea of the impression which this well-contrived incident produces in representation.<sup>530</sup>

P.P. is an important early critic of Lewis not only because he has recorded the effect of Lewis's famous spectacle, but also because he identifies what later critics either miss or neglect – the parallels with Renaissance drama:

There are few scenes in the whole circle of the drama – scarcely even that appalling one in "Macbeth" after the murder of *Duncan*, - which so inspire an audience with a

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<sup>529</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 50; 2. Sc.3. Aspects of Sangrida can be seen in the earlier veiled, knife-wielding Bleeding Nun and in the way people react to her appearance:

Others with gaping mouths and eyes wide-stretched pointed to a Figure, supposed to have created this disturbance. It represented a Female of more than human stature, clothed in a habit of some religious order. Her face was veiled; On her arm hung a chaplet of beads; Her dress was in several places stained with the blood which trickled from a wound upon her bosom. In one hand she held a Lamp, in the other a large Knife. (*The Monk* 138)

Just a few pages later, the legend of the Bleeding Nun is explained, and prefigures that of the later character Sangrida in *The Wood Daemon* and *One O' Clock!*:

This custom, if you will believe the Baron, She still continues. He is fully persuaded, that on the fifth of May of every fifth year, as soon as the Clock strikes One the Door of the haunted Chamber opens . . . (140-141).

Given that Lewis attributed the origins of Sangrida to a Danish legend, it seems likely that the same legend influenced the behaviour of the Bleeding Nun, just as Siddons's Lady Macbeth influenced her appearance.

<sup>530</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock* (Oxberry) iv.

silent shuddering awe as does that of the Banquet in the second Act.<sup>531</sup>

Because of the focus on performance, rather than acting style, morality or likeliness of plot, P.P.'s comments reveal not only similarities between Lewis's overreachers and their precedents, but also on the *effect* that these have on the audience. The audience of *Macbeth* will be struck by the unnatural nature of his crime, the murder of his king, cousin and patron. Lewis's audience, via the contrasting celebratory music and dance and the ensuing 'appalling darkness' would also be made aware of the unnatural nature of Hardyknute's status and his inevitable, impending, downfall.

### **Visual Spectacle: Monstrosity**

Despite being the eponymous character, Sangrida only appears three times in the play: once in each act, and always to create spectacle at a crucial point. Sangrida provides exposition of the plot and a dramatic opening in Act One Scene One and terror and suspense at the end of the second act, as well as ending the final act by claiming Hardyknute. In wielding a knife and stabbing Hardyknute, Sangrida recalls a number of Lewis's earlier female characters: Matilda, *The Castle Spectre*'s Angela and Adelgitha. Moreover, Sangrida's words of triumph ('thou'rt mine') could easily be interpreted as an in-joke by those in the audience familiar with Lewis's novel: not only do they mimic those of the Bleeding Nun, but also of Satan as he claims Ambrosio at the end of the novel, who crows 'You are mine, and Heaven itself cannot rescue you from my power'.<sup>532</sup> These words are complicated by the fact that, like Matilda's, Sangrida's gender is ambiguous – whereas Matilda disguises herself as a boy before revealing that she is female and eventually that she is a demon, the scripts of *One O' Clock* all reiterate that Sangrida is female, though many of the legends that inform the character feature a male demon, and she was played by a man in both 1811 and 1833. Conversely, the character of Auriol, the benevolent 'Guardian

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid.

<sup>532</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 79; 3. Sc.3.; *The Monk* 440.

Genius of Holstein' whom the audience sees manipulate Una's dreams to warn her to protect Leolyn, is described in the script as male, but was portrayed by actresses.<sup>533</sup> This has likewise been passed over by critics, both in Lewis's time and since. It is interesting that the picture by Cruikshank of Sangrida used as the frontispiece to the Cumberland edition of the text, with wild hair and holding aloft a wand with a snake writhing around it, recalls the depiction of 'French Liberty' by Lord George Murray from 1792, in which a sharp-featured woman, described by Anne K. Mellor as 'an Amazonian harridan with Medusa-like, snaky hair' personifies the effects of the revolution. She is labelled with words including 'equality', 'madness' 'cruelty', 'ingratitude' and 'national and private ruin'.<sup>534</sup>

Auriol only appears in one scene, at the beginning of the Second Act, which is a parallel to the opening featuring Sangrida. Auriol also appears sitting on a cloud, but those which surround him are 'brilliant' rather than dark. He conjures a dream which not only features the ghosts of Leolyn's parents, but also the following spectacle:

*The Clouds open above, and show on each side of Auriol  
Four Children in white, crowned with flowers, and all  
pointing to a wound upon the heart.*<sup>535</sup>

The eight children are the previous sacrifices that Hardyknute has made to Sangrida, but their appearance echoes Macbeth's vision, experienced as he asks the witches for advice in Act IV Scene i, and is presented with three visions who speak in riddles and a prophetic glimpse of the future kings of Scotland. Una's dream, however, reveals the misdeeds of the past rather than a thwarted future. In both *Macbeth* and *One O' Clock*, the supernatural vision points to social order: Shakespeare indicates its restoration as an unavoidable fate; Lewis reminds Una and the audience of the threat it faces and invites restoration. Shakespeare wrote to flatter the new King of England and Scotland, Lewis during a time of uncertainty over the future of

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<sup>533</sup>The part was first played by Miss Bristowe and later by Miss Lee. Why the part became a 'breeches part' is unclear and it has been likewise passed over by critics.

<sup>534</sup> See Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2002) 143, and *One O' Clock!* (Cumberland):2

<sup>535</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 37;2. Sc.1.

the war with France and its outcome. Both the similarities and the differences here are important. Shakespeare, writing several centuries after the events he portrayed, knew how they would end. Lewis could not know what the outcome of the war with France would be, making its threat an immediate one. By referencing the Shakespeare play, however, *One O' Clock* offers reassurance. Sangrida, therefore, personifies Hardyknute's ambition and its consequences; her supernatural nature serves not only as visual spectacle, but to reiterate Hardyknute's monstrosity.

Hardyknute shares qualities with both Ambrosio and Osmond. Like Osmond, he has a fear of the afterlife, which is a marker of his defining characteristic: guilt. When threatening Una and explaining his situation to her, a panicking Hardyknute says:

To end *thy* life were but to end an illusive dream, and for *thee* to die were to wake in eternal happiness: But for *Me*, for *Me!* Oh! think, what would be *my* fate; Think. . . . what I dare not utter.<sup>536</sup>

Hardyknute's inability to accept his fate is comparable to that of Ambrosio, who ends his life:

Blind, maimed, helpless, and despairing, venting his rage in blasphemy and curses, execrating his existence, yet dreading the arrival of death destined to yield him up to greater torments [.]<sup>537</sup>

Bertrand Evans's description of Hardyknute, meanwhile, draws out his similarities to Osmond:

Like earlier tyrants, [Hardyknute] stalks through the castle and the dungeons, one minute sunk in gloom, the next exhilarated by a sudden thought of evil. Remorse gnaws him, and he, like others, is made to speak a speech for morality.<sup>538</sup>

Evans omits the fact that Osmond and Hardyknute are prey to the fear of retribution much more than genuine remorse – when about to sacrifice Una to the Wood Daemon, Hardyknute confesses that he would rather sacrifice

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<sup>536</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 76-7; 3.Sc.3.

<sup>537</sup> *The Monk* 363.

<sup>538</sup> Evans, *Gothic Drama* 152.

himself – but he has more to fear in the after-life than she does. Evans does not explore which ‘earlier tyrants’ Hardyknute is descended from, nor what the significance of this may be. In fact, Hardyknute shows little ‘gloom’ at all. What is significant about his character is his monstrosity, which *is* similar to that which I have shown Osmond to demonstrate. Both are evidently usurpers, but Osmond is an aristocratic one whose corruption is dramatically portrayed through his doppelganger Hassan.<sup>539</sup> The lower-class Hardyknute’s monstrosity is portrayed through his association with Sangrida, as discussed above, and his deformed body, likewise a visual metaphor for his actions.

The first act ends with another dramatic scene, this time featuring a procession which includes ‘*Dwarfs, bearing gigantic Armour – HACHO, held by four squires, and struggling to break his chains*’.<sup>540</sup> Whereas processions in *Venoni* signify the order associated with the Viceroy, this reveals the disorder associated with Hardyknute. In his deception following his rescue of Una from Hacho, he is an inversion of the chivalric values expressed by Rugantino, Percy and Adelmorn. Importantly, one of the songs cut in the 1833 performance and therefore possibly in 1811 immediately follows this procession and features Hardyknute presenting himself in such chivalric terms, singing that ‘injured Virtue’ could ‘claim redress and safety from [his] sword’. The chorus of this song urges that all should ‘Wage the fight/In Virtue’s right/’Till life’s last drop were poured’.<sup>541</sup> The inclusion of this song would make Hardyknute appear more duplicitous, even if its omission shows him, unrelentingly, as a villain.<sup>542</sup>

The tableau which ends the first act sums up the disorder which needs to be rectified in the remainder of the play:

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<sup>539</sup> See 74-8.

<sup>540</sup> Lewis, *One O’ Clock!* 32; 1. Sc.3.

<sup>541</sup> Lewis, *One O’ Clock!* 33; 1. Sc.3.

<sup>542</sup> Of course, if the song is considered discretely from its oddly ironic association from Hardyknute, however, then its sentiment can easily be perceived as one which supports the war with France – but anything in favour of military conflict would be unusual in Lewis.

*Hacho breaks from his Guards, and threatens Una, but is seized again, and thrown on the ground – Una and Hardyknute are exalted on bucklers; while Hacho lies at their feet, and the rest form a Groupe round them.*<sup>543</sup>

Indeed, Hardyknute's association with such monstrosity as that of the procession and tableau serves to reveal his own – when he confesses his reasons for his pact with Sangrida to Una, he admits that he was 'born deformed', 'voluptuous', 'proud and a Peasant and that he was 'poor' and 'trampled on' by 'the rich'.<sup>544</sup> Earlier, he has already informed the audience that he could not 'endure to resume [his] native deformity of person', revealing his vanity as well as ambition.<sup>545</sup> The most striking example of Hardyknute's monstrosity is Clotilda's direct comparison between Sangrida and Hardyknute: to Guelpho's comment that the Wood Daemon must be responsible for Leolyn's disappearance, she impatiently responds with 'Yes! Yes! A Daemon: but 'tis a Daemon in human shape!'<sup>546</sup> Here, Lewis uses physical deformity as a symbol for Hardyknute's moral corruption – that of over-reaching his ordained place in society. In doing so, he is comparable to the Renaissance villains Macbeth and Faustus. As Isaac Kramnick has noted:

The position man occupies in the chain of being is a middle state where, half-divine and half-bestial, half-reason and half-passion, he must struggle with an inherent duality in his nature . . . Should the basic structure of nature be violated, the traditional relationship between man and beast was likewise threatened, and man appeared more monster than man. Grotesqueness and monstrosity were used as devices for characterization throughout Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. The overreacher destroys the balance and order inherent in nature and will be affected either physically, or mentally. And so the Renaissance Marlowe dooms his Faustus.<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 35;1. Sc.3.

<sup>544</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 76; 3. Sc.3.

<sup>545</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 71; 3. Sc.2.

<sup>546</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 65; 3. Sc.1.

<sup>547</sup> Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and his Circle* 216-217.

And so, Kramnick might add, is Richard III infamously deformed. As Kramnick identifies, doomed Renaissance villains have two overriding characteristics – they attempt to change their place in the chain of being and they show signs of physical or psychological degeneration as a result. Both of these also apply to Lewis's villains. The nostalgia implicitly inherent in the early nineteenth-century fashion for plays featuring overreachers and their demise indicates an awareness and fear of a society undergoing change.

It is evident, then, that Lewis's villains share much with those of English Renaissance drama. Much recent criticism of the Shakespearean influence on the Gothic novel has pointed out that Shakespeare had become a patriotic figure, a symbol of nationalism, though famously dismissed by Voltaire, and that, therefore, a reference to Shakespeare was an attempt to add cultural legitimacy to what had been considered a lesser art form.<sup>548</sup> The influence of Renaissance villains in Lewis's works, however, suggests more than this claim to legitimacy. The Elizabethan period is a strong one for Lewis to invoke. Not only is it considered a golden age for drama, it was also marked by a crisis with Europe – notably Spain, in the form of the Armada, and threats to Elizabeth's reign from those who considered other candidates more legitimate. The popular drama of the period reflects such tensions in plots which shore up the feudal hierarchy. Over two centuries later, with England faring badly in the war with France, enduring conflict with America, experiencing conflict related to the Slave Trade and the threat to the social hierarchy presented by the madness of George III and the example of the French Revolution, Lewis can be seen to turn to the overreachers of the past as a warning to his audience.

The struggle between reason and passion is precisely the struggle experienced by Osmond and Reginald in *The Castle Spectre*, with contrasting results. Like Venoni, Osmond's speech degenerates into broken

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<sup>548</sup> For example, Gamer and Miles, in their essay 'Gothic Shakespeare on the Romantic stage' (in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. Drakakis and Townshend: 131-152), refer to 'bardolatry' (134) and argue that Charles Fox was associated with usurpation and the 'voice of the people' (141). They also consider Shakespearean aspects of *The Monk* (145).

raging; Reginald maintains a classically-inflected control and calmness. Hardyknute's disordered speech in the play's penultimate scene, as he prepares to murder Leolyn, is certainly 'spectacular' in its intensity – and, I would argue, monstrous. Kramnick's 'reason' and 'passion' are evident in his determination and fear, and it is evident that the latter is in the ascendant:

It must be so! that Boy is the lost son of Ruric! Oh! were there no other motive for his death . . . but my fatal bond. . . . the dreadful penalty of its forfeiture – Ha! at that thought how my blood curdles! - Ages of agony crowd [sic] before me! the earth vomits flame to blast me; Snakes hiss in my ears, and crush me in their loathsome folds! - No, no; there's no retreating! and even might I still retract, could I bear to exchange wealth and power for obscurity and contempt? Could I endure to resume my native deformity of person? Could I resign Una? Never, never! Before the clock strikes "One", my dreadful task must be performed! away then! Leolyn, Leolyn, the dagger aimed at *your* bosom most gladly would I plunge in my own, could I but sink into the grave as pure as *thou* wilt!

