Chapter Fourteen

MYSTERY AND TERROR

THE HEROES and heroines assigned a passive role, perhaps that of a mere "fortune's football," demonstrate a dependence on fate and providence that seems to reduce their personal responsibility to a minimum. They may in theory believe in freedom of the will, yet practically they are paralyzed in an inability to act, and to act for the good and true. Their best policy is to wait for lapses in the control exerted over them by hostile forces: then only can such heroes and heroines begin to fulfill their promise. In this limitation of their initiative, they resemble the figures of an earlier chapter fighting overwhelming odds. These, too, accept the fact of a decisive handicap removing their enemies quite beyond their reach. But at least they are resisting somebody with an identity, a name (even when, because of some writer's lack of skill, the name is no more than a label). They are not, as is the case with "fortune's footballs," confronted by an arbitrary, supernatural, alliance of individual events or personal whims.

There is yet another group of stories whose heroes or heroines are at a very unfair disadvantage, with heavy odds favoring their antagonists. On two levels, however, differences exist between their plight and that of the former figures. For one thing, the enmity is not exclusively or mainly in the field of love; for another, it creates an atmosphere of fear rather than of malice. These heroes move in a fictional world characterized by the devices of the novel of terror as developed in England from Walpole to Mrs. Radcliffe and Monk Lewis. Thus the heroes see through the motives of their enemies and are given ample warning of their evil determination. This knowledge might be sufficient to strike them with anxiety and terror; but they seem even more impressed by the air of mystery that may accompany
the manifestations of their antagonists' hatred, for it appears to imply a command of supernatural powers.

The short tale *Adventures in a Castle* (1806) is a good illustration of this type of story. It rapidly creates on ominous mood of suspicion through some facts: a family quarrel, and the specific threat embodied in an impoverished relative; and Louis's and Henry's comparative unprotectedness and dependence on a guardian. The latter knows about the past and therefore about potential tensions. This material works as a sounding board when Henry mysteriously disappears from a locked room, an occurrence which coincides with the attack of a group of bandits against his brother. There follow, in the setting of a decaying castle, sinister intimations of murder and an intervention only partly successful on the part of Louis. This young man disappears, then unexpectedly returns to his guardian, but as he keeps silent about what happened to his brother and himself, the mystery is only increased. The confrontation with Vauban at the Duke of Alençon's at last starts a process clarifying the issues; as the enmities and grounds for discord stand revealed, Louis and his friend regain confidence. Vauban proves vulnerable: he is involved not just in the family feud, which is now intensified by jealousy over the Duke's daughter, but in a movement representing a threat to the community. This danger necessitates calling in the King's troops, and the defeat of Vauban and his bandits is quickly consummated. The rest of the mystery dissolves in the light of the blaze destroying the outlaws' castle. Henry's reemergence out of the darkness of his prison aptly illustrates the final solution. Reason and order are reestablished, usurping chaos and irrationality vanquished. A quotation may exemplify the type of irrational forces of aggression Henry suddenly finds himself attacked by; in the context of his experience he is bound to rely on reason and common decency to try to understand what lies behind the hostility he encounters, but so long as he does so its depth and complexity must remain unfathomable:

Having alighted from the carriage, I was immediately conducted to the dreary dudgeon [sic] from whence the magnanimity of
my beloved brother released me. When I was secured by chains in that horrible place, my guide condescended to open his lips, and inform me, that here the remainder of my days was to be spent, that here I was to drag out in misery, the remnant of a life, which till then had been spent in a course of uninterrupted felicity, except when the death of my father, for a time, cast a shade over my happiness. I then repeated my request to know by whom, and for what motive, I was thus severely punished, but I could obtain no answer from the monster, and I thought I could perceive a horrible smile of satisfaction, gleam across his countenance, at having thus doomed a fellow creature to be miserable, as long as life remained.\(^1\)

The theme of *Adventures in a Castle* is essentially a very simple one, that of a family quarrel over property. Its chief interest is obviously expected to derive from the villainous means and mysterious appearances employed by Vauban to help his luck. The plot is further complicated when the motive of jealousy joins that of greed, and still more because Vauban also has a share in the schemes of organized bandits. A similar pattern underlies *Julia, and the Illuminated Baron* (1800), by Mrs. Sarah Wood (1759-1855): a family rivalry over a large estate, the motive of lust, and de Launa’s active membership among the Illuminati. If we were to take Mrs. Wood’s sentiments at their face value, the last-mentioned circumstance should prove by far the most serious of de Launa’s crimes.\(^2\) Yet in the portrait which she drew of him (pp. 67-68) and in the sequence of actions for which he bears the responsibility, her explicit criticism is only vaguely borne out. De Launa emerges not as the representative of a formidable subversive movement but as something more familiar: a conventional villain of the Radcliffean variety. He has been consistently brought up as an Illuminatus, to be sure; but this education merely fosters ugly inclinations such as any novel-villain tends to possess and develop.\(^8\) As we follow him through the narrative, he is above all obsessed with the idea of making Julia his mistress. He proves a would-be seducer with little patience in the formal approach, and because he lacks the confidence of a Montraville or a Sanford in his powers of seduction, he soon resorts to the use of
violence. There is no indication that he has any time and energy left to devote to the purposes of the Illuminati, once he is in pursuit of Julia and trying to avenge himself on Colwort. We may assume that, having made over part of his estate to the movement, he is content to enjoy their principles for the simple sake of rationalizing to himself his own enjoyments.4

With this view of the villain, the problem of the Illuminati fails to function as a spiritual or ideological test; it is just another device for the creation of a sense of mystery and horror. This has something to do, of course, with the New England–Federalist conception of the Illuminati. Not that Mrs. Wood’s indignation at the principles and goals attributed to them was not at least as genuine as Jedidiah Morse’s when he preached a sermon against them;5 but we must consider that to Mrs. Wood and Morse, the existence of the Illuminati provided a scapegoat, an embodiment of dangerously enlightened religious views and political radicalism. As such, they were a conveniently crass illustration of the potential corruption lurking in the Jeffersonianism they abhorred, hence the insistence on the connection between Illuminatism and the violence of the French Revolution (pp. 284-88). The notion of Illuminatism was better left vague, suggestive rather than descriptive.

