

CHAPTER ONE

History as Nightmare

O exquisite misery! 'tis now only that I perceive all the horrors of confinement—'tis now only that I understand the value of liberty!

(Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of The Forest*, 1791)

A precise and self-consciously 'orthodox' response to the Middle Ages and what were for many at this time its typical associations, is provided by Anna Laetitia Barbauld's 'On Monastic Institutions' (1773). Her essay opens with her 'good Protestant' response to the spectacle of a ruined abbey:

Ye are fallen, said I, ye dark and gloomy mansions of mistaken zeal, where the proud priest and lazy monk fattened upon the riches of the land, and crept like vermin from their cells to spread their poisonous doctrines through the nation. . . . See how the pure light of heaven is clouded by the dim glass of the arched window, stained with the gaudy colours of monkish tales and legendary fiction; fit emblem how reluctantly they admitted the fairer light of truth amidst these dark recesses, and how they have debased its genuine lustre! The low cells, the long and narrow aisles, the gloomy arches, the damp and secret caverns which wind beneath the hollow ground . . . seem only fit for those dark places of the earth in which are the habitations of cruelty. . . . Farewel, ye once venerated seats! enough of you remains, and may it always remain, to remind us from what we have escaped, and make posterity for ever thankful for this fairer age of liberty and light.¹

Barbauld's observations provide a 'factual' counterpart to the typical representations of late eighteenth-century Gothic fiction. The ruined abbey evokes images of secrets and cruelty amidst subterranean caverns, which she further associates with monkish

¹ Barbauld, from *The Works*, in 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1825), ii. 195–6.

'tales' and 'legendary fictions'. These meditations on the 'rage of Gothic ignorance' (197) serve a definite purpose; reminding her of the distance between an age of 'mistaken zeal' and one of 'liberty and light'. This encounter provides an occasion for philosophical and historical reflection, and ultimately gratitude. The spectacle of the abbey encourages her to imaginatively re-create the times in which it flourished; ages of 'ferocity and rapine' and 'barbarism', the identification of which re-enforces the superiority of her own age. Barbauld applauds their survival, and hopes for their continued existence, because they serve as historical foils to her own enlightened age.

Barbauld's self-consciously 'orthodox' response to the spectacle of a ruined abbey is set up to be qualified by a partial retraction of her comprehensive condemnation of the absurdity and corruption of monasteries. She follows it with an attempt to find some merit in such institutions at the time in which they flourished in all parts of Europe. However, the concessions she makes under this head are significant, and once again re-enforce the superiority of her own times and her gratitude that the 'Gothic' ages are no more. As she states: 'In this enlightened and polished age . . . we can scarcely conceive how gross an ignorance overpread [*sic*] these times' (Barbauld, 201). She pays medieval monasteries the back-handed compliment of sheltering certain things valued by her own age from the 'rages of that age of ferocity and rapine' (197). Significantly she observes that the monasteries were only able to preserve classical literature and the Latin tongue from all this barbarism—like 'treasure hid in the earth in troublesome times, safe, but unenjoyed'—because they were 'protected by ever a superstitious degree of reverence' (201). Monasteries enjoy the dubious distinction of both representing and providing sanctuaries from the 'Gothic' ages. They were not of value in themselves, but for their office of saving Homer, Aristotle, and the sacred texts for an age which could appreciate them without the 'uncouth trappings' (202) of these barbarous ages.² Barbauld's position is basically 'Whiggish' in this

² See also Edward Gibbon's remarks on monasteries in bk. 4 of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, where he observes that 'The monastic studies have tended, for the most part, to darken rather than dispel, the cloud of superstition . . . and

respect. She is only prepared to applaud those aspects of the past which approximate to or serve modern values and interests. This impulse encourages her to concede that not all ecclesiastics were proud or lazy, as some exhibited distinctly 'modern' virtues. As she observes, medieval monasticism could

check the excessive regard paid to birth. A man of mean origin and obscure parentage saw himself excluded from almost every path of secular preferment, and almost treated as a being of an inferior species by the high and haughty spirit of the gentry; but he was at liberty to aspire to the highest dignities of the church; and there have been many who, like Sextus V., have by their *industry and personal merit alone* raised themselves to a level with kings. (203–4, my emphasis)

The monasteries therefore not only preserved classical learning for a later age which could appreciate it, they also partly anticipated the more egalitarian principles of this age when 'learning is diffused through every rank, and many a merchant's clerk possesses more real knowledge than half the literati of that aera' (201). The 'industrious' monk of mean origin is thus a Whig hero (on a modest scale), the political ancestor of the merchant's clerk of an age which has conquered an 'excessive regard [for] birth'. Barbauld's partial retraction of her initial condemnation of monasticism actually endorses the superiority of her own age and its values. Her modern identity is strengthened by this 'Gothic' encounter. A similar process, what E. J. Clery has termed a 'self-authenticating modernity', motivates early Gothic fiction.³

Barbauld's Protestant and Whiggish reading of the 'Gothic' past is far from unique. A highly influential Protestant account of the medieval Church is provided by John Laurens Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History* (published in Latin in 1693, translated into English 1756). Like Barbauld, Mosheim depicts the 'gloomy empire of superstition' which overspread Europe prior to the

[yet] posterity must gratefully acknowledge that the monuments of Greek and Roman literature have been preserved and multiplied by their indefatigable pens', Gibbon, ed. J. B. Bury (London: Methuen, 1895), 69.

³ Clery's remarks appear in her discussion of the reception of Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*; Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 55.

Reformation, and also singles out the clergy and the monastic orders for particular condemnation:⁴

The greatest part of the bishops and canons passed their days in dissolute mirth and luxury, and squandered away, in the gratification of their lusts and passions, the wealth that had been set apart for religious and charitable purposes. Nor were they less tyrannical than voluptuous; for the most despotic princes never treated their vassals with more rigor and severity, than these spiritual rulers employed toward all who were under their jurisdiction. (iv. 16)

Like Barbauld, Mosheim sees monastic institutions as representative of the ages in which they flourished in all parts of Europe. They are emblems of the perceived character of this era. His Lutheran sympathies (Luther's 'learning [was] most extensive, considering the age in which he lived', iv. 27), informs the self-evidence of his arguments. As he asserts with regard to Rome's efforts to suppress the Reformation, these 'shew us, in a shocking and glaring point of light, the ignorance and superstition of these miserable times, and stand upon record, as one of the most evident proofs of the necessity of religious reform' (iv. 110–11). Protestantism is *ipso facto* progressive, enlightened, and necessary; therefore any opposition to it proves the ignorance and bigotry of its opponents, and justifies their efforts for reform. Whilst it is understood that it is the 'age' that is ignorant and superstitious—Leo X of the Medicis, Mosheim concedes, was 'learned, as far as the darkness of the age would admit' (iv. 12–13)—this conditions the outlook and policy of those hostile to 'reform'. The latter are of the age, the reformers belong to the bright future. And thus he asserts that the 'clergy were far from shewing the least disposition to enlighten the ignorance, or to check the superstition of the times; which, indeed, they even nourished and promoted, as conducive to their safety, and favorable to their interests' (iv. 24–5). A Protestant history of the Reformation will, almost by necessity, view the Middle

⁴ Mosheim, *An Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern*, 6 vols., trans. Archibald Maclaine (London, 1826), iv. 9.

Ages unfavourably, and associate the perceived abuses of the 'unreformed' church with an historical period.