By contrast, the mild-mannered Oswy, having overheard this speech, responds in a calm manner which suggests that his reason is unimpaired:

At length He's gone – How passion seemed to shake him!  
'Twas surely the remembrance of some dreadful crime.<sup>549</sup>

This speech of Hardyknute's varies a little across the three editions. That of 1824 is the same as that of 1811, above, but in the performance script of 1833 the punctuation contains fewer exclamation marks, calming the speech – if only by a little; 'obscurity' is replaced by 'poverty', highlighting that the earlier version of the character is motivated by vanity; and the sentence beginning 'the earth vomits flame' is omitted. In 1811, with the war with France at its most critical point, the agonies experienced by an overreacher are presented with great hyperbole. The exclamation marks and question marks, indicating frustration, disorder and panic, make this speech – and Hardyknute's character – another aspect of the play's spectacle.

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<sup>549</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 70-1; 3. Sc.2.

### **Stagecraft, the supernatural and the restoration of order**

Just as the play's spectacular nature can be seen as the natural development of the sensational in Lewis's works, so his deployment of such incidents becomes more sophisticated. In *The Monk*, the supernatural is presented as an aid to the threat posed by Ambrosio's pride, but not its cause, as Lucifer takes care to explain at the end. In *The Castle Spectre* and *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*, the supernatural is used in a Shakespearean fashion, as a mark of disorder. Lewis combines these uses in *One O' Clock*: as is also the case in *The Castle Spectre* and *Adelmorn, the Outlaw*, the supernatural aids the virtuous characters as they go about restoring social order. Like Ambrosio, Hardyknute has transgressive desires and he is the eventual victim of supernatural agents. Significantly, in *Rugantino*, which focuses on the nullification of threat to the Doge of Venice, and *Venoni*, which presents a hero struggling with and finally resisting (rather than rectifying) a threat to his social position, there are no supernatural events, because in both cases a legitimate paternal character maintains at least some authority.

As already discussed, the supernatural is used in the first two acts to set up Hardyknute's monstrosity, the threat of Sangrida and the protecting figure of Auriol. In the third act, Lewis employs the supernatural exclusively to facilitate the restoration of order to Holstein and Leolyn to his birthright. In doing so, Lewis takes his supernatural characters to their natural conclusion. The agency of supernatural characters in Lewis's dramas increases throughout his career. Evelina's ghost influences the actions of Angela by providing timely distraction for Osmond, and the vision experienced by Adelmorn urges him to action. The majority of these functions can be seen in *One O' Clock*. We have already seen how Auriol provides a supernatural warning within a visionary dream. In Act Three, the supernatural beings urge on Una and punish Hardyknute. At the end of Act Three, Scene One, the clock strikes midnight as Una attempts to decipher where Leolyn has been hidden. A lengthy quotation is necessary in order to grasp the extent of the spectacle:

*[With the first stroke of the Bell a blue light illuminates the Portraits, which become animated; the Pedestals, on which they stand, move forwards; they kneel, and clasp their hands.] – They kneel! they supplicate! – Speak! What must I do? – Ha! – They point to yon Golden Tassel! ‘Tis there then, that the secret Spring . . . . Blessed Spirits, I obey you! [She seizes a blazing firebrand, springs upon the Bed, and draws the Tassel.] – Leolyn, Leolyn! I will rescue thee or die! Away! – [The Bed sinks with her, while the Portraits return to their places.]<sup>550</sup>*

The sinking bed is the means by which Hardyknute has abducted Leolyn. The moving portraits depict Leolyn’s parents, who act to restore their descendent to power. The midnight bell is also a reminder that Una only has one hour left to save the child.

The following scene focuses on Hardyknute’s confrontation with Clotilda, before the final scene provides the spectacular denouement. The scene opens in a striking manner:

*A Necromantic Cavern with a burning Lamp. – In the back is a grated Door with steps, standing open: Above is a Gallery – In the Centre is an Altar, round which curl two enormous Snakes, on whose heads rests a large golden Platter. On the Altar stand several candlesticks, not lighted – On one side is an open Pedestal, the height of a Man, on which kneels the Brazen Statue of a Giant, who supports a Clock on his left shoulder, and points to it with his right hand. The Clock marks Half-past Twelve – On the other side is a Rock with a grated Entrance below, fastened by an enormous padlock and a chain, which hangs from a Brazen Pillar on the top of the Rock. – to this pillar LEOLYN is seen chained, while his Guittar [sic] lies by him.<sup>551</sup>*

The bronze giant is another indication of Hardyknute’s monstrosity and his unnatural bargain. Leolyn’s imprisonment recalls that of Reginald and Josepha; as Peck has recognised, Lewis used the set of a dungeon with a grated door with a gallery above it in ‘five or six’ works, as well as the

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<sup>550</sup> Lewis, *One O’ Clock!* 67; 3. Sc.1.

<sup>551</sup> Lewis, *One O’ Clock!* 72-3; 3. Sc.3.

menacing tolling of bells.<sup>552</sup> There are several possible reasons for Lewis's reliance on such a setting, including the mood he wished to create, habit, the conventions of genre and more pragmatic ones relating to expediency of exposition and perhaps even the materials the theatres had available. What is certain is that the clock in Hardyknute's dungeon makes it the most spectacular of all.

The extent of the spectacle is not yet revealed, however. As Una hides, waiting for a chance to rescue Leolyn, Hardyknute sings an incantation, during which '*a stream of blue fire issues from the jaws of the snakes, and a gigantic Golden Head rises in the centre of the Altar*'. This head and the flames vanish after '*A loud crash of discordant Music*'.<sup>553</sup> The influence of *Macbeth* can again be seen in the head which rises on the altar. The most spectacular events of all, however, are reserved for the moment of restoration. Firstly, Leolyn, who has been dumb throughout the play, twice calls that '*The Clock has Struck*'. The stage directions state that he does this '*Recovering his voice by a violent exertion*' – exactly the same words which Clotilda used previously when recounting what physicians had told her would happen to Leolyn.<sup>554</sup> This parallel between the spoken element of the script and the stage directions indicates that Lewis wrote the latter himself.

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<sup>552</sup> See Peck:

The most frequently recurring of these basic scenes is the Gothic dungeon, which Lewis had loaded with Gothic significance in *The Monk*. In his dramas it appears five or six times. A composite picture reveals it as dank and cold, with ponderously thick walls. No daylight ever reaches it, but by the dim flame of a small lamp one sees chains, a small jug, a miserable straw pallet, and a grated iron door. The unfortunate captive, usually guiltless, has pined away here from ten to twenty years mourning for his loved ones, without hope of ever again seeing the sun or hearing a human voice. An interesting detail which Lewis used in four of his dungeon scenes and several times elsewhere is an open gallery or passage above the vault and leading up to it, along which figures are seen slowly passing, guided by a lamp or torch. (Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* 111)

Such dungeons are to be found in *The Monk*, *The Castle Spectre*, *Venoni*, *One O' Clock* and *The Captive*.

<sup>553</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 75; 3. Sc.3.

<sup>554</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 78; 3. Sc.3. Clotilda reveals 'that a famous Physician assured[her] that at nine or ten years old the Boy would recover his speech by some violent exertion' (2;3 1. Sc.2).

The form of melodrama, as Peter Brooks has identified, is concerned with articulation, and muteness is a common and symbolic affliction.<sup>555</sup> Leolyn's return to speech is representative of his return to his birthright, after being symbolically silenced by Hardyknute. He and Una have been aided by the articulation of supernatural agencies. The supernatural is the means by which the 'natural' order asserts itself, as in the play's Renaissance influences. So, Hardyknute is punished for his overreaching. Firstly, the bronze snakes spit out blue flames. Then, after Sangrida stabs Hardyknute:

*He falls into the arms of four fiends [. . .] the snakes twist themselves round him; Sangrida stands over him, and they all sink. – the Statue and the Rock disappear; the Cavern vanishes, and Leolyn and Una find themselves in the Great Hall of the Castle.*<sup>556</sup>

Order is now returned to the castle – Una is reunited with Oswy, a lover from her own rank in life, and Clotilda instructs the 'vassals' to 'kneel'. The following tableau rectifies the disorder of that which ended the first act:

*All kneel, except Four of the Vassals, who raise Leolyn on their bucklers; Clotilda having previously placed a diadem on his head.*<sup>557</sup>

At this point, a chorus chants 'Hail, Lord of Holstein! Hail! All-Hail!' as the play ends.<sup>558</sup>

Lewis also returns to the concept of 'gratitude' as a means of encouraging obedience. The term appears nine times in this short play. At the same time, his use of a lower-class usurper, magically rendered 'invulnerable in battle' allows him to hint at the war affecting the country and, in particular, to present Napoleon as monstrous.<sup>559</sup> Lewis's strongest depiction of Napoleon, however, was in *Timour the Tartar*, discussed in the following section.

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<sup>555</sup> Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination* 56.

<sup>556</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 79; 3. Sc.3.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid. 'All hail' recalls the ending of *Macbeth*, as Macduff and others celebrate Malcolm becoming the King of Scotland. Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 5.9.25.

<sup>559</sup> Lewis, *One O' Clock!* 76; 3. Sc.2.

**‘Sedulously contrived for show’:**

*Timour the Tartar*

(8,281 words)



Though *Timour the Tartar*, up till now, has received little modern critical attention, it is the only one of Lewis's plays other than *The Castle Spectre* which exists in a recent, annotated critical edition. Jeffrey N. Cox and Michael Gamer include it in *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama* for its use of music to heighten action, Lewis's use of spectacle on a large scale and, importantly, the way it engaged with contemporary issues, including the war with France, orientalism (due to Britain's then-new 'domination' of India and Napoleon's entry into Egypt) and the feminism of Mary Wollstonecraft (through the presentation of the character of Zorilda).<sup>560</sup> It is loosely based on Christopher Marlowe's *Tamberlaine*. The eponymous character has usurped a throne and holds the small child Agib, rightful Prince of Mingrelia, hostage in a tower, where Oglou, Timour's father, has been treating him more kindly than his son is aware of. Agib's mother, Zorilda, arrives disguised as a warrior princess, whom Timour has expressed an interest in marrying, and, with the help of Oglou, frees Agib. When Timour is overthrown, Zorilda spares his life due to her gratitude to Oglou. The play's reviews were mixed, with some finding the use of spectacle created by the setting and the horses excessive and degrading to drama. More importantly, some critics appear to have approved of the play's possible political relevance, praising it for its apparent criticism of Napoleon.

Margaret Baron-Wilson writes at length about *Timour the Tartar*, but found it something to be excused rather than celebrated. She is critical of the form of hippodrama, going as far as to claim that unless matters improved the stage, will 'instead of affording amusement to the intelligent and refined, serve only as a raree-show for children, or a gazing-stock for fools'.<sup>561</sup> She attempts to exculpate Lewis by stressing that he only wrote *Timour the Tartar* at the request of Harris, and mentions twice that he ensured that it could be performed without horses. Her praise of the play, though scant, is

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<sup>560</sup> Cox and Gamer, eds., *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama* xxiv. The play is included in this anthology: 97-116.

<sup>561</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 61.

interesting. The claim that *Timour the Tartar*, ‘although chiefly spectacle, is by no means deficient in the dramatic requisites so undeniably Lewis’s forte; it abounds in matters of contrivance, connivance, concealment, and escape’ recalls the *Poetical Register*’s defence of *One O’ Clock* as being ‘more than a mere spectacle’.<sup>562</sup> The play was influential – both imitated and parodied, and Baron-Wilson, in 1839, regrets its detrimental effect on drama and suggests apologetically that Lewis would have shared this regret.<sup>563</sup> This view is typical of the way in which drama of this era has often not been taken seriously, but needs reconsidering in the light of both earlier criticism of the play and more recent academic interest in Romantic-era drama.

As discussed previously, in 1811, England was close to capitulating in the war with France. Gothic melodramas commonly included, as George Taylor points out throughout his *The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789-1805*, villains based upon Napoleon Bonaparte, despite the censoring of anything overtly political in the ‘legitimate’ patent theatres in London.<sup>564</sup> As the work of Simon Bainbridge has also identified, several ‘archetypal historical, literary and mythical figures’ were used on stage to depict Napoleon, including Tamburlaine, Bajazeth (defeated by Tamburlaine in Marlowe’s play) and Macbeth, whose influence on Lewis’s villains is explored above.<sup>565</sup> Jane Moody has described Timour as a ‘Napoleonic bogeyman’ whose ‘oriental world [is] characterised by physical peril and spectacular ideological confrontation’.<sup>566</sup> Perhaps because of its patriotic credentials, its spectacular nature (discussed below) or both, *Timour the*

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<sup>562</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 63.

<sup>563</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 64.

<sup>564</sup> See George Taylor, *The French Revolution and the London Stage 1789-1805* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000).

<sup>565</sup> See Simon Bainbridge, *Napoleon and English Romanticism*, Cambridge Studies in Romanticism 14 (Cambridge: CUP, 1995) 13.