As a device in the service of the sinisterly mysterious, the phenomenon of Illuminatism is linked with the chief element of complexity in the plot of *Julia*: this story of a struggle between innocence and lust is also a twisted tale of mistaken and hidden identities in which the villain is endowed, with no gain to his reality as a character, with certain powers of an agent of fate, and therefore with some of the awe that fate calls forth. He plays a part in the manner of an evil destiny, from the day of Julia’s birth all through her career of misfortune. He has her mother poisoned, which leads to Julia’s removal from the de Launa castle and her being brought up in obscurity. Out of the latter circumstance arises the threat of an incestuous connection, since de Launa does not know that Julia, whose virtue he is trying to subdue, is his half-sister.6

The narrative proper, which begins when the Countess be-
friends Julia, introduces in the girl's account of her abandoned state, the element of mystery that is to characterize many of her adventures. She mentions the hints given her by Isabella concerning her future rank, and the circumstance of Isabella's abrupt disappearance (chap. 1). While Julia is tested by normal occurrences, such as falling in love, parting from her fiancé, and becoming seriously ill (chaps. 4, 5, 15), the strangeness of her origin is referred to again in remarks on her resemblance to some relative of the Countess. Gradually the consciousness of some hidden relationship and the elements of the strange and exceptional coalesce and dominate the narrative. Since de Launa has early been depicted as wicked (pp. 25, 26) and is obviously irritated at failing to impress Julia, the girl's abduction to Spain is likely to be attributed to him. It is soon shown that Julia has been the victim of an error, but the formerly vague distrust of de Launa remains more definitely with the reader and prepares him for the villain's later actions. After Julia's imprisonment, her adversities are unhesitatingly traced to him; meanwhile it appears that de Launa may also be mixed up with Julia's earlier history.

The girl grows more familiar with man's wicked ways through listening to the stories of the Countess, Mademoiselle de Gyron, and Leonora (chaps. 2, 12, 17), and experiencing de Launa's menace to her honor. She seems to feel the fascination of the forces of darkness, of the unknown, the potentially fearful, and proves her curiosity and fortitude in the visit to Leonora's grave; at the end of this visit she wishes to cut off a lock of her mother's hair: "... She had just touched the hair, when the stillness that pervaded the gloomy mansion was interrupted by a deep sigh; and Julia started, touched the face, to her horror it sunk into ashes, and mouldered into dust; not a feature remained; it was all an horrid chasm, for the affrighted imagination to fill up" (p. 192). This is the culmination of the supernaturally horrible; further harassing experiences follow, but these are too obviously caused by de Launa's machinations. The death of the villain, as the result of an apothecary's error, ironically and finally disposes of all appearances of supernatural powers. Julia,
to judge from her behavior in two thirds of the book, should at all times easily be de Launa's match. It is difficult to reconcile her fearlessness when a prisoner with her later meek acceptance of the loss of the Countess's esteem. In this change, however, our heroine conforms to the pattern of innocent sufferers of slander: they accept being abandoned by their former friends as quickly as the latter lend an ear to their calumniators. Significantly, in the final part of her story, Julia must rely on the help of fortuitous happenings. There is, for example, that chain of events acquainting her through Roswell with Madame de Shong a short time before a fire destroys this lady's dwelling; its former inhabitants eventually seek shelter at an inn just in time for a revealing reunion with the Countess (chap. 24), which is itself a prelude to the discovery that Julia is the Marquis's daughter (p. 263). Overhearing a conversation which sheds light on Colwort's origins is another helpful accident arranged by a destiny kindly preparing Julia's happiness (p. 288).

The anticlimactic features in the characterization of de Launa and Julia, and the transparent device of Julia's and Colwort's identities, are typical of the weaknesses of the novel. The story is needlessly burdened with the episodes of Mademoiselle de Gyron's revenge, Leonora's elopement from the convent, Olivia's becoming de Launa's mistress, and the succession of deaths among Madame de Shong's relatives. There is repetitiveness in the parallel fates of Julia and Colwort-Ormond, both before and after their meeting with de Launa and in details of the accounts given of the villain. The style of Julia is undistinguished: it does perhaps tend less toward extremes of sententiousness or sentimentality than that of other writers. Mrs. Wood, mentioning in her "Dedication" her wish to write a moral tale, apologized for her European setting; she clearly wished her patriotism not to be questioned and went out of her way to praise her country (p. 47) and Washington (pp. 131-35), and her female colleagues "Philenia" and "Constantia" (chap. 8).

From the latter, Mrs. Wood borrowed two mottoes and used them as chapter headings in her novel *Amelia; or, The Influence of Virtue* (1802), in which she extended her distrust of the
Illuminati not just to all French revolutionaries but to their country as a whole. By comparison the British became a nation as nearly exempt from faults as the Americans, and she gave her French heroine an English mother and grandmother as well as an English education. Amelia must hold her own against two different types of villains. The difficulties which she encounters in the first two-thirds of the novel belong to the familiar elements of the novel of domestic victimization. There is the difference, however, that the emphasis of the narrative lies less on the sufferings of the heroine—as, for instance, in *The Hapless Orphan* or *Constantia Neville*—than on her exertions to manifest the influence of virtue which is at her command. This may not make her any more lifelike than her all too submissive fellow heroines, but it at least provides a welcome relief from the manifestations of Harriot’s evil spell and the trials to the heroine’s sensibility.