However, this emphasis has its corollary or logical extension, whereby contemporary Catholicism is considered from an historicist or antiquarian point of view. A modern perspective emerges in a number of places in Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*. In the following passage he refers to the ecclesiastical abuses which the Council of Trent 'supposedly' reformed: 'But those who had the cause of virtue at heart, complained (and the reason for such complaint still subsists) that these laws were no more than feeble precepts, without any avenging arm to maintain their authority . . . In reality, if we cast our eyes upon the Roman clergy, even in the present time, these complaints will appear as well founded now, as they were in the sixteenth century' (iv. 162). Here ecclesiastical history serves sectarian polemic. Indeed, Mosheim's volume was 'continued to the present time' by Charles Coote in 1826. Volume six includes a 'History of the Roman Church in the Nineteenth Century', which refers to how the 'Romish bigots have still some remains of an intolerant spirit'; to how Charles X of France, in 'his late law against sacrilege, has imitated the pontifical rigor of the middle ages' (vi. 317, 328). The impression given is a battle between the 'more enlightened spirit of the age' (327), and the Roman Church which attempts to drag Europe back into the dark ages. Similarly, S. G. Potter in his preface to an 1884 edition of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, could express the fear that 'at the present day many English men seem to be so enamoured of [Popery] that they not only propose a union with it, but a return thereto, in order that the halcyon days of a Medieval millennium may return'.⁵

The imputation of anachronism as a source of abuse or scandal is a powerful one and can be deployed when the writer's intentions are not overtly doctrinal. Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–88) is written from a rational and 'secular' perspective, and yet its historical arguments

⁵ *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, ed. S. G. Potter (London: Walter Scott, 1884), p. iii.

include remarks about how 'A cruel unfeeling temper has distinguished the monks of every age and country';⁶ while W. E. H. Lecky's *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe* (1864) observes how 'medieval habits of thought' still persist in those parts of Europe which are 'most torpid and most isolated', and where the people are 'most immediately under [the] influence' of the clergy.⁷ Such remarks, whether overtly doctrinal or purportedly disinterested, balanced or 'rational', can be regarded as basically 'Whiggish' in the sense identified by Kevin L. Morris, who observes how 'The Whigs assumed that since Protestants were always progressive, Catholics, in opposing them, were always reactionary, fighting for the past'.⁸ Thus whilst the Whig interpretation of the historical past reflects and endorses the values of the present, the corollary of this is to identify and stigmatize perceived abuses persisting into the present that are associated with the past, with 'pastness' of necessity carrying negative connotations. The celebration of what is modern or progressive in history (according to a Protestant, liberal, or enlightened view of progress), easily shades into an identification and condemnation of what is 'historical' or anachronistic in the present day. Such troubling reminders of the 'dark ages' as the worship of relics, belief in miracles, the persistence of the Inquisition or the power of the Pope, occur in both historical and topographical accounts, contemporary with the emergence of Gothic fiction. Such accounts help to reinforce Protestant identity, but also evoke the frisson of confrontation that structures the narrative and dramatic effects of Gothic fiction.

Gothic novels deploy in varying degrees both these emphases, which are central to the motivations and strategies of this liter-

⁶ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, iv. 74. According to Kevin L. Morris, 'Mosheim was [Gibbon's] chief authority for medieval ecclesiastical history, and as his *Decline and Fall* . . . "became an active moral force in Victorian England", so Mosheim's version of history came to be further disseminated and accepted', Morris, *The Image of the Middle Ages in Romantic and Victorian Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 72-3.

⁷ William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, 2 vols. (1867; London: Longman, 1897), i. 146, 145.

⁸ Morris, *Image of the Middle Ages*, 71.

ary mode. As such, Gothic fiction is essentially Whiggish, in the sense classically defined by Herbert Butterfield's *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931). As Butterfield observes: 'It is part and parcel of the whig interpretation of history that it studies the past with reference to the present . . . Through this system of immediate reference to the present-day, historical personages can easily and irresistibly be classed into the men who furthered progress and the men who tried to hinder it.'⁹ This emphasis can be explicit, but is more often implicit. It is implicit in the Gothic novels which, as will now be argued, dramatize a conflict between representatives of 'modernity' and those who stand for the past.

The Gothic Cusp

Whig history represents the past as a site of conflict between progressives and reactionaries. The former are alienated from their ages and act as ambassadors of modernity, the latter represent the benighted past and do their best to thwart progress, as perceived from the vantage point of the present. What is of value in the past depends entirely on its perceived or contrived resemblance to 'modern' values. Historical figures are thus 'identified' as the historian's counterparts, unfortunately trapped in less enlightened times.¹⁰ A similar situation is encountered in the early Gothic romances which use 'historical' settings. As Mary Murial Tarr observes: 'The "Medieval" world of Gothic fiction [is] inhabited

⁹ Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: G. Bell, 1931), 11. A Whiggish version of the past need not necessarily be equated with 'Whig' or even liberal politics; as J. W. Burrow asserts, Butterfield's definition 'carries no necessary implication that the historian so designated need be a Whig when doing anything else, such as, for example, voting', Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 2. However, it is perhaps no accident that Walpole, Beckford, and Lewis were all Whig MPs. On Walpole's Whig credentials see Clery, *Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, 72–3; on Radcliffe as Whig see Robert Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

¹⁰ On Whig hagiography and the worship of 'illustrious forebears', see Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*.

by creatures from the Age of Enlightenment.¹¹ Or as David H. Richter puts it, ‘in *Otranto* Walpole produced a mishmash of enlightenment motivation with medieval detail . . .’.¹² A clear example of this tendency is found in Edward Montague’s romance *The Demon of Sicily* (1807), which depicts a typical historically ‘misplaced’ sensibility. The noble Ricardo falls in love with a beautiful commoner, and is of course prevented from marrying her by his proud but dissipated father. The following passage records Ricardo’s thoughts as he returns to the ancestral pile after his first meeting with Louisa:

How dull, how gloomy it seemed, as he entered it; he almost was astonished to think how he could possibly have existed so many years in it; while the cottage where dwelt Louisa seemed decked with all that could charm the senses. He recollected the little bower, the green lattices, the simple vases filled with flowers gathered by her hand; there, whatever he saw gave him pleasure; here, all around filled him with disgust.

Horror seemed to sit brooding over the time-dismantled turrets of the Castle; she had spread around her sable wings, which added an additional gloom to the scene.¹³

Ricardo, who spends much of the narrative trying to right the wrongs perpetuated by his father, signals here his disaffection with the age in which he lives and the class to which he belongs. The castle’s ‘time-dismantled turrets’ entrap him within a time-bound ideological prison, at odds with his own affectionate and democratic principles. The narrative displays a view of history—‘astonished to think how [the world] could possibly have existed so many years’ in the feudal castle of political tyranny. On his father’s death he marries Louisa and sets about modernizing the castle, turning it into an oversized version of her cottage.

¹¹ Sister Mary Murial Tarr, *Catholicism in Gothic Fiction: A Study of the Nature and Function of Catholic Materials in Gothic Fiction in England (1762–1820)* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1946), 87.

¹² Richter, ‘From Medievalism to Historicism: Representations of History in the Gothic Novel and Historical Romance’, *Studies in Medievalism*, 4 (1992), 79–104, 89.

¹³ Montague, *The Demon of Sicily, A Romance*, 4 vols. (London: J. F. Hughes, 1807), i. 84–5.