<sup>566</sup> Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre* 100. Moody also identifies the illustrations of Skelt’s toy theatre sheet as an indication of just how spectacular the play’s costumes and props were (Moody 100-101).

*Tartar* was a commercial and popular success. As Macdonald and Cox and Gamer have recorded, its first run was for forty-four nights and it gave rise to a series of parodies (a mark of its being well-known, if not critically respected).<sup>567</sup>

Several contemporary reviews found such a similarity between Lewis's mocking presentation of Timour as a villain and Napoleon. The Whig newspaper *The Morning Chronicle* of April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1811, though critical of its genre, noted that 'Some part of the piece may be considered as a satire upon a neighbouring Emperor. *Timour* is a usurper, and raises his needy relations to princely dignity'.<sup>568</sup> The edition of *The Sun* for the same date made similar points:

The author has evidently intended to have some reference to the Usurper of France in the character and elevation of the Tartar Chief. Timour, like him, has forced himself, by artifice and villainy, into the seat of power, and like him exalts his beggarly connections to situations of Royalty. [. . .] the fable is well calculated.<sup>569</sup>

If *The Sun*'s reviewer is warmer in his praise than *The Morning Chronicle*'s and seems to berate Napoleon as much as laud Lewis, then the reviewer for *Bell's Weekly Messenger* (May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1811) positively bounces with glee at the chance to do the same, even expressing his appreciation by comparing the play to a military campaign:

Bonaparte was certainly never in a more miserable condition than he is at present . . . Lord Wellington has defeated him in Portugal; General Graham has routed him at Barrosa; and Mr. Kemble . . . is making a most spirited campaign against him at Covent Garden, borrowing the cavalry of Astley, and bringing to bear on him the whole park of artillery of the

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<sup>567</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 177-8; Cox and Gamer, *Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama* 98. Cox and Gamer also note that the play is mentioned almost thirty years later in Charles Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839). Macdonald has also recorded the claim that Dickens may have been familiar with *The Castle Spectre* and that similarities exist between Lewis's most well-known play and Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* – set during the French Revolution. See Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 223.

<sup>568</sup> *The Morning Chronicle* No. 13,096: 2, included in Cox and Gamer, eds., *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama*: 344-5.

<sup>569</sup> *The Sun*, No. 5,814: 3, in Cox and Gamer, eds: 345.

Playhouse, he has attacked him in his own palace . . . Mr. Kemble deserves as much praise for his poetry, as for his pageantry . . . he did not look to his own interest than the interest of the nation, we . . . are perfectly persuaded, as well from the gravity of this Piece, as from its spirit of poetry and magnificence, that Mr. Kemble fully intended it as a national boon; and in his attack on Bonaparte, he is as much in earnest as General Graham himself. We have only to express our hopes, that this spirit of patriotism and ingenious allegorical representation will extend beyond the walls of Covent Garden-house . . . in holding up the great Usurper, the Timour of Europe, to universal execration.<sup>570</sup>

The review's hyperbolic metaphor may render it difficult to take seriously, but what is acknowledged here is Lewis's conservative patriotism and its representation through dramatic spectacle. This response is far from that which met *The Monk*, though Lewis's aim to warn against transgression by showing its results had remained unaltered since the 1790s. It would appear, therefore, that Lewis's works have been used by a range of reviewers to make political points, not unusual for reviewers at the time, but paradoxically resulting in his early works being held up as dangerous and his final piece as an example to the nation.

Other than comparisons of Timour with Bonaparte, it was the spectacle that reviewers concentrated on, especially that involving the horses. *Timour the Tartar* is possibly Lewis's most spectacular work for the stage; with its costumes, eastern setting, water-borne escape, African boys and, of course, the acting horses. Some reviewers were more impressed than others. *The Poetical Register* printed the cynical 'Epigram on the representation of Timour the Tartar': 'Let the *Houynnhms* no longer be reckoned a fable/Now all our great actors are brought from the stable!'<sup>571</sup> *The Dramatic*

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<sup>570</sup> *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, No.787:137, in Cox and Gamer, eds.:348-9. This review was reprinted verbatim in the issue of *Belle Assemblée*, for June of that year: the only apparent difference between the two is that *Belle Assemblée* only uses upper-case letters for names and at the beginning of sentences. See *Belle Assemblée, or court and fashionable magazine* [online]. Available from: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:bp:&rft\\_dat=xri:bp:article:e526-1811-000-00-000141](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e526-1811-000-00-000141), June 1811:70-71. [Accessed 01/09/2011].

<sup>571</sup> *Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1810*: 89. The epigram is attributed to 'B.H. Browne, .M.D.

*Censor*'s reviewer called *Timour* 'another Vandal experiment on the public taste for scenery, horsemanship and mummery'.<sup>572</sup> The reviewer does not go as far as to consider the parallels between this 'Vandal' dramatic form and the characterisation of the usurper that it is employed to delineate, but 'Oliver Old Times', in a letter to the editor of *The Dramatic Censor*, pointed out that the play's popularity was due to the country being at war – 'the military spirit is diffused from the cot to the throne'.<sup>573</sup> The *European Magazine* for May 1811, however, noted that the play 'surpasses in splendour any thing of the kind that we have seen on the stage', and 'as a literary work it will not rank very high; but as a dramatic production, rich in contrivance and incident, and above all, interest, it is entitled to great praise'.<sup>574</sup> The reviewer goes on to look more closely at the spectacle, which I return to later in this chapter:

In the first act, a splendid combat scene exceeded all that we had previously witnessed. The opening of the second act charmed us with a scene representing a chamber in the castle of *Timour*. – Than this display of eastern grandeur nothing could be more superb. The last scene, in which the castle of *Timour*, and a beautiful water-fall, are the most conspicuous objects, would be injured in its effect by too minute a description. It is impossible to conceive anything more striking; and the exertions of the horses have a wonderful

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<sup>572</sup> *The Dramatic Censor*, May 1811: 241-5, in Cox and Gamer, eds.:346-7, 346.

<sup>573</sup> *The Dramatic Censor*, May 1811:244n., in Cox and Gamer, eds.: 347-8, 347.

<sup>574</sup> The reviewer for this periodical also claims that the use of horses on stage was objected to:

Before the commencement of the piece, it was evident that there was a strong party against it. The opposition threw a great number of hand-bills from the upper boxes, containing (as we understood) some declamations against equestrian performances being introduced at the regular theatre. These, however, met with a very favourable reception; most of them were torn to pieces with indignation, and those who had dispersed them were loudly hissed [ . . . ] It has been asked, how the stage is degraded by the introduction of these noble and beautiful beasts? If paste-board and wicker-work animals are allowed, against which we do not remember any declamation . . . can it be any degradation to follow the example of the ancients, and to introduce the living horse in all the evolutions of real action? (*European Magazine* [online] 59. Available from: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:bp:&rft\\_dat=xri:bp:article:e726-1811-059-00-024401](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e726-1811-059-00-024401), May 1811: 377-8. [Accessed 01/09/2011].).

effect.<sup>575</sup>

It is through spectacle and excess that Lewis critiques Napoleon. Perhaps the strongest acknowledgement of the play's conservative ethos lies in its ridiculing by a famous liberal periodical. Writing in *The Examiner*, Leigh Hunt is unimpressed by the play, claiming to be ignorant of the author's identity but using exactly the sort of criticism that dogged Lewis throughout his career – he calls the spectacle 'gaudy' and 'a plagiarism', and its political credentials cement his disdain:

The melodrama appears to be a most awful, but at the same time insidious attack on the reputation of BONAPARTE . . . who is perfectly shocked, no doubt, to hear of these terrible proceedings against him in "the finest theatre in Europe!"<sup>576</sup>

Such criticism of this play is unusual, however, as its mocking of Napoleon provided timely patriotic sentiment. By contrast, the damning response to the liberal Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, outlining the damage which will be caused to the country by the war with France, has been credited with ending her writing career.<sup>577</sup> Hunt's criticism of the play is also interesting as it highlights the complexity of ascertaining

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<sup>575</sup> Ibid.

<sup>576</sup> *The Examiner* No.176, 12 May 1811: 299-300, in Cox and Gamer, eds.:349. Hunt's *Reflector: A Quarterly Magazine* also criticised the play. The reviewer in this case calls the play '[a] desperate hit at that low fellow Bonaparte' and presents it as childish, in terms which agree with Baron-Wilson's view: 'never was there a more accomplished specimen of what the little boys call *making as if*; and accordingly all the little boys are in ecstasy [sic.]. The great ones, however, already begin to be tired'. The reviewer also claimed that it was cruel to make the horses act in the way that the play necessitated and used the play's genre to attack it:

In a word, the introduction of such spectacles on a civilised stage is a barbarism, which no reasoning and no necessity on the part of the managers can justify. If the thing could be done with perfect safety to the public taste as well as perfect comfort to the animals, it would be laudable enough. (*Reflector: A Quarterly Magazine* [online]. 1:2. Available from: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:bp:&rft\\_dat=xri:bp:article:e631-1811-001-02-000053](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e631-1811-001-02-000053), January 1811:470-3. [Accessed 01/09/2011].).

As the reviewer goes on to criticize Kemble and Sheridan at length, referencing several productions but never actually mentioning Lewis's name, it appears that the disdain of the *Reflector* was not directed towards Lewis himself, as had been the case earlier in his career.

<sup>577</sup> See Wu, ed., *Romantic Women Poets* 9.

Lewis's politics and the relationship between his political views and his social circle. Hunt cannot approve of the mocking of Napoleon, but both he and Lewis were friends with Byron and Shelley. Lewis, in fact, stayed at Villa Diodati with the pair during the summer of 1816, during which time he wrote a codicil to his will, returned to later in this chapter.

### **Timour, the Overreacher**

That Lewis depicts Timour as a Napoleonic figure in the mould of a Renaissance overreacher may have been recognised and even praised by some of his contemporaries, but what has not been considered about this portrayal and its spectacular nature is the way that this is used not only to provide a somewhat shallow critique of Napoleon but also to explore several themes which this thesis has shown to be common throughout Lewis's works. As indicated above, these include both paternal and maternal authority and duty, patriotism, social rank and the importance and beneficial nature of mercy and gratitude in relationships of power.

Timour's tyranny and bullying of those around him, in addition to his treatment of the young Agib, mark him out as a dramatic descendent of Lewis's earlier Osmond. This is most noticeable in his pursuit of Zorilda, which recalls Osmond's determination to marry Angela. As discussed earlier, Osmond himself is a dramatic descendent of Milton's Satan, a character which Bainbridge identifies as forming another template for Napoleonic overreachers in Romantic texts.<sup>578</sup> Though neither Timour nor his sister Liska regret their changed circumstances, their father Oglou laments his separation from his shepherd's cottage throughout the play, presenting it as an Edenic place:

[. . .] 'tis only in the Cottage, that real happiness resides.  
Desolate with snow, or terrible with fire, on the haughty  
Mountain's Summit never yet did flowret [sic] bloom: the  
Rose and the Violet are only found in the lowly verdant

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<sup>578</sup> Bainbridge argues that Southey, for instance, in *The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo* (1816) 'insistently equates Satan with Napoleon who has instigated the fall of man from his *ancient regime* Eden'. Bainbridge, *Napoleon and English Romanticism* 164.

valley!<sup>579</sup>

Oglou speaks figuratively here. The cottage is his natural space, therefore he cannot achieve success or true prosperity elsewhere: the mountain may be of impressive stature, representing a higher rank, but it will always remain barren to him. Timour's lack of remorse makes him a one-dimensional character, ensuring that the audience are not awed by him in the way they are by Tamburlaine, whose achievements are presented as being at least partly admirable by Marlowe.

As is the case with *The Castle Spectre*'s villain, Timour is also described by other characters, notably his father, in terms which make him appear frightening. For example, Oglou claims that he trembles when he sees him and that he fears Timour's rage.<sup>580</sup> Indeed, it is a speech from Oglou which opens the play, in which he not only remarks on his fears, but also idealises his previous occupation: 'Oh! that I were but still a Shepherd, and subject only to a Shepherd's fears!'<sup>581</sup> This play, like others by Lewis, draws connections between desirable masculine behaviour and patriotic behaviour. In the play's final scene, Timour is attacked by Abdalec as an 'unmanly tyrant' and by Zorilda as the 'Despoiler of my dear native Land'.<sup>582</sup> Even his father refers to him as 'the Oppressor of my country' and 'my sovereign's murderer'.<sup>583</sup> If the play is an attack on Napoleon, these accusations are of key importance: they present usurpation as dangerously unpatriotic and in doing so form a case for maintaining a more traditional hierarchy, as with *Venoni*.<sup>584</sup> When Liska claims that Timour's rise to power

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<sup>579</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 115; 2. Sc.3.

<sup>580</sup> Oglou tells Timour 'I always *do* start and tremble at the sight of you! - When you look at me, my Knees knock together; When you speak to me, my blood runs cold; and I never think of you without wondering how I could ever have courage enough to beget such a Firebrand'. Lewis, *Timour* 112; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>581</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 99; 1. Sc.1.

<sup>582</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 115; 2. Sc.3.

<sup>583</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 101; 1. Sc.1.