It also, of course, suggests the idea of Amelia’s perfection. Her only sign of weakness is her pique at Sir William’s delay in consummating their marriage (chap. 6). She ranks first in the moral hierarchy of the characters, whereas Volpoon just as surely is at the other end of the scale. Young Barrymore really is no less accomplished than Amelia, for his one error apparently is his Roman Catholicism, of which he eventually rids himself. Lady Stanly, too, is near-perfect, except in too rashly assuming that her son and Amelia must marry. Sir William at least, though he has substantial virtues (p. 104), is of a frailer substance, and only an Amelia can be so patient with his slavish submission to Harriot. This girl, repeatedly in explicit contrast with Amelia, is not deliberately evil but rather selfishly and impulsively weak and partly a victim, like De Everet, of those who spoiled her in her education. Clearly she is far from being a villain of the Volpoon caliber:

Alas, unfortunate man! he had never enjoyed one social comfort, or one solid pleasure: guilt corroded all his joys, and impressed discontent and despair upon his gloomy countenance: he had never known a dear domestic joy, nor one smiling comfort. He had not wiped the tear from the widow’s cheek, or raised the
drooping heart of the fatherless; he had never given comfort to
the friendless, or cheered the afflicted. He was a stranger to the
god-like pleasure of doing good: he received no satisfaction
from reflection; avarice had prompted guilt that he feared to
remember; and to accumulate riches, he had waded through
sighs, tears, and blood: this one passion had absorbed every
other; and to the gratification of it, he had sacrificed his con-
science, peace, and happiness, and left not one soul behind him,
that regretted his death, or would have recalled him by a wish. 13

The reader early realizes that Amelia is far superior to Harriot
and must sympathize as the heroine's sensitivity is tested severely
and cruelly by her rival's unscrupulousness. Amelia has suffered
quite enough when the author appears to promise the imminence
of her reward, Sir William's return to a sense of her shining
Christian virtues. The concluding part of *Amelia*, however,
inaugurates a new persecution. The heroine is carried to corrupt
France and held captive in a deserted and decaying house; at
length Volpoon's intention to murder her is made plain. Her
earlier domestic and sentimental trials at this point assume the
aspect of a mere anticipation of these freshly accumulated
sufferings. It is as though Amelia's sensibility first has had to be
heightened simply to make her more vulnerable to the quick
changes of her destiny, from unhappiness to the promise of
fulfillment and back again into desperate misery. Inevitably
there is, in the ups and downs of her existence in England, a
gradual blunting of the effects of her individual experiences; but
this does not compensate an increasing sense of insecurity which
results from the fact that her troubles proceed from different
sources: apart from Harriot's agency, there have been some
simple unfortunate coincidences 14 and the quite unrelated spiri-
tual crisis caused by Barrymore's proposal. 15 On the other hand
her vicissitudes from the time of her abduction are intensifi-
ed by being entirely dominated by the mysterious purpose of one
man rendered the more awe-inspiring because he remains in the
background. He exerts his evil influence through the agency
of a scoundrel whom he can blackmail into almost any crime.
In France, therefore, Amelia lives in a sinister atmosphere long
unrelieved by glimpses of human compassion such as she earlier
witnessed and supplied. There is only a temporary, and limited, luxury granted her: she can share with Henrietta the pleasure of scorning Volpoon and hearing that one at least escaped him alive: his sister-in-law, Amelia’s mother. De Everet then summons up enough energy to rebel against Volpoon’s orders, but apparently only to plunge Amelia into a new order of difficulties, the hardships of a snowstorm.

With Amelia recaptured in sight of the convent door, Mrs. Wood permitted herself a particularly flagrant piece of artificial suspense: she concluded one chapter with the scene in which Volpoon’s servant raises his dagger over Amelia and began the following chapter with a ten-page account of the reasons for Volpoon’s persecutions of the girl, and the stages of Sir William’s efforts to rescue her (chaps. 17-18). We return to Amelia with the dagger still in midair; but its owner is by now half-convinced that he would be wrong in using it. Amelia recovers her liberty, is reunited with her husband and, just as the Terror of Robespierre begins, they leave France for peaceful England. In a mood of moral serenity, they reap the rewards of Amelia’s goodness, while Harriot, doomed to an early death, at last profits from the chance to repent. 16

Mrs. Wood described the story of Amelia as a “useful lesson” 17 and declared having recorded it for the benefit of her readers, as she heard it from the lips of Mr. Harley, an English visitor to America and admirer of the Federalist leaders. In other words, she claimed to be telling not fiction but a true story, warranted by Harley’s worthy and judiciary character (pp. 75, 218). The Englishman is the actual narrator, in the first person; yet most of what he tells, and especially all of Amelia’s adventures, he has learned secondhand, and Mrs. Wood gained nothing from using him as a narrator. Nor is Amelia superior to Julia, in either character-drawing or style. The author was satisfied in the later novel, too, with ready-made superlatives and phrases, whether introducing and grouping her figures, appealing to the reader’s compassion, or attempting to convey the horror of Amelia’s situation when she is at the mercy of Volpoon and his henchmen. 18 There is, however, in the whole
of the design and execution of *Amelia* a certain energy and purposefulness which *Julia* was too overburdened with digressions to achieve; and *Amelia* is perhaps easier to read—or at any rate, less dull—than the majority of the contemporary American novels of sentiment and Gothic adventure.\(^{19}\)

The most sustained effects of *The Asylum; or, Alonzo and Melissa* (1811),\(^{20}\) by Isaac Mitchell (ca.1759-1812), spring from the same sort of Radcliffian inspiration as the prison episodes in *Julia* and *Amelia*. Mitchell has been ridiculed for introducing a Gothic castle into his American setting.\(^{21}\) His Connecticut fortress (2:58-59)\(^{22}\) certainly does not seriously take hold of our imagination. But it is only one part of his Gothic theatricals; the author was briefly able to achieve the true touch of the novel of terror. This occurs when the heroine, a prisoner in the “castle,” is in a desolate situation which makes her particularly receptive to the sinister quality of her surroundings without as yet plunging her into helpless fright. In twenty pages of crescendi, the smugglers’ masquerade and the raging storm combine with Melissa’s heightened but still rational sensitivity to cast a spell on the reader’s imagination. The climax of the passage is reached in the following lines:

...She was about to unbar the door, when she was alarmed by a deep hollow sigh; she looked around, and saw stretched on one side of the hall the same ghastly form which had so recently appeared standing by her bed-side. ...Groping to find the stairs, as she came near their foot, a black object, apparently in human shape, stood before her, with eyes which resembled glowing coals, and red flames issuing from its mouth. As she stood fixed in inexpressible trepidation, a large ball of fire rolled slowly along the extended hall, and burst with an explosion which seemed to rock the building in its deepest foundations. Melissa closed her eyes and fell senseless to the floor; she revived, and reached her chamber, she hardly knew how; locked her door, lighted another candle, and after again searching the room sank into a chair in a state of mind which almost deprived her of reason. (2:85-86)