The romances of Mrs Radcliffe consistently dramatize similar situations. As Clara F. McIntyre observes, despite their 'historical' settings, 'In many ways . . . Mrs. Radcliffe is characteristic of her own century. Her sentimental heroines are the same that we find in Richardson and Fielding. Her people, although they live in deserted abbeys or wild castles, have the manners and customs of eighteenth century England.'¹⁴ This situation is not a consequence of an indifference to history or poor characterization, and should not be disparaged as 'anachronistic'. It is anachronistic; but such an emphasis is fundamental to the motivations and representations of the Gothic mode both at its emergence and its development in the nineteenth century and beyond.¹⁵ Radcliffe's 'anachronisms' resemble aspects of the Whig interpretation of the historical past as defined above. For as McIntyre points out: 'The only character that has any real foreign quality is the villain, and even there we find that she is drawing from the Italy of the Elizabethan dramatists rather than from the Italy of history' (651). The Radcliffian Gothic stages a confrontation between the heroine of Richardson and a villain taken from the Jacobean stage, who embodies the past and all its terrors. The modern heroine or hero (the reader's counterpart who is equipped with an appropriate sensibility and liberal principles) is located in the Gothic past, forced to contend with the supposed delusions and iniquities of its political and religious regime. It is the conflict between the civilized and the barbaric, the modern and the archaic, the progressive and the reactionary which provides the terrifying pleasures of these texts. These circumstances compare with the Whig emphasis of history as a site of conflict. The Whig historian recreates history as a progressive narrative, and *identifies* his or her ideological counterpart or representative in real historical figures

¹⁴ McIntyre, 'Were the "Gothic novels" Gothic?', *PMLA* (1921), 36, 644–67, 666. See also Mary Poovey, 'Ideology in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*', *Criticism*, 21 (1979), 307–30.

¹⁵ On the emergence of the concept of anachronism see David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. xvi; and James K. Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 107–10.

who have assisted this progress. Historical Gothic romances like *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (1791), or *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), re-create an imaginary past of domestic or generational conflict, and place modern heroines or heroes into this past to act as the writer's and reader's counterparts. Whilst the heroes of a Whig history would generally be such figures as the Magna Carta Barons, Luther, Cranmer, Cromwell, or Lord Russell, who secured the nation's liberties and contributed to the bright future of political felicity, Gothic fiction depicts heroes and heroines of the domestic realm.¹⁶ The conflicts of Gothic fiction are played out less on the political stage, than within the intra-familial sphere which is nonetheless arranged around historical and political oppositions. Gothic novels display a modern concern with 'natural' affections and familial relationships which are projected back into the past where an earlier regime holds sway. The present thus challenges and comments on the past; but conversely, the past is resurrected for the present age to illustrate what has been gained, and as a reminder of what could so easily be lost. Such emphases play a key role in early Gothic fiction, as can be seen by examining the generational structure of Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (1791).

A Sicilian Romance is set at the end of the sixteenth century, and narrates the fortunes of various members of the Sicilian nobility. It nonetheless features a number of representatives from Radcliffe's own century and class, misplaced in this 'Gothic' context. The virtuous characters like Julia and Emilia, daughters of the fifth Marquis of Mazzini, are enlightened, affectionate, and sensitive. They delight in poetry, music, painting, and refined conversation. Opposed to the modern inclinations and sensibilities of the younger generation are the paternal tyrants with which Radcliffe's narrative proliferates. Their tyranny is associated with, or located in, an adherence to antiquated or ancestral customs and attitudes. These figures' principal function is to embody the

¹⁶ On domestic conflict in the early Gothic novel see Caroline Gonda's chapter 'Schedonic Contours: The Sins of the Fathers in Gothic Fiction', in *Reading Daughters' Fiction, 1709–1834: Novels and Society from Manley to Edgeworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

past and all its abuses. The marquis stands in marked contrast to his daughters: 'He was a man of a voluptuous and imperious character. . . arrogant and impetuous . . . [his] heart was dead to paternal tenderness.'¹⁷ He has no regard for his daughters' happiness or welfare, and his dealings with them are directed by 'pride, rather than . . . affection' (4). He arranges for Julia an alliance with the Duke de Luovo, who 'delighted in simple undisguised tyranny', and who had already been through two wives 'victims to the slow but corroding hand of sorrow' (57). As Ferdinand discovers, there is a stain on the house of Mazzini; his great-grandfather settled a political feud by murdering his opponent. Ferdinand is dismayed 'to learn . . . that he was the descendant of a murderer' (54). Indeed, ancestry is the source of oppression and conflict in the narrative. Ferdinand's father is very much cast in the ancestral mould. His response to any form of opposition is to unsheathe his sword. It is even intimated that his own son's rebellion might be punished in this way: 'From the resentment of the marquis, whose passions were wild and terrible, and whose rank gave him an unlimited power of life and death in his own territories, Ferdinand had much to fear' (69). Fathers in Radcliffe's novel represent the political values of the aristocracy, while their offspring subscribe to 'progressive' notions of marriages based upon mutual affection which the novel implicitly endorses.

Radcliffe's romance of the late sixteenth century is situated on the threshold of the medieval and the modern, what Robert Miles has termed the 'Gothic cusp';¹⁸ the older generation faces backwards, the younger towards the world inhabited by her readers. These fathers are steadfast in their defence of the past order, and threaten to drag their erring offspring back into a past darkened by the murderous deeds of ancestors and characterized by an

¹⁷ Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance*, ed. Alison Milbank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3.

¹⁸ Miles, *Ann Radcliffe*, 87. This policy also appealed to Sir Walter Scott (albeit in the service of more 'romantic' views of antiquity). As he explains in the introduction to *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822): 'the most picturesque period of history is that when the ancient rough and wild manners of a barbarous age are just

unfeeling and inflexible aristocratic pride. Situation on the Gothic 'cusp' meant that 'modernity' can be achieved in one generation, with domestic and generational conflict providing a micronarrative of progressive history. Thus whilst the marquis holds absolute sway over his vassals, Ferdinand, who eventually succeeds to the title, proves his more egalitarian spirit when, caught in a storm and offered a servant's cloak: 'he refused to expose a servant to the hardship he would not himself endure' (196).

That the virtuous characters in Gothic romances are also honorary Protestants is an important part of Gothic convention.¹⁹ In *A Sicilian Romance* this is signalled by the fact that when Julia seeks sanctuary in the monastery of St Augustin she offers 'up a prayer of gratitude to heaven' (113). Had it been the Virgin or a patron saint who had received her prayer the reader's sympathies would have been alienated. On reaching the monastery, Julia believes that she is safe from the combined machinations of her father and the duke. However, she finds that the pride of the abbot rivals her father's when he compels her to make a choice between marrying the duke or taking the veil. Both options are odious to her as they go against her natural inclinations and affections: 'From a marriage with the duke . . . her heart recoiled in horror, and to be immured for life within the walls of a convent, was a fate little less dreadful' (142). Aristocratic

becoming innovated upon, and contrasted by the illumination of increased or revived learning and the instructions of renewed or reformed religion.' This affords 'lights and shadows'—the 'turbulent independence and ferocity, belonging to old habits of violence, still influencing [those] who had yet been so lately in a barbarous state', in contrast to those representing 'the newer and more improved period, of which the world has but lately received the light', Scott, *The Fortunes of Nigel* (London: Thomas Nelson, n.d.), p. vii. On Scott's use of historical 'conflict' in his novels see A. Dwight Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 30.