<sup>584</sup> The theme is also present in *Alfonso, King of Castile*.

was 'lucky', Oglou responds angrily:

A lucky day? – Girl, 'twas the saddest of my life, [. . .]  
.]'Twere better to have lost my Son for ever, than have found  
him such; 'Twere better never to hear him named, than only  
hear him named with curses.<sup>585</sup>

Oglou's is in a predicament here – divided between duty to his son and his country along with his gratitude to Zorilda.<sup>586</sup> Oglou reminds Liska of their obligation to Zorilda whilst presenting an idealised, revisionist view of the aristocracy to the audience, making Timour's act of usurpation appear unforgivable:

Then how can you forget, that the Throne, which your  
Brother has usurped, belongs to the Son of Her, to whom we  
both owe our existence? we were in poverty, without help,  
without hope, when chance led to my hut the Mother of Yon  
little Captive. Though we were but peasants, and she was  
Mingrelia's Princess, she disdained not to fulfil the humblest  
duties of humanity.<sup>587</sup>

I return to the significance of this quotation below, but here it is appropriate to note that as Timour does not recognise Zorilda, implicit in this speech is the fact that Oglou and Liska must have been in poverty when Timour was absent, building his empire – and therefore neglecting the needs of his family, whom Lewis indicates he should have recognised as his primary duty. Lewis subverts Marlowe here, to some extent. As David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen note, 'Tamburlaine's opportunity for limitless self-advancement arises from the universal failures of the present power structures' which are 'autocratic' and 'corrupt'.<sup>588</sup> The same, of course, could be said of Napoleon, but, in *Timour*, Lewis presents the existing

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<sup>585</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 101; 1. Sc.1.

<sup>586</sup> This predicament recalls that of Orsino in *Alfonso*, who decides that his loyalty to his King, even though the latter has wronged him, is of greater priority than that he owes to his son, Caesario, who is Alfonso's enemy.

<sup>587</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 102; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>588</sup> David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, 'Introduction', in Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*. Ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: OUP, 1995): vii-xxiv, x.

power structures as strong and benevolent and, above all, justifiable.

Lewis's presentation of Timour himself, however, is certainly not favourable.<sup>589</sup> Timour is referred to as 'tyrant' and 'usurper' throughout the play. He reveals this tyranny in Act Two, when he confronts Zorilda with the words 'I heed no hours; I laugh at forms; for Here my will is law'.<sup>590</sup> Zorilda calls Timour a 'Barbarian' and 'Tyrant' when he discovers her disguise and imprisons her separately to her son.<sup>591</sup> She later calls him 'Barbarian' and 'Monster' (a term also used by Agib) when he threatens that her refusal to marry him will result in Agib's death.<sup>592</sup> The language in these instances is similar to that deployed by Barbault, who refers to Napoleon as the 'Colossal Power [who] with overwhelming force/bears down each fort of Freedom in its course'.<sup>593</sup>

Lewis's nationalism makes his choice of Elizabethan source material an interesting one. Lewis does not seek merely to legitimise his own 'popular' works by associating them with texts which were becoming canonical, but also to draw upon the nationalism that attended this process. As Syndy M. Conger has pointed out, Lewis was familiar with both Marlowe's and Goethe's versions of the Faust myth and *Macbeth*. Conger's claim that Ambrosio is a development of the Renaissance overreacher and Bertrand Evans's claim for Osmond's significance cannot be said of either

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<sup>589</sup> Interestingly, Bainbridge has claimed that Byron's depiction of Napoleon as continuing the liberating 'excess' of the French Revolution' is 'favourable' when considered alongside Byron's avowed affiliation with the Whigs (Bainbridge, *Napoleon and English Romanticism* 137). Bainbridge notes Byron's association with pro-Napoleon Whig society (which he shared with Lewis) and his comparison of Napoleon to Richard II, Macbeth and Prometheus (151-2).

<sup>590</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 111; 2. Sc.1. He appears similarly inflexible and cruel, as well as sexually threatening, when he later informs her 'thou'rt mine!' echoing both the Bleeding Nun of *The Monk* and the Wood Daemon Sangrida in *One O' Clock!*. Lewis, *Timour* 116; 2. Sc.3. The use of the upper-case 'H' is Lewis's.

<sup>591</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 109; 1. Sc.2.

<sup>592</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 111; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>593</sup> Barbault, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, in *Romantic Women Poets*, ed. Wu: 10-18, 10.

Hardyknute or Timour.<sup>594</sup> Neither is presented as having the redeeming quality of remorse and neither has any believable psychological depth. This fact, admittedly the sign of ‘popular’ rather than ‘serious’ texts, also reduces any empathy or sympathy the audience may feel for the villain and in doing so prevents any ambiguity clouding the political and social message. It was this ambiguity, created by the complexity of Ambrosio and Osmond, which makes Lewis’s earlier plays susceptible to politicised misinterpretation. Hardyknute’s machinations towards Una and Leolyn make him a threat, but Timour, outwitted by his supposedly bumbling and cowardly father and Zorilda, lacks even this. He is therefore, not to be marvelled at like his Elizabethan template. As Bevington and Rasmussen note, ‘Tamburlaine’s appeal manifests itself in his mesmerizing ability to win followers’, but Timour has lost the allegiance of his own father and has resorted to imprisoning a child.<sup>595</sup> Napoleon, then, for Lewis, was an example of how authority can be *badly* revised.

### **A Reworking of Old Themes: Gratitude, Mercy and Paternalism**

In *Timour the Tartar*, Lewis makes strong links between filial relationships and the relationship between a ruler and his subjects. Lewis achieves these links through his focus on the importance on mercy and gratitude (with these becoming the all-important duty of, respectively, rulers and subjects) as the means of pacification and control. Lewis presents Oglou as being torn between his loyalty to his son and his defence of Agib. His reasons for defending the child are set out in the first scene, quoted above, as Oglou upbraids his daughter, Liska, whom he calls an ‘ungrateful Girl’.<sup>596</sup> The lesson here is clear: Zorilda fulfilled her duty as queen in her amelioration of the condition of the poor and as a result, the duty of Oglou and his family should be ‘gratitude’ in the form of subservience, regardless of personal

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<sup>594</sup> See footnote 123 for Evans’s comments.

<sup>595</sup> In the introduction to *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays* xi. The endangered heir in *One O’ Clock!* is also a child – another similarity which perhaps made it a suitable play to follow the commercially successful *Timour*.

<sup>596</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 100; 1.Sc.1.

cost. However, only Oglou shows this: his daughter – a conceited, comic character – has become ‘vanity mad’ as a result of being placed above her natural social status.<sup>597</sup>

Though only a child, Agib has already learnt the importance of gratitude, and also speaks with the controlled patterns of rhetoric common in Lewis’s noble heroes. This is evident when he thanks Oglou for the kindness he has shown to him during his imprisonment:

‘Tis to *you*, that I owe every little comfort! If ever my fevered lips drink one breath of pure sweet air, - If ever my fevered limbs enjoy one wholesome hour of exercise – if I have health – if I have life itself – all is *your* gift! Since I became your son’s captive, no eye has looked on me with mercy – save *yours*: No voice has spoken to me with kindness – save yours, yours only!<sup>598</sup>

Agib goes on to beg Oglou to continue to be merciful in the future. Oglou is thus caught in a double-bind between his tyrannical son and the values of gratitude and mercy. He sums this up in the first scene by twice referring to Timour as his oxymoronic ‘dear terrible son’. As he explains his predicament to Agib, referring to both his fear for himself and Timour’s treatment of his enemies, the child’s response draws attention to the extent of Timour’s transgression. Firstly, he is confused by the inverted family relationship as Oglou admits his fear, remarking ‘Dare not? – Oglou, is he not your Son?’ and later calls Timour a ‘Monster’. It is Oglou’s predicament which creates the tension of the plot and eventually its resolution, which is (reassuringly, in the manner of *Rugantino*) identified early, in Act One,

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<sup>597</sup> In what appears to be a comment on the many Gothic works (such as Reeve’s *The Old English Baron*) featuring members of the gentility being brought up amongst peasants but demonstrating an apparently innate superiority, Liska points out that ‘Destiny designed me to be a Great Woman . . . Even when I was a Cottager, you know, I always carried my head high’. Interestingly, Oglou’s caustic, witty responses reinforce rather than challenge the concept that social superiority is innate, dryly remarking that ‘Destiny and Nature must have had very different intentions’. (Lewis, *Timour* 102; 1. Sc.1.)

<sup>598</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 100; 1. Sc.1. By contrast, Timour often speaks with the lack of control that is common in Lewis’s villainous characters, contributing to the play’s spectacle in doing so. An example can be found when he insists to Zorilda that she will marry him: ‘I love you! Love you with that madness – that desperation – Love you, as Timour *ought* to love! You are my Captive; I offer you my hand’. (*Timour* 111; 2. Sc.1.)

Scene Two:

*Zor.* You, good Oglou, shall be the partner of my flight, and every reward which gratitude –

*Oglou.* Flight? Reward? – Lady, what price would tempt you to forsake your Son?

*Zor.* Not Thrones! Not Worlds!

*Oglou.* Then what price, think you, can bribe me to abandon mine?

*Zor.* Oglou! a Tyrant – a Regicide –

*Oglou.* True, Princess, True! – But still my Son!

*Zor.* But *such* a Son – and can you then still love him?

*Oglou.* *Still?*- Ah! when can a father *cease* to love, and what guilt can exceed the measure of paternal patience? this Tyrant, this Regicide is still dear to me, dear as the air I breathe: His very vices chain me to him closer, and I feel that I love him the more, because being what He is, no one but myself *can* love him – Then observe me, Lady – I will be secret, I will even aid your escape; But in return you must allow my Son's: your Georgians must retire without drawing a single arrow – Fly with your Child: Collect your Troops; If you can, regain your empire: - and then if Timour should fall into your power, I'll kneel before your Throne, and say – "Timour slew your Husband, but his Father's silence saved your Son: Spare Mine!"-

*Zor.* And I *will* spare Him, good old Man: I swear it!<sup>599</sup>

Oglou's gratitude to Zorilda and her own indebtedness to him will ensure that mercy will ultimately be shown to Timour. In other words, gratitude and duty are represented as part of a social bargain which will ensure the restoration of order with the minimum of bloodshed. The exchange is, however, ideologically forced and Lewis compromises the realism of Zorilda in order to make his point. This sentiment is also to be found in other works of the period – most notably in Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts*, where religious members of the peasantry commonly accept their situation in life in work and are subsequently rewarded, in contrast to their more rebellious, less pious counterparts, from whom help in the form of charity is withheld.

Macdonald has suggested that in this play Lewis draws on his own feud with his father, in a conciliatory gesture presenting his own inflexibility

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<sup>599</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 107; 1. Sc.1.

through the character of Timour.<sup>600</sup> I would further argue that Lewis is concerned, as a result of his lengthy rift with his father and his knowledge of his future role as a slave-owner, with the maintenance of order, specifically the role of obligation. Certainly his surviving letters express little, if any, self-reproach or acknowledgement of culpability for the breakdown of his relationship with his father, though he found the situation regrettable. In a letter written to his mother during his father's final illness, Lewis remarks that 'as it is now above nine years since I have had any intercourse with him that carried with it any kindness, his loss will alter none of the habits of my life' and that 'I have done no wrong, and need not his *forgiveness*. In a mercenary view a reconciliation may be desirable for me, but in what other?' He ends this letter by assuring his mother that 'it was a great consolation' to have read in one of her letters that he 'had nothing to blame [himself] for in [his] conduct.'<sup>601</sup> His inflexibility here is similar to that of his father, who put off reading the letter that Lewis sent to him as he was dying.<sup>602</sup> Baron-Wilson, usually prone to excusing her subject's excesses, defends him in uncharacteristically strong terms, referring to Mrs. Ricketts, as 'despicable' and accusing her of 'malignity'.<sup>603</sup> Lewis's assertion that Cyril Jackson, who arranged their reconciliation, was entitled to gratitude is significant. In Lewis's works, the qualities of mercy and gratitude always have *material* benefit and ingratitude is presented as the worst of betrayals, exemplified by Zorilda's words in Act Two of *Timour the Tartar*, when she mistakenly believes that Oglou has betrayed her:

No comfort! No hope! Agib! Agib! shall I then never see thee more! – His release seemed so near – Success appeared so certain – Oh! Disappointment too bitter to be endured! Yet deep as the arrow has pierced, 'tis Oglou's ingratitude which has poured most venom in the wound.<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> Macdonald remarks that '[i]f it was a gesture of reconciliation, Lewis must have been relieved that he made it in time'. ( Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 46)

<sup>601</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2:77-8.

<sup>602</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 73.

<sup>603</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 71.

<sup>604</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 109; 2. Sc.1 (my emphasis).

Despite the mortal danger facing her and the son she is devoted to, it is ‘ingratitude’ which she presents as the most upsetting and indeed, metaphorically (as ‘poison’) the most dangerous, aspect of her predicament. Timour expresses similar sentiments later when he becomes aware of the role that his father has played, commenting ‘Father, I loved you – I trusted you – You have betrayed me – Remember that’.<sup>605</sup> When Oglou responds, he reveals the web of obligations present in the play’s relationships:

Remember it? You need not tell me to do that! – How  
terrible He looked! alas! alas! I hoped that Nature – that Duty  
– that the love He ever bore mw – Oh! what have I done!  
Wretched old man!<sup>606</sup>

Oglou is ‘wretched’ because his obligation to Zorilda has resulted in the sacrifice of a peaceful relationship with his son. This sacrifice highlights the strength of the obligation. During his later visits to Jamaica, Lewis would write with great pride of his slaves’ devotion to him.<sup>607</sup> A similar sacrifice forms the moral at the centre of *The Grateful Slave*, in which the eponymous character betrays the confidence of fellow slaves to help the master who has shown him kindness.