Isolating such a passage, of course, robs it of the tension which it has inherited from the pages preceding it, and consequently
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stresses its melodramatic staginess. Yet even this may be seen to be of a different texture than Mitchell’s rather mechanical description of the coming of dawn and dusk by degrees, as contrived as the gradual turning on and off of stage-lights. Two parallel passages within the Gothic stretch of The Asylum show Melissa witnessing these transitions:

Melissa seated herself at a western window and watched the slow declining sun as it leisurely sank behind lofty groves. Pensive twilight spread her dusky mantle over the landscape; deepening glooms advanced; the last beam of day faded, and the world was enveloped in night. The owl hooted solemnly in the forest, and the whipperwill sung cheerfully in the garden. Innumerable stars glittered in the firmament, intermingling their quivering lustre with the pale splendours of the milky-way. (2:79)

The properties used in the concluding lines point to the strict conventionality and imitativeness of Mitchell’s manner. This must lead us to expect touches of sentimental and genteel writing; in the case of Mitchell such features are the more irritating as, from the author’s preface, we might have thought he knew how to avoid the weaknesses of minor novel-writers. Rereading his introductory “Short Dissertation on Novel,” with its admittedly loose terminology, we find that at any rate he did not run against its positive requirements. He was undoubtedly influenced by his admiration of Mrs. Radcliffe (1:xviii) and may have profited from reading The Gleaner and Constantius and Pulchera. Curiously there are some parallels with The Gamesters, a book which appeared after the first publication of The Asylum and was praised in Mitchell’s 1811 preface.

If other parallels with contemporary works of fiction, whether of plot, emotional attitude, or style, are not likely to prove an asset, neither is the repeated use of individual devices, such as the pair of prophetic dreams, one gloomy and one rosy, which both the hero and heroine dream. The rawest bit of the story is the “joke” played on Melissa’s father: he is given to understand that the girl is dead when a cousin of hers, conveniently a namesake living at a great distance, dies of consumption.
This is intended to shield Melissa from further persecutions, but indirectly also to punish her father for his mercenary violation of his promise that Melissa and Alonzo should marry. Mr. Bloomfield repents, but the reader wonders all the more at the use of such a method because of Mitchell's reference to a similar trick that backfired cruelly, the story of Balcombe (2:chap. 13). The treatment inflicted on Melissa's father reflects the emotional instability of some of the characters, who are liable to be overwhelmed by their feelings. Alonzo offers an extreme illustration of this: witness his transports of grief at the news of Melissa's death. In view of Melissa's remarkable self-possession amidst Gothic terrors, we need not fear that she might go to such lengths. Her sensibility is of a calmer, lyrical kind, responsive to the soothing melancholy echoes of nature or to the pastoral promise of the Avernum of which she dreams with Alonzo (1:263-64), and which she realizes at long last after they have emerged from their nightmare of imprisonment and separation (2:277). It is fitting, if we consider these instances of the importance of feeling, that the harshest portrayals should be those of the soberly unromantic fathers (1:69, 2:36) and the shallow ladies' man (1:251-52); not that such sketches really carry any more punch than the hackneyed composition of the hero's and heroine's pictures (1:209, 37).

The landscapes are particularly "sublime" in the subsidiary, European episode. It would seem that such painting is in the nature of an ornament, whereas Mitchell was personally committed to a view of America as a paradise within reach of those willing to emigrate from the Old World. Into the story of the Berghers, refugees from European corruption in an America about to become independent, the following piece of propaganda therefore found its way quite as naturally as did Imlay's propagandistic descriptions into his books:

The new land is the poor man's Canaan; to him it is a land flowing with milk and honey. He there finds not only a plentiful supply for himself, but independence and affluence for his children. The forest affords abundant provender for his cattle, and in no small degree comforts for his family; it abounds with a
variety of fruits, nuts, herbs and roots, some of which possess in an eminent degree a nutricious, others a medicinal quality; acorns which fall from the oak in autumn completely fatten his swine, and they require no other feeding; then the maple is itself a treasure; from its trunk you extract a liquid which by various processes is transformed into spirituous or fermented liquor, vinegar, molasses, and the richest of sugars. The birch tree affords a similar fluid, though much inferior in quality. In clearing the land, we obtain materials for building, firewood for the winter, and even the ashes produced by burning the useless wood and timber on the grounds, are valuable for the potash-works. The earth being fertile needs little tillage and yields copiously. (i:77-78)

Yet the new world is not free from moral corruption and sources of fear, and an innocent imagination can respond to them, as the case of Melissa proves, as strongly in America as in the France of Henry and Louis, Julia and Amelia.

Similar to Melissa and her Alonzo, the hero of Glencarn; or, The Disappointments of Youth (1810), by George Watterston (1783-1854), is endowed with an impressible sensitivity. He therefore experiences terrors whose effects are increased by their sheer number and quick succession. The novel is a tale of victimization with a male protagonist. This made it possible for the author to stress not just Glencarn's heroic patience and sublime virtue but his physical prowess as well. The hero can act in situations in which a heroine's resistance must be passive, and even in the midst of difficulties is called upon to prove his chivalrous gallantry. The highly developed sensibility which Glencarn literally enjoys is, to begin with, a positive and commendable disposition. Thus he is governed by, and unrestrainedly acknowledges, his gratitude and admiration toward Mr. Richardson. His love for Amelia might be in part an expression of his reverence for her father. He appreciates her characteristic qualities because Richardson has taught him the importance of virtue. Correspondingly he must become painfully aware of the scorn of the second Mrs. Richardson and her son Rodolpho for his benefactor. By making Richardson's virtues his ideal, he becomes a rival heir who is all the more detestable. One specific difference between him and Rodolpho is the preference they
habitually give to nature and solitude and to the more frivolous aspects of social enjoyments, respectively. Apart from contributing to the moral portrait of Glencarn, his love of nature and refinement serves in the narrative to introduce elements as diverse as his courageous fight with a bear and his first meeting with the stranger later identified as his father. This event is related very early (1:24), and in conjunction with the circumstance of Glencarn being a foundling, establishes, in a manner reminiscent of Mrs. Wood’s in *Julia*, a strong undercurrent of mystery, a chord that is struck again repeatedly while the hero is involved in one set of adversities after another (1:chaps. 6, 13, 19; 2:chaps. 1, 12).