¹⁹ The most obvious way in which this is achieved is by what Chris Baldick terms a form of (doctrinal) ventriloquism, 'by which Catholics often find themselves speaking in Lutheran tongues', introduction to Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, ed. Douglas Grant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. xiv. See also Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 150–6; and Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 171.

pride, parental tyranny, and religious oppression thus combine to entrap Julia within the prison house of the Gothic past. A third option however presents itself to Radcliffe's modern protagonist—escape. Julia's brother appears as a *deus ex machina* who informs her that her lover Hippolitus lives, and encourages her to awake from the nightmare of history and make a bid for domestic happiness based upon a liberal, rational, and therefore 'modern', choice.

Julia's arrival at the monastery provides occasion for a distinctly modern perspective to intrude on the historical events. Radcliffe's narrative is framed by a preface which appears to be contemporaneous with its date of publication. The text itself constitutes an abridged version of a tale found in a manuscript kept in the library of a monastery close to the now ruined castle of Mazzini. The 'editor' has taken abstracts from this manuscript, and combined them with information supplied by the 'abate' of the monastery. However, as is indicated in the following passage, not all the material originates from the manuscript, or the holy father's additions. An overtly modern and Protestant consciousness permeates and organizes the material:

The abbey of St Augustin was a large magnificent mass of Gothic architecture, whose gloomy battlements, and majestic towers arose in proud sublimity from amid the darkness of the surrounding shades. It was founded in the twelfth century, and stood a proud monument of monkish superstition and princely magnificence.

. . . The view of this building revived in the mind of the beholder the memory of past ages. The manners and characters which distinguished them arose to his fancy, and through the long lapse of years he discriminated those customs and manners which formed so striking a contrast to the modes of his own times. The rude manners, the boisterous passions, the daring ambition, and the gross indulgences which formerly characterized the priest, the nobleman, and the sovereign, had now begun to yield to learning—the charms of refined conversation—political intrigue and private artifices. Thus do the scenes of life vary with the predominant passions of mankind, and with the progress of civilization. The dark clouds of prejudice break away before the sun of science . . . But through the present scene appeared only a few scattered

rays, which served to shew more forcibly the vast and heavy masses that concealed the form of truth. Here prejudice, not reason, suspended the influence of the passions; and scholastic learning, mysterious philosophy, and crafty sanctity supplied the place of wisdom, simplicity, and pure devotion. (116–17)

This passage perfectly exemplifies the historical ‘attitude’ of Gothic fiction. A cultivated awe before the ‘proud sublimity’ of this monastic edifice is eclipsed by a version of the Protestant response encountered in the historical accounts discussed above. The ‘beholder’ (given the masculine pronoun and therefore standing as a generic type) is vouchsafed a double perspective. Identified as modern, he is in a position to compare the past with the present. His response to the past is similar to Barbauld’s, associating a monastic institution with the ages of ‘monkish superstition’, ‘rude manners, boisterous passions and gross indulgences’. The monastery is thus made to stand for its age, an age extending from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries with only a few ‘scattered rays’ of modernity breaking into its darkness more recently. The sixteenth-century monastery exhibits almost unchanged its medieval character, retaining ‘prejudice’, ‘scholastic learning, mysterious philosophy, and crafty sanctity’. This accords with Mosheim’s remarks on how the pressure for reform compelled the religious orders to ‘conceal, at least, such vestiges of ancient corruption and irregularity as may yet remain’ (Mosheim, iv. 164). Such ‘crafty sanctity’ which conceals ‘ancient monastic vices (witness the riotous abbot encountered in chapter 5 whose motto is ‘Profusion and confusion’), is the premiss of numerous Gothic novels from Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796) to Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820)—narratives sanctioned by such historical sources. Indeed, Maturin draws on Mosheim as a historical source and authority to support his depiction of the tyrannies practised on Monçada in the monastery. He plagiarizes (with acknowledgement) Mosheim’s account of a fraud conducted in a monastery at Bern in 1509. Here the tricks employed by Maturin’s monks to terrify Monçada into submission or madness, were originally adopted to publicize a miracle in the interests of Dominican politics. An event occurring at the turn

of the sixteenth century, and recorded by a Protestant historian, is transposed into a tale set in nineteenth-century Spain. Gothic fiction brings to life and dramatizes the annals of sectarian polemic and ecclesiastical history.

However, the term 'historical' can have a wider application, as an historical perspective often informs representations of contemporary institutions peculiar to specific geographical locales. Thus Mosheim uses the present tense when he refers to the abuses which 'may yet remain'; while Barbauld concludes her meditations on monasteries by stating that 'Their growing vices *have* rendered them justly odious to society, and they seem in a fair way of *being* for ever abolished' (Barbauld, 213, my emphasis). Similarly for Radcliffe's narrator, it is only in the eighteenth century that 'the gross indulgences' of the past 'had now begun to yield to learning' (Radcliffe, 116). Such references to continental Catholicism are conditioned by an historical awareness. As suggested above, this is the corollary of historical Whiggism; it is also central to Gothic fiction which is structured by and dramatizes such historical attitudes. Consider the following statement by Mosheim which could perhaps be regarded as a template for the Gothic fictional scenario. His comments refer to the late seventeenth century but appeared in translation in 1756. In Catholic countries,

superstition reigns with unlimited extravagance and absurdity. Such is the case in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, where the feeble glimmerings of Christianity, that yet remain, are overwhelmed and obscured by an enormous multitude of ridiculous ceremonies, and absurd, fantastic, and unaccountable rites; so that a person who arrives in any one of these countries, after having passed among other nations . . . is immediately struck with the change, and thinks himself transported into the thickest darkness, into the most gloomy retreats of superstition. (iv. 204-5)

Here the ecclesiastical historian cedes to the tourist or even the romancer. Mosheim spends five volumes carefully describing the history of the rites of the Catholic church, but when he adopts the perspective of the tourist, he finds the present day rites 'unaccountable'. Versions of this suggested 'transportation' through

travel to the darkest 'retreats' of history are found in Gothic fiction, which dramatizes the very situation which Mosheim evokes. On the first page of *The Monk* Lewis carefully places the action 'in a city where superstition reigns with such despotic sway'.²⁰ Such a perspective is also encountered in another genre which encouraged such depictions, and was popular when the Gothic novel emerged. Mosheim's hypothetical tourist who imagines himself 'transported' into a gloomy superstitious retreat appears in person in numerous accounts of continental travel published throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Robert Gray stated in 1792, 'Rome should be visited with the lantern of Christianity, that we may justly discriminate between the parade of religion and the real impiety of this dark, gloomy and superstitious city'.²¹ Such comments are typical of the genre, which represented contemporary Italy, Spain, Portugal, and parts of France in ways which accord with Mosheim's and others' historical perspective. When English tourists travelled to the continent, they moved through time as well as space. This emphasis informs the early Gothic novel and contributes to its fictional representations. It also provides examples of another mode of anachronism which is central to the Gothic tradition and will play a major role in this study. How 'vestigial' anachronisms are represented in travel writing and Gothic fiction is now considered.

Gothic Vestiges

When an eighteenth-century English tourist visited the Catholic continent his or her response to the experience was generally conditioned by a sense of history and Protestant identity.²² As Samuel Sharp wrote from Rome in Holy Week 1765: 'I am now in a country where the Sovereign is a Priest; at a time of the year too,

²⁰ Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. Christopher MacLachlan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), II.