In all three cases above, it is the sense of betrayal which causes the grief of the speaker, though somewhat ironically, as it is Oglou’s sense of duty to both Zorilda and Timour which allows the action to be resolved. In Act Two Scene One, Oglou archly informs Timour that his son has ‘always found [him] a very dutiful father’, which is true despite Oglou’s helping his son’s enemies.<sup>608</sup> Oglou manages to repay his gratitude to Zorilda and ensure that she is indebted enough to him to later save Timour’s life. Oglou’s actions

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<sup>605</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 113; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>606</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 114; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>607</sup> For example, Lewis records with great satisfaction a visit from freed slaves to his estate at Cornwall, Jamaica, on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1816: ‘Many manumitted negroes, also, came from other parts of the country to this festival, on hearing of my arrival, because, as they said – ‘if they did not come to see massa, they were afraid that it would look ungrateful, and as if they cared no longer about him and Cornwall, now that they were free’. ( Lewis, *Journal* 59)

<sup>608</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 112; 2. Sc.1.

and the sentiments that lie at their source therefore reveal the irony of Liska's earlier statement – that her father has 'no soul for Heroism'.<sup>609</sup> It is in the exploration of the theme of paternal and filial relationships that Lewis most clearly uses and subverts Marlowe's original. In *Tamburlaine the Great Part Two*, fatherhood is likewise a theme. Not only has Tamburlaine founded (fathered) a nation, but this is shored up by the armies of Theridamas, Techelles and Usumcasane, whom he crowns in *Part One*, respectively, as the kings of Argiers, Fez and Morocco in return for their loyalty. They, in turn, show their gratitude by continuing to place the armies of their nations at Tamburlaine's disposal in *Part Two*. In Act One, Scene Three, Tamburlaine declares that his appreciation of this mutually beneficent loyalty is more pleasing to him than the favour of the gods:

Your presence, loving friends and fellow kings,  
 Makes me to surfeit in conceiving joy.  
 If all the crystal gates of Jove's high court  
 Were opened wide, and I might enter in  
 To see the state and majesty of heaven,  
 It could not delight me more than your sight.<sup>610</sup>

The three men continue to impress Tamburlaine by recounting their experiences in battle, foreshadowing and mirroring the later behaviour of Tamburlaine's three sons, two of whom model their behaviour on their father's bloodthirstiness and one who eschews battle, not through a desire for peace but through cowardice and a penchant for gambling at cards. Marlowe presents his dissolute behaviour as being worse than the cruelty of his relatives. He is executed by his father for being 'A form not meet to give that subject essence/Whose matter is the flesh of Tamburlaine' and his 'folly, sloth, and damned idleness'.<sup>611</sup> Lewis maintains the theme of paternal and filial obligation, but replaces the grateful kings and aspiring sons with the character of Timour's father, who is both wiser and blessed with greater forethought than his predecessors. Oglou's behaviour offers

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<sup>609</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 101; 1. Sc.1.

<sup>610</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great, Part II*, in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. Bevington and Rasmussen : 69-136. (1.3.151-6.).

<sup>611</sup> Marlowe, *Tamburlaine Part II* 4.1.11-2 and 4.1.125 respectively.

one paternal benefit not found in Marlowe's play: protection.

The same theme of filial obligation can be found in the character of Agib, who tells Zorilda of Oglou's defence of him and his own sense of duty to his dead father:

He comforted, He soothed me, He talked to me of *You*,  
Mother. Nightly, while my guards slept, He unlocked my  
prison – and that too at the hazard of his life, for if Timour  
had known it – and yet Timour is his Son; only think of that,  
Mother! Ah! surely if my Father had asked me for my life, I  
would have bared my breast, and kissed even in dying the  
hand with which He pierced it.<sup>612</sup>

Zorilda reacts to this assertion with pride. This conversation recalls that between Tamburlaine and Celebinus, the son most like him and keen for his father's approval, after Tamburlaine cuts his arm and invites his sons to examine the wound:

CELEBINUS: 'Tis nothing. Give me a wound, father.  
AMYRAS: And me another, my lord.  
TAMBURLAINE: [*to Celebinus*] Come Sirrah, give me your  
arm.  
CELEBINUS: [*offering his arm*] Here, father, cut it as  
bravely as you did your own.  
TAMBURLAINE: It shall suffice that thou dar'st abide a  
wound.<sup>613</sup>

Lewis's presentation and understanding of paternal relationships veers between the two explored here: as a patrician figure, a slave-owner, he rejoices in the sort of hyperbolic sacrifice exemplified by these two fictional sons. As a son, however, he appears to have been as stubborn as his Timour. The play confirms that his rift with his father was a matter which greatly worried him, but the display of paternity and obligation is more subtle than 'a gesture of reconciliation' can explain.

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<sup>612</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 110-1; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>613</sup> *Tamburlaine the Great II*: 3.2.132-6.

### **Mother figures and filial duty**

As previous chapters have shown, Lewis's letters and literary works reveal an interest in filial duty to maternal figures as well as paternal ones, though his fictional mother figures tend to be well-intentioned but inept, or absent from their offspring, or both. This presentation may be drawn from life and Lewis's anxiety over the financial and social well-being of his own mother. As Macdonald has noted, Lewis's tone towards his mother in many of his letters takes a paternal turn.<sup>614</sup> Macdonald has also pointed out that Lewis was keen to 'promote maternal affection among his slaves' as a way of ensuring the continuation of his workforce and thus his own wealth. It is also worth noting that Lewis uses his *Journal of a West India Proprietor* to record striking acts of both maternal care and neglect.<sup>615</sup> It was evidently a topic of great personal and fiscal interest to him.

Baron-Wilson records that Lewis was apt to reward filial devotion in others: though without documentary evidence, she records an incident in which a provincial actress, in need of work, solicited Lewis for a drama. He promised her 'The Hindoo Bride', as then unpublished, and told her to call for the manuscript the following day. Later, however, Lewis realised that the manuscript had gone missing. Piqued, he went for a walk, was forced to stop at a shop during a shower of rain, and heard the same actress talking to her mother from behind 'the usual curtained half-glass door in the rear [which] opened into an adjoining apartment'.<sup>616</sup> The actress spoke of her approach of Lewis, called him 'good-humoured, so affable', and assured her mother that she had not discussed her as 'it would seem so like a begging affair'. The mother is described as speaking with 'age and infirmity'.<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>614</sup> For example, on Sunday, March 29, 1818, Lewis wrote, after one of his slaves had miscarried: 'No other symptom of child-bearing has been given in the course of this year, nor are there above eight women upon the breeding list out of more than one hundred and fifty females. Yet they are all well clothed and well fed, contented in mind, even by their own account, over-worked at no time, and when upon the breeding list are exempted from labour of every kind.' (Lewis, *Journal* 237).

<sup>615</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 21.

<sup>616</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 91.

<sup>617</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 92.

Lewis left after the rain without making his presence known and upon his return to his inn sent fifty pounds and a letter to the actress, in which he explained the loss of the manuscript but praised her behaviour:

. . .having had an opportunity of witnessing your very admirable performance of a far superior character, in a style true to nature, and which reflects upon you the highest credit. I allude to a most interesting scene, in which you lately sustained the character of ‘The Daughter’ [. . .] For the infinite gratification I have received, I must consider myself in your debt.<sup>618</sup>

Baron-Wilson claims that Lewis did not await a reply, but that the actress, later successful in London, always acknowledged Lewis’s aid. The accuracy of this anecdote is unclear – Lewis’s letter is cited in full and its tone is similar to that of his others, but the word-for-word recall of a conversation overheard many years before recalls the plots of many Gothic texts and must be considered apocryphal. The incident is unusual in that Lewis had nothing obvious to gain from helping the young woman, but it is possible that the conversation he heard, if it did take the form Baron-Wilson recalls, may have flattered his vanity. It may also be that the actress’s conduct towards her mother reminded him of his own. The notions of ‘gratification’ and ‘debt’ in this example are striking, and similar to those in *Timour the Tartar*. Baron-Wilson places this incident at the time shortly after the death of Lewis’s father, but does not actually specify a date.<sup>619</sup>

Lewis usually explores paternal roles through the relationships between men, and maternal roles between mothers and daughters – not sons. It is

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<sup>618</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 93.

<sup>619</sup> Baron-Wilson also records a similar incident which seems to have taken place shortly before that involving the actress: Lewis was out walking when a thunderstorm occurred. He took shelter in a hut, in which a child sat on the floor to eat a potato and a woman nursed a baby whilst sewing. This woman’s husband wrote sermons for a living but was evidently in extreme poverty. He expressed a wish to change employment in order to provide more effectively for his family but was unaware of Lewis’s identity. Lewis left, giving the child on the floor the only money he had with him, but later sent the man money with a note which read ‘You are well spoken of; continue industrious’. The man set up a circulating library and stationer’s shop, only recognising Lewis when he went to the theatre one night and saw him in the manager’s box. See Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 88-90. This incident bears a striking resemblance to the events in Hannah More’s tracts.

only in his two works of 1811 that Lewis considers mother-son relationships. Zorilda is unique amongst Lewis's female characters in successfully protecting her son whilst alive and demonstrating the virtues of both gratitude and *noblesse oblige* – the former usually attributed to servant characters by Lewis and the latter to male ones. Through Zorilda's actions Lewis explores his revisionist view of the aristocracy, which is very different to the democratic stance that he was accused of in his youth. Zorilda's sparing of Timour's life in response to Oglou's pleas reveal that Lewis believed that obligation and gratitude were reciprocal, and formed part of the responsibility of the aristocrat (and in Lewis's case, the slave-owner). As cited above, Zorilda swears to spare Timour because Oglou has saved Agib; she also 'returns to express her gratitude' after leaving the stage in this scene.<sup>620</sup> She cries 'Reward him, Angels!' when Agib reveals the extent of Oglou's kindness towards him.<sup>621</sup>

Zorilda is an amalgamation of aspects of several characters, both from Lewis's body of work and Marlowe's text. Her concern for Agib places her alongside other mother figures created by Lewis and her physical courage and fierce demeanour make her a virtuous version of the demonic Matilda and Sangrida. She responds with threats and scorn when Timour suggests that she is in his power:

Your power? – Oh! no! – who wears a dagger and dares use it, can never be in the power of Man! – *I* in your power, *I*? – Ha! do I live to hear that menace! – Speak it but again, Timour! Speak but those words again, and that instant I'll sheathe this javelin in your heart, or, failing to reach that, in my own!<sup>622</sup>

However, it is crucial to realise that at this point in the play, Zorilda is disguised as the Princess of Mingrelia, a renowned 'Amazon' and warrior,

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<sup>620</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 107; 1. Sc.2. The editors note that the Larpent edition of the play records that music was used at this point, which would have heightened the significance of the scene in a manner typical of Lewis.

<sup>621</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 110; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>622</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 104; 1. Sc.1.

in order to infiltrate Timour's court. When not in disguise, she is less aggressive, defying but not threatening Timour. The spectacle which attends the character's arrival on stage relates, in fact, to the impersonation of the Princess. Once this is understood, the display of power that this entails appears barbaric when compared to the 'real' Zorilda's kindness to Oglou's family and her sense of maternal duty:

*The Tartars arrive on horseback, conducting Zorilda, drest as an Amazon, holding an arrow, and wearing a quiver. She is mounted on a Courser richly caparisoned, and attended by four African boys in golden Chains, and holding fans of painted feathers – Two of them prostrate themselves; the others throw a tapestry over them; the Courser kneels, and She steps on the Slaves to dismount, Abdalec giving her his hand – The Horses withdraw, after paying their homage to Timour.*<sup>623</sup>

The power displayed by the supposed Princess is similar to that of Timour; it requires subservience, here in the form of prostrate children. The real Zorilda, however, uses a kinder way of enslaving people to do her bidding. The use of the African boys is interesting. They play no further part in the action of the play and, perhaps symbolically, remain dumb. However, their presence does raise the issue of race. Lewis had already explained, in the published version of *The Castle Spectre*, he was not averse to using (perhaps exploiting) for the purposes of spectacle. They also remind the audience, however, of the topic of slavery, as Macdonald has identified, and Lewis could not fail to be aware of the reasons why such characters interested his audience.

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<sup>623</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 103; 1. Sc.1. Baron-Wilson claims that the performance of Mrs Henry Johnstone as Zorilda was striking, though the similarity of her account to the stage directions suggests that she may not have seen the play in person:

She performed the part to admiration, and was loudly greeted by the audience as she made her appearance, mounted on a courser richly caparisoned, and attended by four African boys, in golden chains, and holding fans of painted feathers. Two of the boys prostrated themselves, the others threw a canopy over them, and the courser having knelt, Zorilda stepped upon the slaves and dismounted. The horses having then paid their homage to Timour, withdrew. (See Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 62).

Oddly, contemporary reviews have paid little attention to this set-piece.

Zorilda is also the replacement for Marlowe's two maternal characters in the *Tamburlaine* plays. The first is Zenocrate, forcibly married to Tamburlaine but who later avows that she loves him, and who joins in his taunting of his enemies. She dies early in *Part Two*, but like Zorilda, defends her sons, in this case against their father's anger that they may not have inherited his lust for war, saying 'My gracious lord, they have their mother's looks,/But when they list, their conquering father's heart'.<sup>624</sup> Moreover, through Zorilda's pride and ingenuity in planning Agib's release, as well as her metatheatrical threat of suicide discussed above, Lewis reincarnated the character of Olympia, who, after the death of her husband at the hands of Tamburlaine's armies, kills her son and burns both bodies so they cannot be dishonoured, later tricking her captor Theridamas into stabbing her. Lewis adapts these two female characters into one who, through the value of gratitude, escapes the villain and is successful in the rescue of her son. Zorilda's guise of an Amazon princess, a role which the work of Simon Shepherd has revealed to be distasteful to the Elizabethans due to the Amazon's association with brutality, despite their maternal tendencies, is a dramatic contrast to her real character.<sup>625</sup>

### **'Sedulously contrived for show': spectacle in *Timour the Tartar***

As contemporary reviewers realised, spectacle is integral to this play.<sup>626</sup>

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<sup>624</sup> Marlowe, *Tamburlaine Part II* 1.3.35-6.