Indeed, Glencarn’s enemies prove so numerous, so implacable and therefore so unpredictably resourceful and ubiquitous, that our hero occasionally sinks into a state of despairing frustration. Whatever he does is misinterpreted, from his saving Rodolpho’s life to his killing the scoundrel in self-defense (1:chap. 3, and 2:chaps. 11-15). His adversaries’ slander costs him the esteem of all but a very few friends; even Amelia is temporarily alienated from him by the crafty Gray (1:chaps. 11-12). When Glencarn follows the last piece of advice given by Richardson and starts on a journey to the western territories, he leaves his foes behind but soon acquires new ones. The adventures which now begin for him are of a new kind and can be said to mark a decisive turn in his career, in two ways in particular. For one thing the balance between friends and foes is reestablished at least as a possibility: out of the entirely hostile world with which he meets at first among the bandits, there emerges the contrast between, on the one hand, Montalbert and Reynolds, the persistently evil ones, and on the other, the old nurse Phebe and Wilson himself, who stand for man’s ability to resist wickedness or to reform from it. Furthermore, the persons of Phebe and Wilson connect Glencarn again with his own mysterious past; and though our hero presently has once more to face the enemies in league against him, a great step has been taken toward clearing up the obscurity of his origins.

The episode of Wilson’s bandits stands out in the narrative
of Glencarn's vicissitudes as something quite alien. There is in the persecutions which he suffers the common denominator of a struggle between merit and envy, unselfishness and base interest, sensibility and unscrupulousness. The same situation is repeated again and again: Glencarn's behavior can be used against him because its appearances are misleading enough to prepossess against him a gullible public. But in his encounter with the outlaws and in Wilson's story, Glencarn is faced with adversity on a different scale, a menace not just to the individual but to the whole country, with roots in a long tradition of corruption and mistaken values. Thus the promise of the New World is implicitly contrasted with the fundamental liability to decay and abuse inherent in man's social and moral institutions. This is the main significance of the outlandishness of Wilson's band, hiding-place, and practices, which at first sight strikes one rather as a mere reflection of literary indebtedness, comparable to the castle in The Asylum. Wilson attributes his crimes to the spoiling which he enjoyed as a child in the place of a sound education. This corruption he brought to America caused Montjoy's jealousy and violence and prevented his own reform; only recently has he learnt to feel remorse (2:146). Glencarn, on the other hand, though the son of English parents, owes his high standards to the education received through the American-born Richardson. They enable him to weather the "disappointments of youth" which Wilson was unable to cope with, and to survive the terrors of his clash with Wilson's world of corruption (2:117).

Although some of the plot elements of Glencarn may be traced to Fielding and more to Brockden Brown, the author relied heavily, both in individual episodes and style, on a highly colored variety of the sentimental tale. Its surface didacticism and moralizing is no less unoriginal than the preference for descriptions composed of ready-made parts or the effusively superlative. Amelia's conscious social satire (1:31-32) sounds as artificial as Rodolpho's unconsciously ironical self-portrait as a "fellow of fashion" (1:75-76). Watterston seems to have taken some pains to build a structure around the mystery of Glencarn's
birth, but he loaded that flimsy structure with so many hackneyed and melodramatic effects of the quirks of fate, and with such a variety of narrative devices and individual stylistic exercises, that the result was a preposterous book.\textsuperscript{43}

The hero of his first novel \textit{The Lawyer, or Man as he ought not to be} (1808)\textsuperscript{44} responds to the potential terrors of his situation not through ignorance of the limits of man's capacity for evil, as does the innocent Glencarn, but because he knows all too well what mischief man is capable of. Morcell himself has been a criminal for years; the story which he offers is the confession of one who has committed seduction and attempted murder, who has inflicted poverty and had a share in the responsibility for some people's death. When he hears himself threatened by a man he cannot remember ever having met or harmed and whom he never sees except at a distance and in the dark, his experience of his own corruption starts his imagination working. His early training and his career as a crooked lawyer suddenly prove unavailing, and he finds himself helpless in the face of a menace that is terrible because indefinite and inexplicable. A natural desire for survival further intensifies Morcell's anticipation of the fate that may befall him; it tends to exaggerate the danger he thinks himself exposed to in order to justify whatever measure of self-defense he may be prompted to adopt. Moreover, Morcell knows full well that he has deserved punishment. He feels guilty; the sense of his troubled conscience is alive in spite of what he has been taught because it has been kept alert by his contact with the upright Ansley (pp. 32, 79-80, 212). This example proves the more effectual as Morcell all too eagerly, and perhaps implausibly, allows himself to believe Ansley a hypocrite (chaps. 5, 15): he must therefore be shown instances of Ansley's behavior that will reconvince him of his integrity.

The reader is certainly not taken in by what he must consider mere superficial tricks in the service of the author's technique of Gothic suspense (chap. 6, \textit{passim}; p. 167), even though they are given a particular weight through the nature of Morcell's receptivity. The actual accounting for the apparitions in the
narrator’s bedroom and in front of his house are to be looked upon as means of opening the villain’s eyes to the magnifying and scarifying which his guilty predisposition has effected. The concept of a troubled conscience exaggerating worries and fears into shapes apparently beyond the reach of rational means of defense (p. 47) would have been worthy of a treatment less clumsy. Watterston’s initial error was the stress which he gave to the didactic aim of The Lawyer (pp. v, vii, 50, 56), to the extent of slighting any claim to literary distinction, and even to correctness. At first sight the book seems to present a black-and-white picture of man in the contrast between Morcell and Ansley. On looking closer, though, we find that Ansley himself has his weaknesses, whereas Morcell’s eventual conversion endorses the author’s belief in education and in the perfectibility of man, which may be reasserted even after a corrupt education has led a child and youth astray. Watterston’s picture of mankind is made up not of blocks of black and white but of various mixtures of the two. Enlightenment is a progress from a darker to a lighter shade, from ignorance or neglect of the good to a shining practice of love and charity. The case of Morcell’s rehabilitation illustrates such an evolution. His settling down to a life of benevolence shows how radically he has changed, for he used to be restless, in consequence of his moral shiftiness and pursuit of dissipation as well as his moves to escape punishment for his misdeeds. Significantly scenes of and in darkness abound in The Lawyer, such as the seduced Matilda’s wanderings in the storm (pp. 29-30), the apparitions in Morcell’s room (chaps. 5, 17), or the attempted murder of Ansley (chap. 16). These dark scenes echo the element of violence beyond the control of reason in Morcell, in the vindictive Edwards, and in the passionate Ansley too.