²¹ Gray, *Letters During the Course of a Tour Through Germany, Switzerland and Italy, in the Years 1791 and 92* (London: F. & C. Rivington, 1794), 425.

²² Heinz-Joachim Mullenbrock cites Robert Viscount Molesworth from 1694 on why an Englishman travels: 'An *English-Man* should be shewn the misery of the

when the priesthood displays all its pomp, not to call it arrogance; and, I assure you, it is a trial for the patience of reason. We very well know from the history of the church, what tyrants they have been formerly, before the laity dared to assume the prerogatives of civil liberty; and, that they do not yet abate one jot of their presumption . . .'²³ Sharp's version of history is consistent with that encountered in the writings of Mosheim.²⁴ However, whilst the latter was principally writing medieval history, and occasionally drew back to consider the situation of contemporary Catholicism, the travel writer evokes history to explain or confirm what he or she witnesses at first hand. A visit to contemporary Rome provides a medieval history lesson but also 'historical' reflections on the present. Sharp's preface anticipates criticism of his constant derision of the 'ceremonies of a religion [which] are farcical, and so palpably the instruments of oppression and tyranny' (274), when it protests that, 'Should the more reasonable Catholicks of *England* think that I have been too particular in my Descriptions of the superstitious Practices of their Religion, I must beg Leave to remind them of their own frequent Declarations, that, in this *enlightened Age*, those Pageantries are continued abroad . . .' (p. iv. latter emphasis mine). Here, the 'enlightened age' and what is 'continued abroad' stand in explicit opposition. England and Italy exist in different temporal realms; the former is representative of, and is synchronous with, 'this enlightened age', the latter by its 'continuance' of the Gothic past. The Protestant tourist undergoes a form of time travel, visiting the pre-Reformed and medieval origins of his or her own Church. Thus a tourist witnessing a convert from Lutheranism take the veil in 1751 referred to this 'sacrifice' as a 'tragical scene', which provoked him to reflect 'God forgive her, poor unhappy creature,

enslaved Parts of the World, to make him in love with the happiness of his own Country', 'The Political Implications of the Grand Tour: Aspects of a Specifically English Contribution to the European Travel Literature of the Age of Enlightenment', *Trema*, 9 (1984), 7–21, 10.

²³ Sharp, *Letters From Italy Describing the Customs and Manners of that Country* (London: R. Cave, 1766), 193–4.

²⁴ See also Robert Southey, *Book of the Church: From the Druids to the Glorious Revolution*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1824), for a polemical Protestant reading of history designed to combat the cause for Emancipation.

and all those who are led astray by [such] craft and villainy . . . thank God it is my happy lot to be of a nation a long time since by the protection of heaven delivered from such pernicious bigoted and mistaken zeal.²⁵ As Barbauld's response to a ruined abbey was to be thankful that she lived in a more 'rational' and liberal age and country, so the Protestant tourist encountering living 'relics' from the past offers a similar prayer of thanks for his historical deliverance. Encountering Catholicism meant travelling back in time, and seeing the great work of Reformation undone. First-hand observation of Catholic countries confirmed the pages of ecclesiastical history, and encouraged and perpetuated a view of the continent frozen in time. Thus when Arthur Young visited a Benedictine Abbey in Paris in 1787 he remarked that, 'It is the richest abbey in France: the abbot has 3000,000 livres a year (£13,125). I lose my patience at seeing such revenues bestowed; consistent with the spirit of the tenth century and not with that of the eighteenth!'²⁶ The identification of anachronistic vestiges was a powerful rhetorical tool, enabling the observer to divide Europe into countries which were synchronous with the 'age' (meaning constitutional monarchy, political liberty, Reformed religion, commerce, and technology), or plunged into the darkest recesses of an imaginary 'Gothic' past. Hester Piozzi (formerly Thrale) observes how the Brescian and Bergamase nobility, 'still exert the Gothic power of protecting murderers who profess themselves their vassals; and . . . still exercise those virtues and vices natural to man in his semi-barbarous state: fervent devotion, constant love, heroic friendship, on the one part; gross superstition, indulgence of brutal appetite, and diabolical revenge, on the other'.²⁷ The past has often been referred to as a foreign country, but in this genre and in the early Gothic novels certain foreign countries become the past.

²⁵ Anon., cited in Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 240.

²⁶ Young, *Travels in France and Italy, During the Years 1787, 1788 and 1789* (London: Dent, 1927), 77.

²⁷ Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey Through France, Italy and Germany*, 2 vols. (London: A. Strahan, 1789), i. 128.

The accounts of travellers to various parts of the continent, which according to Charles L. Batten 'won a readership second only to novels by the end of the [18th] century',²⁸ encouraged a view of Italy, Spain, and southern France as a world apart from their readers. These places were governed by different, 'archaic' laws and customs, while their inhabitants appeared to be motivated by different passions. As Piozzi remarks: 'One . . . sees the inhabitants of Italian cities for the most part merry and cheerful, or else pious and penitent; little attentive to their shops, but easily disposed to loiter under their mistress's window with a guitar . . . Fraud, avarice, ambition, are the vices of republican states and a cold climate; idleness, sensuality, and revenge, are the weeds of a warm country and monarchical governments' (ii. 235). These remarks recall Walter Scott's characterization of the Radcliffian Gothic, which 'uniformly selected the South of Europe for [its] place of action, whose passions, like the weeds of the climate, are supposed to attain portentous growths under the fostering sun'.²⁹ Both writers exhibit a belief in a differential psychology attributable to southern and northern peoples. Both Piozzi and Scott associate passionate extremes with the former, and imply an equation between character (vices), politics, and environment. Whether such a situation is associated with 'romance' (serenading lovers, frozen in a Shakespearean vignette), or its darker side (vengeful or tyrannical princes frozen in a Jacobean tragedy), both writers suggest that southern cultures are anachronistic antitheses of their northern counterparts. These supposed differences determined the settings of early Gothic romance. Thus Charles Robert Maturin explains the character of the Neapolitan Montorio family, the fortunes of which his *Fatal Revenge* (1807) records:

It was marked by wild and uncommon features, such as rarely occur in those of more temperate climates. But in a country, like the seat of these

²⁸ Charles L. Batten, Jr., *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel Literature* (Los Angeles: University of California Press at Berkeley, 1978), 1.

²⁹ Scott, 'Mrs Radcliffe', *Lives of the Novelists* (Paris: A. & W. Galighani, 1825), 243.

adventures, where climate and scenery have almost as much effect on the human mind, as habit and education, the wonder dissolves, and the most striking exhibition of *moral* phenomena present only the reflected consequences of the *natural*.

The general idea of the Italian character was fully realized in that of the Montorio family; weak, yet obstinate; credulous, but mistrustful; inflamed with wild [transcendent ideals . . .]; yet sunk in the depth of both national and local superstition.³⁰

It would be difficult to find a more precise and explicit testimony to the importance of geographical setting in Gothic romance than these remarks, which correspond to 'factual' representations of continental phenomena. Like Piozzi and Scott, Maturin equates character with environment, and distinguishes the southern from the northern temperament. The emphasis is on distance and (geographical, historical, and psychological) difference. Modern philosophy, and democratic political thought, stresses the importance of habit and education; but '*the Italian character*' is formed by different factors, which set it apart in a psychological and 'historical' realm of its own. In this respect, Gothic fictional representation accords with received wisdom locatable within a number of discourses.³¹

The fictions of Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis, Maturin, and their followers are therefore both historically and geographically 'authentic'. However, 'historical' and 'geographical' criteria cannot always be separated, as the Gothic novel's topographical sources were often conditioned by a culturally determined historical awareness. Therefore whilst a certain vagueness about exactly when a tale is set, or the occurrence of anachronisms, might appear to suggest the 'irrelevance' of history in Gothic fiction, such tendencies actually reflect the anachronistic focus sanctioned by historical and topographical accounts of Catholic cultures or customs *at this time*. Critics who apply

³⁰ Maturin, *Fatal Revenge* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1994), 1.