<sup>625</sup> Simon Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama* (Sussex: Harvester, 1981) 14-15.

<sup>626</sup> The *Gentleman's Magazine* for May 1811 neatly summed the play up as 'an interesting spectacle of splendid scenery and horsemanship!' (*Gentleman's Magazine: or, Monthly intelligencer* [online]. May 1811. Available from: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:bp:&orft\\_dat=xri:bp:article:e591-1811-000-00-123053](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&orft_dat=xri:bp:article:e591-1811-000-00-123053), 1811:489. [Accessed 01/09/2011].).

The reviewer from the *Universal Magazine* praised the spectacle even more lavishly and was clearly unconcerned by the factors which offended the reviewer for the *Reflector*:

The splendour of this melodrama in scenery and equitation exceeds anything we ever beheld [. . .] The whole troop, in fact, leap and climb in a manner to excite the greatest astonishment in the whole audience; not but there were many persons present who endeavoured to discourage the

*Timour the Tartar*'s most notable feature, the performing horses, can also be traced back to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*. Although Marlowe did not intend horses to be present on stage, they are mentioned often, as are slaves. Indeed, these features are not fully separate and *Tamburlaine* demonstrates his authority over those he has captured and defeated by treating them as horses, in scenes which are arguably 'spectacular':

[Enter] Tamburlaine, drawn in his chariot by [the kings of] Trebizond and Soria with bits in their mouths, reins in his left hand, in his right hand a whip, with which he scourgeth them.[. . .]

TAMBURLAINE: Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia!  
 What, can ye draw but twenty miles a day  
 And have so proud a chariot at your heels  
 And such a coachman as great Tamburlaine,  
 But from Asphaltis, where I conquered you,  
 To Byron here where thus I honour you?  
 The horse that guide the golden eye of heaven  
 And blow the morning from their nosterils,  
 Making their fiery gait above the clouds,  
 Are not so honoured with their governor  
 As you, ye slaves, in mighty Tamburlaine.<sup>627</sup>

Lewis not only uses real horses but does so to portray his own view of enslavement. The arrival of Zorilda, as previously cited, demonstrates and criticises a relationship of subjugation. However, the sub-plot presents Lewis's favoured model of dual obligation. It does this through a duel between Kerim and Sanballat, two Afghans in love with Selima. It is the 'splendid combat scene' that impressed the *European Magazine*'s reviewer and is worth quoting at length, due to the nature of the spectacle it involves:

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introduction of these highly disciplined quadrupeds to these boards. The scenery too is magnificent, and draws down universal applause. A gilded [sic] car, characteristic of the piece, is also drawn round the stage by three horses abreast, under the guidance of skilful charioteers.

Mr. Rich became *rich* by his harlequinades, and Mr. Kemble may grow rich by his *cavalcades*, without any offence to us. If the public will go in crowds to see these surprising equestrian exploits, *Marshal Neigh*, as the manager is facetiously called, ought not to be blamed. He does not force the money out of our pockets to see his flying horses, and therefore we do not feel disposed to ride our *high horse*. (*Universal Magazine* [online].15.90. Available from: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:bp:&rft\\_dat=xri:bp:article:e875-1811-015-90-027978](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bp:&rft_dat=xri:bp:article:e875-1811-015-90-027978), May 1811:420. [Accessed 01/09/2011].).

<sup>627</sup> Marlowe, *Tamburlaine Part II* 4.3.1-11.

*The Lists – the Circle is formed by Balconies filled with Spectators – On each side is a decorated Throne. – Zorilda, Timour and Selima arrive in a Car of triumph, followed by Bermeddin, Abdalec, and Tartars. They descend; Timour and Zorilda occupy one Throne, and Selima the other. – Agib’s Tower appears as in the First Scene. – A Trumpet sounds, and is answered; the Barriers are thrown open, and Kerim and Sanballat enter on Horseback, from opposite sides. They charge with lances: at length Kerim’s Horse takes part in the Combat, seizes Sanballat, and drags him to the ground. Sanballat rises, and attributes the victory solely to the Horse. Kerim proposes to renew the combat on foot; the Horses are led away, and the fight begins: Kerim falls, and loses his sword. His Rival rushes to dispatch him, when Kerim’s Horse leaps the Barrier, prevents Sanballat from advancing, picks up the swords, and carries it to his Master. Sanballat in fury stabs the Horse, who falls, and expires.*

Then:

*(Kerim’s desire to avenge the faithful Animal increases his strength. He disarms his Rival, drags him to the Horse, and sacrifices him on the Body: During which all descend. Selima embraces Kerim: Zorilda crowns him: But he takes off the Wreath, breaks it, strews the flowers on the Horse, and falls upon Him weeping. – Selima hangs over them greatly affected).<sup>628</sup>*

This incident employs the acting horses in a way which foregrounds desirable behaviour within the social hierarchy. The horse of the noble-minded Kerim mirrors its master’s virtues by demonstrating bravery and loyalty when it risks itself for him. Parallels can be seen with both Lewis’s earlier depictions of master/servant relationships in *The Castle Spectre* and his later concern with the ‘gratitude’ of his slaves. The stage directions carefully reiterate the horse’s ‘faithful’ nature. By contrast, Sanballat’s savagery is evident in his willingness to hurt a dependent creature and his lack of emotional control as he does so, ‘in fury’. It is significant that Lewis does not allow Sanballat to succeed in the tournament – his villainy results in his death.<sup>629</sup> Kerim’s grief lacks the wildness and futility of the earlier

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<sup>628</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 108; 1.Sc.2.

<sup>629</sup> Kerim’s tears, in grief for a loyal friend and innocent victim of the duel, can be termed ‘manly tears’ in the terminology of Vicesimus Knox. See Vicesimus Knox, ‘On the Absurd Affectation of Misery’, in *Winter Evenings* 1:77-80.

Venoni's, being presented through the ritualistic (and therefore controlled) 'sacrifice' of Sanballat and strewing of flowers, rather than through the body language of illegitimate theatre. Kerim, unlike Tamburlaine, takes no pleasure in the subservience of others but his behaviour shows that he feels he has a duty of care to such characters. However, the extent of the spectacle here does detract somewhat from the message it encodes.

Another difference between the Marlovian example and that from *Timour the Tartar* is that Kerim has no need to use violence to coerce his horse, as Tamburlaine uses on the captured kings. Marlowe makes a spectacle out of cruelty, Lewis from its absence. Baron-Wilson records an example of the horses' training, which would confirm Lewis's opinions concerning corporal methods of control. After a horse had refused to move during a rehearsal:

[its handler] leading him quietly to the spot where he had faltered, and, after steadfastly fixing his eye upon him for the space of about a minute, suddenly exclaiming in a terrible voice, and with the most horrible contortions of face, 'Ha! what! – will you *dare?* – will you *dare?*' till the poor animal was in a perfect tremour [sic]. 'I don't think he'll do it again,' observed the experienced trainer; 'but I never employ whip or spur; I am of opinion that the voice and eye are a more powerful and certain method.' The horse never afterward exhibited reluctance to pass the objectionable point.<sup>630</sup>

Not only does this anecdote provide yet another example of the efficacy of eschewing cruelty when maintaining authority, but Baron-Wilson records that Lewis was the one who told her of the incident, thus implying that he was struck by it. It would not be long before he would ban the use of the whip on his Jamaican plantations. He was also to adopt the practice of punishing insubordinate slaves by withdrawing privileges, rather than by aggression.<sup>631</sup> Timour is presented as a tyrant, imperiously demanding

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<sup>630</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 63.

<sup>631</sup> On March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1818, Lewis wrote of the medical care he provided for his slaves:

I am more and more convinced every day, that the best and easiest mode of governing negroes (and governed by some mode or another they must be) is not by the detestable lash, but by confinement, solitary or

‘slaves obey me’ and insulting his servant Bermeddin by calling him a ‘Careless slave’.<sup>632</sup>

Act Two opens in a similarly spectacular and sensational manner to that which ends Act One, though the focus here is not the horses, but, as the *European Review* noted, the setting:

*A Splendid Chamber, with large folding doors in the centre. On one side is an Alcove with curtains drawn up in drapery by golden Cords. On the other is a large Window and Balcony, to which the ascent is by a double flight of steps with a gilt balustrade – the window is open, and the Moon is seen through it – Numerous Lamps are burning. Vases with flowers, &c, are dispersed about the apartment.*<sup>633</sup>

The comparably extravagant setting which the *European Review* chose not to describe appears at the start of the play’s final scene:

*The Fortress by Moonlight. The whole of it is entirely surrounded by water, except a lofty Tower on one side, with a terrace beneath, of which only one Angle is visible: a variety of smaller Towers, and hanging Terraces, appear beyond.*<sup>634</sup>

Here Lewis uses the typical features of common Gothic settings to create a sense of awe in the audience. As Frederick Burwick has claimed of George Colman’s earlier *Bluebeard* (1798), *Timour*’s ‘Turkish setting – opulent, elaborate, exotic - is at best a means of displaying masculine wealth and power while distracting attention from the cruelty it covers’.<sup>635</sup> Again,

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otherwise; they cannot bear it [. . .]The order at my hospital is, that no negro should be denied admittance; even if no symptoms of illness appear, he is allowed one day to rest, and take physic, if he choose it. On the second morning, if the physician declares the man to be shamming, and the plea of illness is still alleged against going to work, then the negro is locked up in a room with others similarly circumstanced, where care is taken to supply him with food, water, physic, etc., and no restraint is imposed except that of not going out. (Lewis, *Journal*: 238).

<sup>632</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 109; 1. Sc.2. ; and 111; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>633</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 109; 2. Sc.1.

<sup>634</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 115; 2. Sc.3.

<sup>635</sup> Frederick Burwick, *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002) 222.

however, in addition to having possible symbolic interpretations, the setting may have more practical implications. The detailed understanding given of the layout of this room allows a full understating of how Zorilda and Oglou manage Agib's escape through the window – it allows for the practical element of Lewis's comedy and it is this fact which makes it likely that Lewis wrote his own stage directions.<sup>636</sup>

*Timour the Tartar* ends by combining the two crucial elements of the play dealt with here: a spectacular set piece (culminating in a tableau) and a reiteration of the value of gratitude:

*(The Horse rises out of the Water, bearing Agib and Zorilda. The Tartars sally from the Fortress, and endeavour to re-take the Princess; the Georgians come to her assistance; a general Engagement takes place, in which Timour is overthrown; but Zorilda spares his life, at the intercession of Agib and Oglou. The Georgians form a groupe round their Sovereign, while Oglou expresses his joy, and Timour his desperation).*

CHORUS OF GEORGIANS.

Praise to high Heaven! Each heart with rapture burns!  
That life the Mother gave, the Son returns.

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<sup>636</sup> For example, consider the following extract from the final scene, as Oglou, Zorilda and Selima help Agib escape without Timour noticing, having told Timour that the only creature concealed in the room is a dove:

*Oglou (Aside).* The window? – Ha! Perhaps the Georgians beneath it might – *(He makes signs to Selima; she picks up the dagger, which Timour had thrown away in rage, and she cuts off a part of the Cords, which support the drapery of the Alcove. She gives it to Agib; He steals softly across with it to Oglou, who has mounted the Staircase, and is now waving his scarf from the window).*

*Zor.* While you spoke, marked you not my uneasiness? Saw you not how anxiously I watched the entrance of the Alcove? – and when at length my little Favourite appeared – when he approached the Staircase – Oh! how my heart beat! How I trembled, lest you should turn your head! – and once, Prince, you were on the very point of turning it, as now – But I interpos'd myself, as it be *thus* – and drawing you round *in this manner*, I diverted your attention – I fixed it on myself, while *thus* I watched my Favourite. He had past the Balustrade – He entered the Balcony – He rested on the Ledge – He paused for a moment – Oh! that moment was dreadful. – But when I saw him pass through the Window – When at length he quite disappeared – Oh! then I sank on my knees in an agony of rapture, and burst into a flood of grateful tears. – *(Drawing this speech, Oglou fastens the cord to Agib's girdle, and lowers him from the window).* (Lewis, *Timour* 113; 2. Sc.1.).

Praise to high Heaven!<sup>637</sup>

This ending, rewarding nationalistic duty is, like that of *Rugantino*, foreshadowed by the exchange between Oglou and Zorilda in Act One Scene Two, and here both keep their promises. There is therefore no real menace inherent in Lewis's usurper and he is certainly a less imposing character than Tamburlaine. His being overthrown is the reassuring, patriotic culmination of the plot. Lewis was less successful at reaping the rewards of gratitude in real life: his financing of William Kelly embracing a frivolous lifestyle. Lewis reminded Kelly of the debt of gratitude in an admonishing letter, but wrote that 'you are young enough to mend, and my nature is not implacable'.<sup>638</sup> Additionally, though Lewis's plantation reforms improved conditions for his slaves, the tone of his *Journal* reveals not just his pride in his patriarchal position on his Jamaican estates but also his resulting bafflement at their continuing unrest. He ends his journal entry for Monday, March 4, 1816, sadly and with puzzlement, noting of the slaves that 'their satisfaction evidently begins and ends with themselves. They rejoice sincerely at being very well off, but think it unnecessary to make the slightest return to massa for making them so'.<sup>639</sup> Lewis included such incidents in his *Journal* alongside examples of the slaves' apparent devotion to him. The slaves' concern for their own welfare over that of their master can hardly be wondered at by a modern reader, but it was baffling to Lewis, who not only had a vested interest in placating them but who also appears to have been a genuinely kind man: Baron-Wilson recalls a conversation between the writer and his mother, when he remarked 'I know well the luxury of relieving distress'.<sup>640</sup>

Lewis returned to the concept of gratitude in a codicil to his will, added on August 20, 1816. In this codicil, Lewis, in a feudalistic turn of phrase,

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<sup>637</sup> Lewis, *Timour* 116; 2. Sc.3.