Watterston had to rely on the very crudity of the impact of such somber violence because he lacked the skill and discipline better to express it. All too readily, he employed well-worn clichés, and his own diction easily turned into stiltedness and artificiality.44 To use the terms which he introduced in his praise of Burns, he may consciously have aimed at the “pathetic” style,
but he clearly was not aware of the power of "the most simple" language (p. 150).

*A Journey to Philadelphia: or Memoirs of Charles Coleman Saunders* (1804), by a writer using the pseudonym of Adelio, is like *The Lawyer* a confession narrative. Its hero, Saunders, only appears to be a criminal, however. He has been sentenced to death on the strength of circumstantial evidence and while in jail relates his story to Adelio. On his return from a voyage to Europe, the latter to his surprise runs across Saunders, who then tells him of his *in extremis* escape. The misleading evidence of his guilt resulted from persecution by a villain and a number of unfortunate coincidences. These misunderstandings are of the "mistaken identity" kind so much used in the "fortune's football" novels, among the adverse elements over which a hero can exert no control. The persecution, on the other hand, originates in the jealousy of a rival. There develops in *A Journey to Philadelphia* (as, for example, in *The Hapless Orphan*) a disproportion between the initial cause of jealousy and the rival's implacability, not because the cause might not fester so corrodingly, but because the persecutor is not given any tangible substance by the narrative. The tale is comparatively little affected by this lack of bodily presence, for Saunders's tendency to brood over what happens to him makes a plausible and adequate sense of mystery result simply from the combination of consistent hostility and accidental discredit.

Saunders is ordinary enough as far as the circumstances of his early life are concerned: one can believe his dissatisfaction with them and his desire for a change. Exceptional events then precipitate his decision to leave for Philadelphia; they also stimulate his reflective turn of mind, an inclination which has struck his neighbors as eccentric. This inclination therefore becomes a pronounced indulgence in reflection at a time when Saunders might be expected to act rapidly in order to protect himself. It is a feature which recalls Brockden Brown's heroes, and more particularly Arthur Mervyn, though the latter is far better realized than Saunders, perhaps partly because *A Journey to Philadelphia* is too short for the creation of a complete
character. Mervyn, too, is an alien among his neighbors and prefers solitary entertainment to social pleasures. He and Saunders have similar reasons for preferring Philadelphia to their rural background. Mervyn's curiosity is, however, a stronger incentive than the rather vague longings of Saunders, a mere feature of fictional characterization. Mervyn and Saunders further resemble each other in their typical and at times devious honesty, and in their sympathy with their fellow beings and unselfish readiness to help, in their need for a wife more mature than themselves. Above all, they sound alike, so closely are they related in their manner of pursuing chains of reflections. Here is Saunders wondering about the meaning of Carnell's appearance in Philadelphia:

...This man I was convinced, had sought to destroy me, and now again haunted me for the same dreadful purpose. Yet, how could he have discovered my residence? I had imparted no hints of the place of my destination on quitting my spot, to any human being; yet he was here; causes with which I was wholly unconnected, might have induced him to visit Philadelphia; pleasure, business, for aught I knew, this city might be his home, yet I still labored under the conviction that I, and I alone, was the object of his journey, to gratify his revenge, to embrue his hands in the blood of an innocent man. And was his vengeance to be gratified only by my destruction? Was there no method of warding off the impending danger? Could I not cause him to be apprehended? I had seen him in my chamber, armed with the instruments of death, at the hour of midnight; but I was the only one; my voice alone would not condemn him, and if it would, dare I charge him with meditating a deed, of which he perhaps never formed an idea? (pp. 29-30)

Some other details might be named to indicate Brown's influence on Adelio: Susan's attempted suicide and change of mind, which recall Welbeck's jumping into the Schuylkill and eventually reaching the New Jersey shore; the appearance of a sleepwalker, as in Edgar Huntly; the use of a double (though not a twin brother), as in "Stephen Calvert." But A Journey to Philadelphia lacks the intensity of Brown's narratives, deriving from their heroes' stubborn inquisitiveness and their suscepti-
bility to development. That is why we are given Huntly’s and Mervyn’s painstaking attempts at conveying every minute groping toward an accurate or at least a plausible understanding of their situations, of the significance of their lives and the values they believe in. When brought into contact with a Welbeck, Mervyn cannot help acquiring new features and tapping new resources. Saunders, on the other hand, cannot develop in such a manner, since Carnell, his antagonist, is a mere backround replica of the conventional novel-villain, and part of that corpus of novel lore that Brown generally ignored. Adelio was probably well acquainted with Brown’s work, but also knew another allegiance: this may be seen in his use of the typical diction of the imitative novel of terror, in a passage that otherwise contains echoes of Brown’s method of rendering thinking processes:

...I asked myself who could be the person that fired, it was evident it was an enemy; every concurrent circumstance, the hour, the place, seemed to impress this belief; but who could it be? I had injured no being on earth, I was almost a stranger (owing to my romantic notions) even to my nearest neighbors; I soon recovered the slight injury I had sustained; the circumstance no longer caused any anxiety, and I again ventured to revisit my favorite retreat; returning home one night, as I passed through my brother’s chamber to gain my own, I saw by the light of the moon, the figure of a man standing near the bed of my brother, armed with a dagger; I stood almost petrified with fear and astonishment; I had imbibed from our rustic neighbors, some superstitious ideas, it was near “the noon of night,” that solemn hour, when the dead forsake their graves, and wander forth to revisit scenes once dear to them; I believed I saw a spectre; I made no alarm, my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, horror almost froze the blood in my veins, and my limbs scarcely supported my tottering frame! The figure moved towards me,—I made a desperate effort, reached my chamber, and locked the door; the silence of death reigned in the house,—not a sound reached my ear... (pp. 13-14)

The character of Saunders and the plot of A Journey to Philadelphia are also reminiscent of Watterston’s Glencarn, another book by an admirer of Brown. Yet the passage above shows that Adelio at least avoided the wildness and incoherence

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that frequently make Watterston's two novels pretentious and ridiculous.