³¹ By suggesting that environment determined the different passions and characters of northern and southern peoples, the Gothic novels were merely applying a commonplace of long standing. On this see Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent (New York: Hafner Press, 1949), bk. 14, 'Of Laws in Rela-

modern strictures of historical accuracy to Gothic novels are missing the point. If historians and travel writers imply that Italy and Spain are largely unaltered by 'the age', and exhibit vestigial and obsolete rituals and power structures more appropriate to the fourteenth century or the Jacobean stage, there is no reason why romancers should be more particular (especially when, as with Mrs Radcliffe, they had no first-hand experience of the countries where they placed their action).³² In fact, the emphasis on anachronism identified in the historical and topographical writings discussed above not only occurs in but is central to the representational codes of Gothic fiction, which both places 'modern' representatives in archaic contexts, and depicts the anachronistic survival of *vestigial* customs into the enlightened present. The use of this important textual property, and how it operates in Radcliffe's *The Italian* will now be discussed.

Unlike *A Sicilian Romance*, the events of *The Italian: Or, the Confessional of the Black Penitents* are nearly contemporary, taking place in the mid-eighteenth century. However, very little has changed in Radcliffe's depiction of the Italians. As Mary Murial Tarr puts it: 'Examination of Gothic fiction itself . . . provides evidence that the eighteenth century itself became medieval when the setting was a Catholic country', and that Mrs Radcliffe

tion to the Nature of the Climate'. On the history of this belief, and its application to various 'speculative geographies' which endorsed various myths about the Goths, see Samuel Kliger, *The Goths in England*, 'Climate and Liberty' (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), 241 ff.

³² A number of Gothic novels provide no direct statement about the historical setting of their action; the most famous being Lewis's *The Monk*. A modern editor's statement that it is set 'in Madrid in the days of the Inquisition', and that 'Inquisitional Spain seems too remote to be taken seriously as a setting for anything touching actual experience, whether in the eighteenth century or the twentieth' (pp. vii–viii) does not provide any further elucidation on this matter, but is nonetheless highly revealing. Eighteenth-century Spain was *still* Inquisitional Spain, and therefore the action could have been set in 1765, or any time up until 1834 (excluding the years 1808 to 1814). The editor's comments reveal how much the assumption of 'pastness' is a premiss of the first generation of Gothic novels, and how Lewis relies upon the expectations and cultural prejudices of his original readers. The Spanish Catholic setting, replete with monks, abbesses, and Inquisitors, was sufficient to place the action in an 'historical' setting, regardless of its actual date; Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. Howard Anderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

‘created, as it were, a contemporary, continental medieval period’.³³ Radcliffe’s Italy is still frozen in the two-dimensional world of the Elizabethan or Jacobean stage, as depicted by English tourists.³⁴ Indeed, the text explicitly encourages a comparison with the genre of the travelogue in its opening section. The narrative of *The Italian* is framed by an introductory passage explaining the circumstances of the manuscript which forms the body of the text. It depicts an excursion undertaken by English tourists in 1764 to the convent of Santa Maria de Pianto belonging to the order of the Black Penitents. Here they catch a glimpse of a sinister figure who haunts the gloomy aisles of the chapel attached to the convent. On enquiring of a monk, the figure is revealed to be an assassin who has found sanctuary in the church. This revelation provokes the following exchange:

‘An assassin!’ exclaimed one of the Englishmen; ‘an assassin and at liberty!’ . . .

‘He has sought sanctuary here,’ replied the friar; ‘within these walls he may not be hurt.’

‘Do your altars, then, protect the murderer?’ said the Englishman.

‘He could find shelter no where else,’ answered the friar meekly . . . ‘But have you never, since your arrival in Italy, happened to see a person in the situation of this man? It is by no means an uncommon one.’

‘Never!’ answered the Englishman, ‘and I can scarcely credit what I see now!’³⁵

The sight of this assassin reminds an Italian gentleman in the party of a tale associated with this very chapel. This tale makes up the narrative of *The Italian*, the manuscript of which the gentleman lends to the outraged yet curious English tourist. The Englishman is the reader’s counterpart, as both simultaneously read the manuscript of the events associated with the confessional

³³ Tarr, *Catholicism in Gothic Fiction*, 8, 9.

³⁴ On Radcliffe’s use of writers like Piozzi in her depictions of Italy see, Clara F. McIntyre, *Ann Radcliffe in Relation to her Times* (Yale Studies in English, 62; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), 58–61; and J. M. S. Tompkins, ‘Ramond De Carbonnières, Grosley and Mrs Radcliffe’, *Review of English Studies*, 5 (1929), 294–301.

³⁵ Radcliffe, *The Italian*, ed. Frederick Garber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 2.

of the Black Penitents. By employing this introductory frame, Radcliffe separates the 'fictional' or 'romance' aspects of her text from those resembling travelogue, the supposedly factual account of a tourist's excursion. The English tourist thus occupies a similarly 'real' space to the reader him or herself.³⁶ However, he has caught a glimpse which confirms the 'truth' of Gothic fiction, an experience which unnerves him: 'While the Englishman glanced his eye over the high roofs, and along the solemn perspectives of the Santa del Pianto, he perceived the figure of the assassin stealing from the confessional across the choir, and, shocked on again beholding him, he turned his eyes, and hastily quitted the church' (4). The 'Gothic' thus intrudes on the modern and factual world of the travelogue, a space occupied by the reader's direct counterpart. In *The Italian*, Radcliffe brings the Gothic mode up to date, but shows how the past and the present are not so easy to demarcate. The Gothic past is preserved in such institutions as monasteries, which retain disconcerting vestiges of obsolete customs.

Radcliffe's English tourist 'hastily quit[s] the church'; able to reflect upon the absurdity of these laws, and return from his travels relieved that he lived in a country where such things no longer prevail. The protagonists in the romance itself are less fortunate. As the Englishman reads the manuscript the narrative shifts from travelogue to Gothic tale of terror. If the reader identifies with the English tourist in this short introductory section, then his or her sympathies are with the 'honorary Protestants' in the romance proper. Here the rational Vivaldi and the industrious Ellena are imperilled by the twin forces of aristocratic pride and religious bigotry. A noble 'House' and the Church are reluctant to relinquish their ancient privileges, and strive to reassert them in the face of an implied modernity. *A Sicilian Romance* constantly underlined the fact that the marquis's tyrannical impulses and actions were attributable to his noble status

³⁶ For Tobias Smollett's outrage at seeing 'the most execrable villains diverting themselves in the cloysters of some convents at Rome', see his *Travels Through France and Italy* published in 1766, ed. Frank Felsenstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 147.