<sup>638</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 101.

<sup>639</sup> Lewis, *Journal* 127.

<sup>640</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2:107.

forbade the selling of any slaves from the plantation, stating, ‘I hereby attach my negroes to the estate to which they belong’. He did, however, permit them to be freed. Lewis also stipulated that his heirs should visit their estates for three months every three years, either in person or via a male representative. He included a condition that any heir who, visiting the plantations, made ‘any regulation which may appear to him likely to *ameliorate* the situation of the negroes’ would be rewarded by ‘one whole half of the clear profits of the succeeding crop’.<sup>641</sup> However, he also wrote that ‘any person who may infringe those regulations which I have laid down for the benefits of the negroes . . . or who dare to diminish the comforts and indulgences allowed them by me, shall forfeit his or her interest in those estates’.<sup>642</sup> Lewis ends the codicil by pointing out that failure to comply with his conditions would make his heirs:

*robbers*, and usurpers of property not belonging to them, nor to which they are properly entitled; and I earnestly hope that the property which they shall have acquired by such unjust and unworthy means, may never prosper either with themselves, or their descendants.<sup>643</sup>

The final sentiment here is that his negligent successors should suffer a fate similar to that of his usurping Gothic villains, whose provinces always fall to ruin and disorder. Again echoing the language of his dramas, Lewis points out that he doubts that his heirs would be ‘likely to adopt conduct so ungrateful to me; and so disgraceful to themselves’.<sup>644</sup> Even after death, Lewis was determined to retain order on his estates through obligation – of slaves to their master, and his heirs to their benefactor.

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<sup>641</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2:160.

<sup>642</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 161. Lewis did not specify how such success or failure would be measured.

<sup>643</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 158-163: 163. The codicil was added whilst Lewis was staying in Diodati and is witnessed by Lord Byron, P.B. Shelley and John Polidori. The careful distribution of wealth recalls that advocated by *Venoni*.

<sup>644</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2:163.



**Coda:**

***Lewis's Journal of a West-India Proprietor***

(4,100 words)



Previous chapters have considered the way in which Lewis's Gothic dramas present power, masculinity, violence, the pragmatic need for 'mercy' and the importance of 'gratitude', duty and responsibility, paternalism and Lewis's awareness of himself as a member of the planter class and of Parliament. This presentation was influenced by public and domestic events including the French Revolution, the abolition of the slave trade and the constant threat of slave revolts, his parents' separation, his rift with his father, his relationship with the Kellys, the financing of an actress who was also a devoted daughter and his patronage of Sir Walter Scott. In particular, the events of the Whitlocke trial seem to have reinforced many of Lewis's beliefs concerning the obligations of those imbued with authority over their subordinates.

When he inherited two Jamaican estates from his father in 1812, Lewis began to put into practice the ideas he had explored in these fictitious dramas. Lewis himself made connections between his new role as a slave-owner and his previous one as a dramatist: he compares the most onerous task carried out by the slaves, digging the holes in which cane plants were planted, as being work 'on much the same footing [as that of] English day labourers', who had, of course, featured in *The Castle Spectre*.<sup>645</sup> Lewis wrote of his slaves, on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1816, that their 'greatest fear is the not having a master whom they know', despite 'Mr. Wilberforce lamenting their hard fate in being subject to a master' (46). The devotion Lewis was keen to find and inspire in Jamaica recalls that displayed by low-born characters in his dramas. He does, however, note some dissatisfaction amongst the slaves.

Perhaps Lewis's most direct comparison between his life in Jamaica and his dramas is to be found at the beginning of his entry for January 16<sup>th</sup> of the same year: 'I never witnessed on the stage a scene so picturesque as a negro village . . . if I were to decide according to my own taste, I should infinitely have preferred their habitations to my own' (69). Lewis gives a sentimentalised depiction of his slaves here, as ideologically skewed as any of More's peasants or the servants which were the offspring of his own pen.

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<sup>645</sup> Lewis, *Journal* 66. Following references to this text will be given in parentheses after the quotation.

Lewis's comment that slavery is regrettable is often cited, but usually without a consideration of his view that emancipating slaves would not be economically viable and would be likely to lead to outbreaks of violence.<sup>646</sup> Lewis saw himself as being in a position which demanded that he attempt to maintain order.

After years of using the stage to theorise about power and its maintenance, Lewis was finally able to play the role that domestic patronage had prepared him for: the slave-owner. Lewis did need to find some way of maintaining order on his plantations, as the danger he feared was real: on March 16<sup>th</sup> 1816, he recorded in the *Journal* a plan to 'murder all the whites in the island' which had originated at 'the property of Lord Balcarras', despite the fact that 'the overseer is an old man of the mildest character, and the negroes had always been treated with peculiar indulgence' (137). Lewis faced the possibility of both slave revolt and resistance from those who oversaw the slaves in his absence: an early entry in the *Journal* notes the two things that Lewis was perhaps keenest to avoid: '[e]very morning my agent regales me with some fresh instance of insubordination he . . . gives me to understand, that the estate cannot be governed properly without the cart-whip' (87). The seriousness with which Lewis viewed his responsibility to and for the slaves is evident in the comment, for January 25<sup>th</sup> 1816, that although he had been invited to a dinner and ball in Montego Bay, he declined, as he was 'determined to give up [his] whole time to [his] negroes' during his time in Jamaica (87). This element of self-denial was present in his behaviour years before, when remonstrating with his late-night-billiard-playing friends, and even earlier, when he witnessed violence in Weimar. He also wrote to, and met with, William Wilberforce, seeking advice on how the treatment of his slaves could be improved. Wilberforce recorded their collaboration in 1816:

Monk Lewis dined with me, to talk over Jamaica. I went again to town to see him; he is I hope in earnest in writing to

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<sup>646</sup> These are cited on 82, above.

me to secure the happiness of his slaves after his death; I am quite anxious to do some good though this channel.<sup>647</sup>

As previous chapters have noted, D.L. Macdonald has explored that Lewis adopted a paternalistic approach towards his mother and that Lewis's view of his slaves was a mixture of feudal loyalties, paternalism and of them being akin to human livestock.<sup>648</sup> Lewis's prefaces to published versions of his plays suggest that he was also concerned about his public image. Work by Judith Pascoe has identified several key figures and events in Romantic-era culture that were theatricalised – 'stage-managed' would be a more modern, cynical term – to create a favourable public image. Pascoe identifies, in the work of writers contemporary with Lewis, features of self-theatricalisation, including 'a concern for audience, a sensitivity to popular taste, an awareness of the fictive nature of self-representation'.<sup>649</sup> She also notes that 'Fascination with dramatic modes of self-representation in the period is frequently coupled with stylistic excess', which led to the vilification of Keats and several female writers.<sup>650</sup> Lewis was another writer renowned and often criticised for the excesses of his writing and who manipulated his image towards the end of his career, possibly as a result of lessons learnt concerning his earlier controversies. The focus of this short concluding chapter is on how the anecdotes Lewis records about his life on the plantation reflect his earlier, dramatised concerns. Lewis's penchant for self-dramatising can be seen in a fragment which Baron-Wilson included in the second volume of her biography; Lewis records reading to his slaves (a paternalistic activity), only to be seemingly attacked by one of them during the following night. Lewis's vivid description gothicises the attack. After hearing strange moans, Lewis slept badly, as his 'wasting lamp alternately shot up a glaring flame, or grimly cast grotesque shadows'. Eventually:

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<sup>647</sup> Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, eds., *The Life of William Wilberforce*, 5 vols. (London: John Murray, 1838):4, 292.

<sup>648</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 53-56. See also 90 and 195, above.

<sup>649</sup> Judith Pascoe, Judith, *Romantic Theatricality: Gender, Poetry and Spectatorship* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997) 1. Amongst the female authors she mentions are Mary Robinson, Laetitia Elizabeth Landon and Hannah Cowley.

<sup>650</sup> Pascoe, *Romantic Theatricality* 3.

[A] tall shadow passed slowly between the struggling flame and the transparent draperies of my couch; and by a sudden brilliant coruscation, I at length plainly beheld a hand and swarthy arm introduced between the hangings!<sup>651</sup>

Lewis claims that he grabbed his attacker by the throat, but then rather unheroically knocked himself out on a marble pillar. When he regained consciousness, a penitent slave (who had not, apparently, meant to attack Lewis in the first place) had put him on a sofa. Lewis records upbraiding him with a comment that could have been uttered by any of his heroes: ‘Ungrateful wretch . . . Is it then you?’ (266) This concern with ‘gratitude’, evident in his plays, a euphemism for what Macdonald calls the ‘feudal loyalty’ of Lewis’s slaves, is central to Lewis’s ‘heroic’ conception of his control over his slaves.<sup>652</sup> He met with varied success as he reformed the system of rewards and punishments on his plantations and tried to maintain his workforce.

That Lewis, despite his concern for his slaves (and there is no reason to believe that this was insincere) was motivated by self-interest is evident in his dismissal of Wilberforce’s arguments and in the comment he made as he neared Jamaica on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1815: ‘I can only look at Jamaica as one does on a man who comes to pay money, and whom we are extremely well-pleased to see’ (34). Like his plays, the island is a source of income. Just under three weeks later, on January 17<sup>th</sup>, he worries about the productivity of his estates:

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<sup>651</sup> The incident is included in the Oxford World’s Classics edition of the *Journal*: 262-268. The quotation is from 266. Some criticism considering Lewis’s gothicisation of race and the West Indies has focused on his long poem, *The Isle of Devils*, which he included in his *Journal*. Lewis also Gothicises the slaves and their customs throughout the *Journal*, referring often to their belief in ‘Obeah’ (which seems just as strong and a cause of fear as it did to Juba in Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda*) and referring to the funeral ceremonies as ‘strange and fantastical’ (*Journal* 63). There has been less consideration, however, of the way that he also theatricalises the aspects he gothicises, of which this incident is an example.

<sup>652</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 55.

Not a drop of rain has fallen since the fifth of November; the young canes are burning . . . these winds may be said to blow my pockets inside out. (72)<sup>653</sup>

Such statements make Lewis's self-interest clear, which is hardly surprising. He does, however, maintain the desire to please that his earlier letters had made revealed. As is the case in his dramas, however, this process of pleasing those reliant on him is a reciprocal process:

I find it quite impossible to resist the fascination of the conscious pleasure of pleasing; and my own heart [. . .] seems to expand itself again in the sunshine of the kind looks and words which meet me at every turn, and seem to wait for mine as anxiously as if they were so many diamonds.(59)

The keenness for his approval that he records in his slaves may have been the result of their apprehension about meeting their new master or it may have been disingenuous; in either case, Lewis may have exaggerated its extent. Regardless of its origin or even truth, it is apparent that Lewis revelled in his new role, which is presented as that of the bountiful and kindly feudal lord as he receives adoration of the type enjoyed by Earl Percy and Viceroy Benvolio. Lewis also describes his slaves in a way which recalls the childlike simplicity of his peasants, and which presents him as a bountiful leader in the mould of the unseen feudal lord of *One O' Clock!*:

As I passed through their grounds, many little requests were preferred to me: one wanted an additional supply of lime for whitewashing his house . . . several entreated me to negotiate the purchase of some relation or friend belonging to another estate . . . but all their requests were for additional indulgences; not one complained of ill-treatment, hunger, or over-work.(71)

Lewis seems anxious here, trying to persuade himself as much as the reader that the slaves were satisfied and not ill-treated. This attitude would change to a certain extent as his stay in Jamaica progressed, as I will shortly discuss.

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<sup>653</sup> Lewis goes on to reveal his familiarity with the writings of contemporary authors here: when complaining that the warm dry air hampering production cost him a guinea for every breath of it he took, he compares himself to 'Miss Burney's Citizen at Vauxhall, who kept muttering to himself, with every bit of ham that he put into his mouth, 'There goes sixpence, and there goes a shilling!''