3. One does not have to be an Illuminatus to behave badly; this is demonstrated in *Julia* by the elder Ormond in his dealings with his brother, Camilla, and with their son, and by the behavior of Don Gasperd and Lord B—toward Miss Gyron and Leonora, respectively.

4. See de Launa's arguments when he tries to convince Julia that she may reasonably yield to him (p. 203). If he was inspired by Brockden Brown's Ormond, he is a far cruder representative of the enlightened atheist. The story of Olivia incorporates a naïve account of the precepts and some practices of the Illuminati (p. 243).


6. They are both children of the Marquis Alvada: De Launa by his first wife, Julia by his second, Lavinia. De Launa lusts first after his stepmother, later after his half-sister. Among plot elements of the same order, there are the Countess's unwitting bigamy and the crudity of Ormond's offer to marry her officially, just after he has dispatched her husband in a duel.

7. Julia is perhaps more impressed later, when she supposes that it must have been Colwort's ghost she saw and heard in the vault (chap. 20); it turns out that it was Colwort himself.

8. Both carry miniatures that can serve as a clue to or a proof of their identity (chaps. 5, 24).

9. The European setting was obviously a necessity if Mrs. Wood chose to use the theme of Illuminatism. The choice itself, however, was perhaps dictated by convenience and topicality rather than necessity. It is worth remembering that, of her four novels, only *Dovral* has an American setting. See below, Chapter 15, pp. 331-35, and (for *Ferdinand and Elmira*) above, Chapter 13.

10. The endings of *Amelia, Julia, and Ferdinand and Elmira* are similar: the heroes settle in England; it seems safer to leave the Continent "While France her huge limbs bathes recumbent in blood,/And Society's base threats with wide dissolution" (Robert Treat Paine, Jr., "Ode: Adams and Liberty," 1798).


13. P. 225; cf. also pp. 133, 195, 204, 220.

14. There is, for example, Sir William's delayed return from the Continent.
and the timing of his homecoming and Lady Stanly's death (chs. 4-5); in this context the fact that Lady Stanly overhears two revealing conversations between Harriot and Amelia (pp. 12-13, 28-29) must be remembered, since it renders her insistent in the question of marriage between Sir William and Amelia.

15. The heroine's attitude in this crisis is influenced by Morcan's story, which thus acquires a significance rather grater than that of a pretext for Amelia's benevolence.

16. Her repentance is one of the features recalling the example of Mrs. Rowson's Charlotte (specifically, Mlle La Rue). Julia is more in the line of Mrs. Radcliffe or Charlotte Smith.

17. Among obvious didactic features of the novel, there are reflections on domestic education (p. 12), self-discipline (p. 177), "Man proposes but God disposes" (p. 76), the unpredictable turns of destiny (p. 209), and the "retribution of Providence" (p. 233).

18. See, e.g., the descriptions of Amelia's voice (p. 6), Barrymore (p. 41), Sir William (p. 104), "a truly lovely woman" (p. 146); the parting from the Barrymores (p. 20), tantalizing and elusive sleep (pp. 55, 172), rewarding Shakespeare reading (p. 174); the scenes of Gothic foreboding and suspense: solitude (p. 168), dreariness (p. 170), waiting for dawn (p. 191), a hostile wind (p. 199), approaching footsteps (p. 211).

19. There are two stories in Mrs. Wood's Tales of the Night: "Storms and Sunshine; or, The House on the Hill" (74 pp.), and "The Hermitage; or Rise of Fortune" (90 pp.). They are made up of conventional ingredients of the romantic tale; since they are short, and crowded with incidents, there is no room left for explicit and prolonged passages of moralizing and didacticism.

20. Published under the title "Alonzo and Melissa" in weekly installments in the Poughkeepsie Political Barometer (June 5-Oct. 30, 1804) (see Milton W. Hamilton, The Country Printer 1785-1830 [Columbia University Press, 1936], p. 152). This was plagiarized in 1811 by Daniel Jackson, Jr., whose version was to become a bestseller. Mitchell republished his novel in book form, with an additional preface as The Asylum; references are to this edition.

21. Cowie speaks of "papier-maché scenery" and "bogus Gothic effects" (Novel, pp. 107-8). He also mentions the stumbling dialogue; this is at its worst in a conversation between Melissa and Alonzo on the shores of Long Island Sound (1:219-21).

22. Mitchell inserted a remark vouching for the authenticity of his castle and describing how it was destroyed after the Revolution (2:78). He has more than one footnote on plants and birds native to America, perhaps striving to underscore the realism of his story and to prevent the Gothic machinery from becoming too dominant; see 2:59, 88-89, and cf. his emphasis on his American setting, p. xxvii.

23. Some of the events of the nights before: noise of people trampling below, dark forms passing swiftly in the yard; hum of voices, quick shutting of a door, sharp sound, footsteps and voices, "a hand, cold as the icy fingers of death, grasped her arm"; loud whisper: "away! away!"; a shot; a sulphurous smell; a flash like lightning; a loud and deep roar; hollow, horrible groans dwindling into a faint, dying murmur, a tall white form gliding by; the slamming of doors; violent noises; clamorous voices, boisterous menaces; a cry of "Murder!": a shot, groans, apparently in death-agony; an expiring gasp; a hoarse peal of laughter; a gruesomely wounded man, bleeding copiously; a bloody dagger; the command "Begone!" With the exception of the whole sequence of Melissa's
castle experiences, individual Gothic passages and details of plot machinery are mere "mechanical imitations" resulting from the writer's lack of discipline (O. S. Coad, "The Gothic Element").


25. See, e.g., the Courtland episode in "Margaretta."

26. The journey to France and the meeting with Franklin suggest this comparison.

27. Parallels include the figures of the villain who contrives to accompany the heroine on her flight, and of the honest tar.