and were sanctioned by the customs of his age. He has absolute power over all his dependents, including his wife, his children, and his vassals. When he thrusts a sword into his daughter's lover as they attempt to elope, he is well within his rights. Further, his ability to dispose of his daughter as he sees fit is sanctioned by the Church; as the abate denounces Julia's crimes: 'You have disobeyed the will of him whose prerogative yields only to ours' (*A Sicilian Romance*, 131). Similar exponents of the prerogatives of family and Church are found in *The Italian*, in the figures of the marchesa and Schedoni. The marchesa, like Radcliffe's earlier parental tyrant, is motivated by an inflexible family pride. The terms 'family', 'house', 'line' and 'dignity' recur constantly in her angered fulminations on her son Vivaldi's 'dishonourable' love for the lower caste Ellena. She is encouraged in her steadfast defence of 'the honour of [her] ancient house' (169), by Schedoni, who manipulates her prejudices to effect his own revenge on Vivaldi. Through a series of masterful insinuations he convinces the marchesa that she is justified in arranging Ellena's murder: 'her death alone can restore the original splendor of the line she would have sullied' (168). Believing that Vivaldi had already married Ellena, their motive is retribution and the restoration of caste. However, whilst 'House' and Church conspire to exercise the same ancient rights which belonged to the marquis in Radcliffe's earlier tale, 'vulgar prejudices' prevent their open display in the comparatively modern context of *The Italian*. The marchesa believes she has the right to act like the marquis from a hundred and fifty years earlier, but, as she laments: 'I have not the shield of the law to protect me' (173). Schedoni's response to this is significant: 'But you have the shield of the church . . . you should not only have protection, but absolution'. This refers back to the preface and the scandal of a church which harbours assassins, and in which the rich 'can buy themselves innocent again, in the twinkling of a ducat' (166). It underlines the antiquated motivations of the nobility and the Church, which attempt to retain ancient customs in the face of an implied modernity. Radcliffe's Gothic romance therefore adopts and even exaggerates for dramatic effect the emphases of the travel writers who commented

on the 'medieval' vestiges of Italy and the continent. When Samuel Sharp remarked on the frequency of stabbings in Naples he observed that 'here, besides the sanctuary which delinquents find in churches and holy places, there is another still more open sanctuary, I mean, the remissness both of law and prosecution'.³⁷ Radcliffe goes one better, when she implies that a state of law and order does exist, but against this the nobility and the Church stand fast. What is significant here is how Radcliffe deploys the imputation of anachronism for dramatic effect. The impulses and acts of the marchesa and Schedoni are vestigial, in conflict with their context, and it is from this that they derive their power to unnerve. Thus if *A Sicilian Romance* depicted the confrontation between a prescient 'modernity' and the historical past, *The Italian* shows how the past can survive into and threaten the present.

This is further testified in Radcliffe's representation of the Inquisition which dominates the latter part of the narrative. When P. J. Grosley travelled to Rome in 1758, he remarked how: 'it is now above a century since the inquisition of Rome has passed a capital sentence. Everything there is transacted in private by spiritual and pecuniary penalties'.³⁸ However, as J. M. S. Tompkins points out, 1758 was the 'very year (for she dates *The Italian* exactly), that Vivaldi in the vaults of the Inquisition heard the thrilling groans of the tortured and was bound by the masked familiars on the rack'.³⁹ Similarly, Frederick Garber observes how: 'Curiously, she dates *The Italian* very carefully at 1758, but describes the Inquisition as it had not been in Italy for over a century before that' (in Radcliffe, 418).⁴⁰ This is not so curious however when it is recognized that the Gothic novel is motivated by such anachronistic strategies. Radcliffe, taking her cue from

³⁷ Sharp, *Letters*, 283.

³⁸ Grosley, *New Observations on Italy and its Inhabitants Written in French by Two Swedish Gentlemen*, trans. Thomas Nugent, 2 vols. (London: L. Davis and C. Reynolds, 1769), ii. 52.

³⁹ Tompkins, 'Ramond de Carbonnières, Grosley and Mrs Radcliffe', 301.

⁴⁰ On how the Gothic icon of the Inquisition survived in the popular memory see Sage, *Horror Fiction*, also J. M. S. Tompkins, in Victor Sage (ed.), *The Gothic Novel: A Casebook* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 87–99.

the travellers and historians who refer to the vestiges of the past which survive on the European continent, adapts and exaggerates this emphasis, evoking the scandal and terror of anachronistic survival.

It was this latter emphasis that came to dominate Gothic fiction in the nineteenth century, the period upon which the present study principally focuses. Victorian Gothic fiction is obsessed with identifying and depicting the threatening reminders or scandalous vestiges of an age from which the present is relieved to have distanced itself. Where the 'vestigial' is found (in monasteries, prisons, lunatic asylums, the urban slums, or even the bodies, minds, or psyches of criminals, deviants or relatively 'normal' subjects) depends upon historical circumstances. The present study will challenge the notion that settings in the Gothic are its most dispensable properties, by observing how various historical and political factors help to shape the narrative material and determine those settings. Because Victorian Gothic fiction came to rely less on overtly 'historical' or 'exotic' locations and settings (even placing the action in the contemporary realm and the heart of the modern capital), it should not be assumed that it abandoned its 'fancy-dress' element or its transparent 'denials', and revealed what had motivated it all along—psychology. Rather, as the early Gothic novels conformed to various historically informed representations of medieval or continental terrors, so Victorian Gothic shows how the location for terror had shifted its ground. As will be explained in the next chapter, the Urban Gothic novels of the mid-Victorian period testify to a new set of concerns, which are both historically and topographically significant. Furthermore, they do not abandon the historical emphases or perspectives which motivated the early practitioners in this mode; rather they adapt them to conform to circumstances which can be located within the historical contexts with which they interact.

CHAPTER TWO

*From Udolpho to Spitalfields:
Mapping Gothic London*

Terra Incognita

The night was dark and stormy. . . . [A] canopy of dark and threatening clouds was formed over London . . . Everything portended an awful storm. . . . At length large drops of rain fell, at intervals of two or three inches apart, upon the pavement.

And then a flash of lightning, like the forked tongue of one of those fiery serpents of which we read in oriental tales of magic and enchantment, darted forth from the black clouds overhead. . . . [and the thunder] stunned every ear, and struck terror into many a heart—the innocent as well as the guilty. . . .

At the first explosion of the storm, amidst the thousands of men and women and children, who were seen hastening hither and thither, in all directions as if they were flying the plague, was one person on whose exterior none could gaze without being inspired with a mingled sentiment of admiration and interest.

He was a youth, apparently not more than sixteen years of age . . . His frock coat, which was single-breasted, and buttoned up to the throat, set off his symmetrical and elegant figure to the greatest advantage. . . . But he was upon foot and alone; and, when the first flash of lightning dazzled his expressive hazel eyes, he was hastily traversing the foul and filthy arena of Smithfield-market.

An imagination poetically inspired would suppose a similitude of a beautiful flower upon a fetid manure heap.

He cast a glance . . . of affright, around; and his cheek became flushed. He had evidently lost his way, and was uncertain where to obtain an asylum against the coming storm. . . . To one so young, so delicate, and so frank in appearance, the mere fact of losing his way by night in a disgusting neighbourhood, during an impending storm, and

insulted by a low-life ruffian, was not the mere trifle which it would have been considered by the hardy and experienced man of the world. . . .

Accident conducted the interesting young stranger into that labyrinth of narrow and dirty streets which lies in the immediate vicinity of the north-western angle of Smithfield-market.

It was in this horrible neighbourhood that the youth was now wandering. He was evidently shocked at the idea that human beings could dwell in such fetid and unwholesome dens; for he gazed with wonder, disgust, and alarm upon the houses on either side. It seemed as if he had never beheld till now a labyrinth of dwellings whose very aspect appeared to speak of hideous poverty and fearful crime. . . .