As discussed in previous sections, Lewis was caught between the roles of dutiful son and paternal adviser to his mother, and his works are ambiguous in their presentation of motherhood: some of his maternal characters, particularly Elvira and Hortensia, are well-meaning but so inept that they endanger their daughters. The sentimentalised Alexina and Evelina protect their daughters, but are spectral. Zorilda acts the part of a warrior, but her protection of Agib is also sentimentalised. Lewis's approach to the mothers on his plantations was more pragmatic. Owning a slave plantation in a post-abolition world meant that Lewis was largely reliant upon the reproduction of his existing slaves for the continuity of his workforce, and he describes both the dearth of births and the high infant mortality rate in a manner which reveals his frustration and concern for the future of his estates. On January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1816, he made the bitter and unsympathetic comment that 'I really believe that the negresses can produce children at pleasure, and where they are barren, it is just as hens will frequently not lay eggs on shipboard, because they do not like their situation' (54). On January 13<sup>th</sup>, Lewis wrote of the attention paid to new mothers, in order to ensure their health (presumably for future pregnancies) and that of their children:

Two have been born since my arrival. My housekeeper was hardly ever out of the lying-in apartment, I always visited myself once a day, and sometimes twice, in order that I might be certain of the women being well taken care of; not a day passed without the inspection of a physician; nothing of indulgence, that was proper for them, was denied; and, besides their ordinary food, the mothers received every day the most nourishing and palatable dish that was brought to my own table.(62)

Lewis self-dramatises his behaviour here as that of a feudal lord, concerned for his vassals, but maintaining an authority over them, as evidenced in the proviso that only 'indulgences' which were 'proper for them' would be allowed. Lewis was swift to act, writing on January 21<sup>st</sup> of a scheme which saw him award a scarlet girdle and medals to the mothers: they received a medal for each child born and were instructed to wear the girdle when they 'should have any favour to ask' as then the overseer would know they were 'entitled to particular indulgence'. They would be forgiven their first offence upon the girdle's production and would also receive larger portions

and be served earlier at feasts – the greater the number of medals, the greater the precedence (79-80). Mothers had been awarded clothes and provisions on the tenth day after giving birth in order to encourage them to care for their infants: Lewis also arranged for them to receive money on the fourteenth day. In awarding these women status – a starring role - Lewis sentimentalises motherhood, theatricalises it with a striking costume and presents himself as benevolent and beneficent, like his heroes. He acts in self-interest, hoping for the production of more slave-children, but understands his motivation sufficiently well to attempt to replicate it by appealing to the self-interest of the mothers. Lewis would be disappointed in his attempts: two years later, shortly before his own death, he wrote that ‘among upwards of three hundred and thirty negroes, and with a greater number of females than men, in spite of all indulgences and inducements, not more than twelve or thirteen children have been added annually to the list of births’ (202).<sup>654</sup> Though Lewis goes on to discuss health and infant mortality on the island more generally, it is clear that part of the cause of his frustration and disappointment is the fact that ‘indulgences and inducements’ had failed to produce results.<sup>655</sup>

Lewis would be similarly disappointed in his hopes that improving medical provision and reducing punishments for his slaves would improve their productivity; a development that echoes his father’s attempts to improve the hygiene and nutrition of Irish soldiers. The *Journal* is full of anecdotes

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<sup>654</sup> Lewis wrote this in his entry for Saturday, January 24<sup>th</sup> 1818. Later, realising that rewarding mothers for breast-feeding was leading to late weaning, Lewis introduced a system which rewarded the mothers for weaning at fifteen months (*Journal* 251-2).

<sup>655</sup> This topic is the sole focus of Lewis’s entry for Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1818:

This morning (without fault or accident) a young, strong, healthy woman miscarried of an eight months’ child; and this is the third time she has met with a similar misfortune. No other symptom has been given in the course of this year, nor are there above eight women upon the breeding list out of more than one hundred and fifty females. Yet they are all well clothed and well fed, contented in mind, even by their own account, over-worked at no time, and when upon the breeding list are exempted from labour of every kind. In spite of this, and their being treated with all possible care and indulgence, rewarded for bringing children, and therefore anxious to have them, how they manage it so ill I know not, but somehow or other certainly the children do not come. (*Journal* 237).

about slaves malingering in the hospital in order to avoid labouring. On March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1816, Lewis self-pityingly wrote:

Since my arrival at Jamaica, I am not conscious of having omitted any means of satisfying my negroes, and rendering them happy and secure from oppression. I have suffered no person to be punished [unjustifiably] [. . .] I have never refused a favour that I could possibly grant. I have listened patiently to all complaints. I have increased the number of negro holidays, and have given away money and presents of all kinds incessantly. Now for my reward. On Saturday morning there were no fewer than forty-five persons (not including children) in the hospital; which makes nearly a fifth of my whole gang. Of these, the medical people assured me that not more than above seven had any thing whatever the matter with them. (125)

Lewis ends this journal entry by complaining ‘so much for negro gratitude’ after their unhelpfulness in an incident where escaped cattle trampled crops and cost him money: ‘They rejoice merrily at being very well off, but think it unnecessary to make the slightest return to massa for making them so’ (127). However, Lewis is also keen to record evidence of the devotion of his slaves, noting in February 1818 that, upon his return to Jamaica, his slaves clamoured to see him and had no complaints of their treatment. Although ‘it has been found necessary to punish with the lash’ in his absence, this was only in severe cases, when ‘its necessity and justice were universally felt, not only by others, but by the sufferers themselves’ and that his ‘trustee acknowledges that during my absence the negroes have been quiet and tractable’ and have been more productive than those on a neighbouring plantation (214-5). It is difficult not to think of Viceroy Benvolio, Duke Sigismond and Earl Percy as Lewis continues to describe his opening of a new hospital and distribution of presents: the scene recalls that of Benvolio’s return in the opening scene of *Venoni*. Lewis creates a similar image in March of 1816, when as he:

Came down the steps to depart, they crowded about me, kissing my feet, and clasping my knees, so that it was with difficulty that I could get into the carriage. And this was done with such marks of truth and feeling, that I cannot believe the whole to be mere acting and mummery. (147)

How truly attached the slaves were to Lewis cannot be accurately judged. He proudly wrote, on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1818, that, when surprised not to see some of them greet him on his return to Jamaica, that he had been told they were at the funeral of a slave called Bob, who had been so attached to Lewis that he died asking if there was news as he had wanted to ‘but see him once more, and thank him, before he died’ (213). This is the language of Lewis’s fictional peasants – and it is possible that the slaves were attempting to flatter him out of anger at not being met by the full complement of his workforce. After all, on other occasions his benevolent paternalism had proved fruitful for Lewis – as, for example, when, after arriving at Jamaica for the first time, he had ‘desired that no questions should be asked’ when several runaway slaves returned to his plantation. Lewis called this recouping of his slaves the ‘one advantage to myself’ of his visit (70).

The ‘indulgences’ which Lewis had earlier introduced also included increasing his slaves’ holidays by giving them time off at Easter, in July (in honour of the Duchess of York) and in October (for himself, ‘massa’s day’, allowing himself a status akin to royalty on the island). Lewis claimed that ‘the poor creatures overflowed with gratitude’ at the news’ – not unsurprising given the little freedom they had had previously (118).<sup>656</sup> Lewis had not always been this enthusiastic about the efficacy of his methods: in March 1816 he records that ‘the negroes are perverse beings’ as, although they had supposedly eagerly anticipated his arrival on the island, and he had ‘suffered no one to be punished, and shown them every possible indulgence’, their productivity had shrunk from ‘thirty-three hogsheads a week’ before his arrival, to twenty-three in the two weeks following his arrival and finally to thirteen (141). Nor was his enthusiasm of March 1818 to last: by April 8<sup>th</sup> 1818 he was again complaining about the lack of births and the death of his best labourer, Nelson: ‘This is the sixth death in the course of the first three months of the year, and we have not as yet a single birth for a set-off’. He ends the entry with a bitter reflection on

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<sup>656</sup> Lewis similarly records similar exuberant ‘gratitude’ and that the ‘joy of the negroes on [his] return were quite sufficiently vociferous and they were allowed to-day for a holiday’ when he returned to the plantation on January 26<sup>th</sup> 1818 (*Journal* 203).

his reforms: ‘Say what one will to the negroes, and treat them as well as one can, obstinate devils, they will die!’ (241).<sup>657</sup>

Lewis was also keen to introduce mechanical ploughs and oxen to his estates, ‘substituting the labour of animals for that of slaves . . . where-ever such a measure is practicable’ (205). Though he claimed that it would be beneficial for his slaves for these practices to be adopted, he describes their resistance in the form of damaging ploughs. He does not provide a reason for this resistance, but by this point, must have also realised that his reliance on a dwindling supply of slaves was not indefinitely sustainable. His description of the death of bulls he and Lord Holland had sent to the island has a similar tone to that he uses when describing the deaths of slave infants, supporting the claim that he viewed slaves as being akin to livestock:

They were taken all possible care of, houses appropriated to shelter them from the sun and rain, and, in short, no means of preserving their health was neglected. Yet, shortly after their arrival in Jamaica, they evidently began to decline. (205)

Though biographers of Lewis, including Macdonald, accurately stress that Lewis’s treatment of his slaves was unusually humane for the time, it should be noted that it was by no means unique. It was, in fact, a tried and to some extent proven method of controlling slaves. In 1789, Olaudah Equiano had published his *Interesting Narrative*, recounting the effective methods of Sir Philip Gibbes in Barbados, who ‘never needed any fresh supply of negroes’ due to his good treatment of his slaves.<sup>658</sup> Gibbes went on to publish on the efficacy of his experiences and Equiano also recalls that he managed an estate using similar methods, where ‘the negroes were uncommonly cheerful and healthy [and] did more work by half than by the common mode of treatment they usually do’.<sup>659</sup> Equiano likewise provides evidence that the sense of ‘duty’ and ‘gratitude’ of slaves could be used to the advantage of

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<sup>657</sup> Lewis is also darkly humorous here, to the point of being shocking, just as his portrayal of Lodowick’s behaviour had been in relation to the death of Father Cyprian in *Adelmorn, the Outlaw* over a decade previously.

<sup>658</sup> Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*: 122.

<sup>659</sup> *Ibid.*

owners and former owners: he allowed himself to be convinced to take work on a ship rather than leave for London.<sup>660</sup>

The incident in the *Journal* concerning the ‘gratitude’ of the slaves which most closely recalls the peasants of the dramas, the peasants of Hannah More and the ‘grateful negro’ of Edgeworth (and even Equiano himself) is to be found in the entry for February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1818, when Lewis writes with some relief that ‘All negroes . . . are not absolutely without some remembrance of kindness shown them’, as they had been reluctant to accept rewards for driving out escaped cattle from sugar cane, claiming ‘that as they were all well treated on the estate, it was their business to take care that no mischief was done to it’ (207). Lewis records his measures as having generally succeeded during his time on Jamaica. He ends his *Journal* with the remark:

I am certain that there cannot be more tractable or better disposed persons . . . than my negroes of Cornwall. I only wish, that in my future dealings with white persons, whether *in* Jamaica or out of it, I could but meet with half so much gratitude, affection, and good-will. (252)

Lewis’s tone here is that of wistful pride – it seems that he was to some extent dependent on the reverence of his inferiors, and not merely for financial reasons. Lewis’s will, in which he does not manumit his slaves, but in which he does insist that his heirs spend a specified amount of time in Jamaica, combines his duty to both sets of his dependents, and in doing so he yet again echoes the actions of his own father, whom Lewis calls ‘one of the most humane and generous persons who ever existed’ who never ‘denied’ his slaves an ‘indulgence’ and whose ‘letters were filled with the most absolute injunctions for their good treatment’, it being ‘a particular

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<sup>660</sup> Equiano refers to his ‘benefactors’ and ‘honoured patrons’, claiming that ‘gratitude bowed me down’. His phrasing in the latter example is suggestive of the enforced slavery he had left, whilst the terms he uses to describe his employers verge on euphemism, falsely suggesting their disinterestedness. They are also notably similar to the language used by Lewis in both his letters and his literary works. Equiano, *Interesting Narrative* 158.

recommendation' that his trusted over-seer should live in Lewis's house (74).<sup>661</sup>

Lewis died on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1818, of yellow fever on the voyage to England from Jamaica. The manner of his death is a microcosm for the way in which Lewis and his works have been misunderstood and misinterpreted.

Macdonald has pointed out that Michael Kelly's claim that the slaves had poisoned Lewis was a political one: it identified the danger of showing 'excessive indulgence' to dependents.<sup>662</sup> Baron-Wilson records that a fellow-passenger claimed that one of Lewis's last acts was to arrange the payment of his valet's wages.<sup>663</sup> This would be unsurprising having considered Lewis's treatment of his slaves and the presentation of gratitude, benevolence and loyalty in his work. However, learning of the death on June 30<sup>th</sup>, John Cam Hobhouse blithely recorded that '[h]is servant told my servant that just before he died he wrote his will on his servant's hat'.<sup>664</sup> If Lewis's servant was indeed the originator of this lie, then not only did it detract attention from Lewis's kindness, but in doing so became the final act of 'ingratitude' that Lewis's reputation was to endure.

Lewis's Gothic dramas reveal an engagement with contemporary politics and cultural ideals through their presentation of power, responsibility, gratitude, social rank and masculinity. These are aspects of his over-arching concern with disruption to the social order and the avoidance or rectifying of such disorder. Lewis gothicises this concern using a dramatic repertoire of ghosts, imprisonment, disguises, tableaux, Renaissance influences and stylised speech patterns. There are parallels between this focus on disorder in Lewis's literary output and the experiences, relating to both national concerns and his difficult familial circumstances, which are recorded in the

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<sup>661</sup> See 275 for closer discussion of this codicil.

<sup>662</sup> Macdonald, *Monk Lewis* 209.

<sup>663</sup> Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence* 2: 252. The valet, incidentally, was 'Tita', who later famously became Byron's servant. Macdonald identifies the passenger as Mary-Ann Finlason. As with the incident involving the actress, Baron-Wilson does not provide material evidence regarding Finlason's story.

<sup>664</sup> Broughton, *Recollections of a Long Life* 2:100.

*Journal* and his letters. Common to these personal, non-fiction texts is a theatrical, self-dramatising style of expression. Such parallels in style and content legitimise a biographically informed reassessment of Lewis's works, to which this thesis, concentrating on a reconsideration of a selection of his plays, is a contribution.



**Appendix:**

**Raphael's *The Transfiguration*.**





**Raphael's *The Transfiguration* (1516-20).**

The dream-vision of Adelmorn in Act Three, Scene One of *Adelmorn, the Outlaw* was compared to this painting. See 117 and 139.

The image is available online, from:

<http://www.artbible.info/art/large/613.html> , [Accessed 30/08/2011].



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