28. Melissa (chap. 9) dreams first of happiness, then of misery, but with Alonzo it is the other way round (chap. 12). This is perhaps an alteration meant to be prophetic.

29. "Ah! where is she? Oh! reflection insupportable! insufferable consideration! Must that heavenly frame putrify, moulder, and crumble into dust! Must the loathsome spider nestle on her snowy bosom! the odious reptile riot on her delicate limbs! the worm revel amid the roses of her cheek, fatten on her temples, and bask in the lustre of her eyes!" (2:133). These weird broodings are followed by a vociferous prayer proclaiming Alonzo's resignation. His complaints on Melissa's grave, much later, are more Sternean (2:200).

30. See 1:45-46, 213 (and cf. Mrs. Bergher's predilections, 1:63). Melissa is not proof against emotional storms, but she recovers comparatively quickly (2:36).

31. Here is a description of Radcliffian sublimity: "By a long, gradual ascent, hedged on each side with impenetrable shrubbery, we reached the top: from its craggy summit, which arrested the course of careering clouds, the eye extended over an immeasurable space of wilderness and cultivation, picturesque and romantic in the extreme. As we passed along our ears were frequently stunned by the piercing screeches of the cormorant, as it pounced upon its prey in an adjoining lake; the harsh croakings of the raven, winging to his nightly covert, or the sonorous voice of the solitary eagle, soaring high above our heads, or hovering among the loftiest cliffs" (1:129).

32. The Bergher story is given complete, and not in installments liable to distract from the main plot (see p. xxvi). Its early insertion (1:62-207) gives it the function of a warning for Melissa, an anticipation of her difficulties; see her reflections (1:206).

33. Glencarn is chaste, too, and in this he is conspicuously different from Tom Jones, with whom he has much in common, especially as regards his childhood and education, and his harassing confrontations with his foil (Rodolpho).

34. See his rescue of Mary (2:chap. 5), and his withdrawal when he realizes that Sophia is in love with him (2:chap. 4). References are to Glencarn (1810).

35. But Sophia represents "that sickly sensibility that preys upon itself, and destroys every pleasure of life" (2:160).

36. "...We struggled in the water for several minutes, I found my strength decreasing, and determined to make one desperate effort to conquer my opponent. With great difficulty, I liberated my other arm from his grasp, and thrusting it down his throat as far as I could reach, kept his head under water until he expired...." (1:45).

37. Here Amelia is the typically credulous heroine; but Glencarn is as easily duped and believes that Amelia has become a prostitute (2:chap. 11).

38. An episode akin to the Wilson material occurs in the story of the Berghers
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(The Asylum, 1:chap. 5): a Venetian nobleman, hurt in his pride, leads a band of robbers, but (like Robin Hood) stops only the wealthy travelers. In The Robber (1816), a 2,000-word tale of the same type with an unreal Bohemia setting, the chief of the "Sons of Night" is the victim of an unfeeling, ambitious father and his own passions, but is at least trying to keep his men from committing murder. Peter Irving translated Charles Nodier's first (anonymous) edition of Jean Sbogar (1818); his Giovanni Sbogarro (1820) is in the Abaelino and Rinaldo Rinaldini tradition, with a Trieste and Venice setting and a hero leading a double life, as a bandit chief with a reputation for cruelty and superhuman courage, and a nobleman well liked in Venetian society and admired for his generosity and justice by the people. Irving said that he had made "great alterations" to the original, but Sbogarro is really a fairly close, and a good, translation, with embellishments here and there. Cf. also the tale, "The Adventures of Sociviza," The American Bee, pp. 3-29.

39. There is the parallel between Huntly's encounter with the cougar and Glencarn's fight with the bear; Huntly's Indians and Glencarn's bandits; the pathological manifestations in Wieland, Clithero, and Wilson; the naive Mervyn, Stephen Calvert, and Glencarn; the exemplary role (in the eyes of the heroes) of Clelia Neville, Achsa Fielding, Clara Howard, and Amelia Richardson; Glencarn's first interview with the stranger and Mervyn's meeting with Welbeck; the ventriloquism of Carwin and Glencarn; the dawning of a sense of love in Glencarn and Calvert (toward Clelia).

40. See Watterston's remarks on the relation between innate attributes and education (1:3, 11, 67), and the rewards and punishments of the final chapter.

41. E.g., the description of Richardson's house (pp. 1:9-10), Glencarn's bower (1:23-24), a romantic wilderness (2:155).

42. See the portrait of Richardson (1:6-7, 15), and the contrasting one of his wife (1:8); their respective adoration of Amelia (1:11) and Rodolpho (1:12); the portraits of Amelia (1:28-29, 30-31) and Sophia (2:158); Glencarn's emotions after he has saved Rodolpho's life (1:20), and his despair at losing Amelia (1:70); the memorable first kiss of Glencarn and Amelia (1:52-53).

43. "Glencarn may serve as an example of the American novel at a very low ebb" (Cowie, Novel, p. 108).

44. There is in the title an allusion to Robert Bage's Hermsprong, or Man as he is not. Hermsprong's virtues—sincerity, simplicity, strength, both moral and physical—are attributed to his having been brought up among the North American Indians; i.e., far from the corruption of an unjust social order and the city. The narrator of Hermsprong is called Glen. References are to the first edition of The Lawyer.

45. See the portraits of Matilda (pp. 22-23) and Maria (pp. 145-46), and a typical landscape: "The moon shone with the most magnificent brilliancy; a number of lombardy poplars, planted near the house, waved to and fro by the cool refreshing gale, and sent forth a solemn and melancholy sound; while at a small distance below, flowed a murmuring stream, on whose dimpled surface the moon-beams sweetly played" (pp. 65-66). Morcell is "completely lessened in his estimation" by Ansley's glance (p. 32); he watches a man burning to death until "the relentless element had evaporated the fountain of vitality" (p. 65). Watterston's mannerisms are no less artificial than the affectations which he satirically invents for Rattle (pp. 133-34).

46. Appropriately, a conventional style of sentiment is used in the account of Saunders's parting visit to a favorite spot of his (A Journey to Philadelphia, pp. 19-20).