[Taking shelter in one of these houses he] advanced along the passage, and groped about. His hand encountered the lock of a door: he opened it, and entered a room. All was dark as pitch. At that moment a flash of lightning, more than usually vivid and prolonged, illuminated the entire scene. . . . He was in a room entirely empty; but in the middle of the floor . . . there was a large square of jet blackness. . . . An indescribable sensation of fear crept over him; and the perspiration broke out upon his forehead in large drops . . . He was alone—in an uninhabited house, in the midst of a horrible neighbourhood; and all the fearful tales of midnight murders which he had ever heard or read, rushed to his memory: then, by a strange but natural freak of the fancy, those appalling deeds of blood and crime were associated with that incomprehensible but ominous black square upon the floor.¹

Thus opens 'The Old House in Smithfield', the first chapter of G. W. M. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London*, which ran in weekly parts from October 1844 to 1848. A bizarre mixture of radical politics, 'sociology', and Gothic sensationalism, it proved to be one of the most successful publications of the century.² The situation and imagery of this opening passage are unmistakably 'Gothic'.

¹ G. W. M. Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London*, i (London: George Vickers, 1846), 2–4. All quotations from Reynolds are taken from this edition.

² On Reynolds as a writer and the popularity of the *Mysteries* and its sequel, *The Mysteries of the Court of London* (1848–56), see Louis James, 'The View from Brick Lane: Contrasting Perspectives in Working-Class and Middle-Class Fiction in the Early Victorian Period', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 11 (1981), 87–101; Gertrude Himelfarb, 'The Gothic Poor', *The Idea of Poverty* (London: Faber 1984), 435–52; Anne Humphreys, 'The Geometry of the Modern City: G. W. M. Reynolds and *The Mysteries of London*', *Browning Institute Studies*, 11 (1983), 69–80; Trefor Thomas,

And yet it is set in 1831 and in the middle of London, a city rendered Gothic by the importation of effects from the earlier literary tradition. The imagery of serpents and oriental magic transforms the urban setting, combining fantastic registers with the emphasis on fear which dominates this opening passage. The storm strikes 'terror' into all, while the stranger is 'affright[ed]' by the aspect of the 'horrible' neighbourhood which bespeaks 'fearful crime'. The anxiety increases as the youth penetrates deeper into the dark and 'labyrinthine' district, and gives way to 'an indescribable sensation of fear' as he finds himself alone in the old house in utter darkness. Apprehension is succeeded by terror as the narrative perspective increasingly narrows and defines its focus. It shifts from the dark and forbidding heavens which canopy London to a specific, and decidedly unattractive, part of the capital. The narrator's descriptive focus then combines with, or is mediated through, the anxious consciousness of the youth who has accidentally wandered into its dark recesses. From the labyrinth to a single 'dark, narrow and dirty' street, and from this street to a particular house, and from the house to a darkened room, the frightened focus swiftly narrows down to the contemplation of a small black square in the centre of the room. As the focus is defined so the terrified thoughts of the youth summon up images of dark deeds and midnight murders evoked by the ominous black hole. The fears of the protagonist (who is later revealed to be a young woman in disguise) are realized when she is thrust down that very hole, by two 'wild beasts in human shape' (i. 22) who discover her in their hide-out. Reynolds thus transports a Gothic scenario—a young woman incarcerated by desperate villains—into the modern urban context, and carries with this many of the trappings and sublime effects associated with the genre. That this is a conscious appropriation or relocation of an earlier mode is suggested through

Introduction to Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), pp. vii–xxvii. On the genre of the 'Mysteries' novel see Richard Maxwell, Jr., 'G. W. M. Reynolds, Dickens, and *The Mysteries of London*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 32 (1977), 188–213, 'City Life and the Novel: Hugo, Ainsworth, Dickens', *Comparative Literature*, 30 (1978), 157–71, *The Mysteries of Paris and London* (Charlottesville, Va. University of Virginia Press, 1992).

analogy. Thus when Eliza Sydney, having escaped from the Old House in Smithfield, narrates her ordeal, she reinforces the narrator's use of Gothic registers: 'Those wretches [carried] me to a room upon the ground floor—a room to which the cells of the Bastille or the Inquisition could have produced no equal. It had a trap-door communicating with the Fleet Ditch!' (i. 23). In this way, such standard Gothic icons as the Bastille and the Inquisition are appropriated to heighten the fearful situation enacted in an identifiable metropolitan locale. As these comparisons imply, Reynolds has effected a transportation, shifting the scene for locating terrors from the exotic and 'historical' settings of Radcliffe, Lewis, and Maturin to the contemporary urban context. This is made explicit when Eliza describes her impression of the environment in which she finds herself: 'But oh! the revolting streets which branch off from that Smithfield. It seemed to me that I was wandering among all the haunts of crime and appalling penury of which I have read in romances, but which I never could have believed to exist in the very heart of the metropolis of the world' (i. 22). Reynolds thus announces the premisses of the Urban Gothic, which depicts 'scenes and places whose very existence may appear to belong to the regions of romance', but instead are found in 'a city in the midst of civilization' (i. 75). These terrors supersede, but are dependent upon if only by analogy, those of the earlier Gothic tradition.

However, despite its obvious exploitation of stock Gothic scenarios, plots, and imagery (his narrative of the Reverend Tracy is a straightforward retelling of *The Monk* in contemporary London), it would be wrong to read Reynolds's text as a mere transplanting of the Radcliffian tale of terror in a modern urban context. This is not just a Gothic in the city, it is a Gothic *of* the city. Its terrors derive from situations peculiar to, and firmly located within, the urban experience. As a modern editor of Reynolds observes, the 'Mysteries' genre 'represents an urbanization of eighteenth-century Gothic, and a new consciousness of the city as inexplicable and impenetrable'.³ One aspect of the modern experience which Reynolds represents in his urban

³ Trefor Thomas, Introduction to Reynolds, *Mysteries*, p. ix.

mysteries has been identified by Richard Maxwell. As Maxwell argues, Reynolds's novel (modelled on Hugo and Sue), reflects and exploits distinctly modern concerns about the growth of an information culture, and its correlative production of secrets. As he observes: 'The mystique of the document is the final, excessive flowering of the Gothic secret. Secrets have become commodities. They are traded, hoarded, stolen, and in these ways bring about arrangements of power or status.'⁴ This accurately characterizes Reynolds's labyrinthine narrative, which proliferates with blackmailers, swindlers, and double-dealers, all hoarding, trading, or exposing various secrets. As Maxwell suggests, this network of duplicity and complicity strangely unites the potentially chaotic modern metropolis, and its complex narrative configuration: it unites monarch with pot-boy, and upperclass with the unclassed. Secrets provide what Ann Humphreys has termed the 'Geometry of the Modern City' figured in Reynolds's text.⁵ However, while Maxwell's and Humphreys's discussions of the narratives and plots of Reynolds's Urban Gothic are important and compelling, the present chapter is more concerned with the 'geographical' or 'environmental' aspects of Reynolds's and others' writings. It focuses on how the very fabric of the city (partly a poetic or allegorical figure, but also partly an object of perceived reality) conditions and enables this new Gothic mode. The relocation of the Gothic in the modern city involved the city itself, or at least part of it, being Gothicized, and thus analogous to and appropriate for scenes of terror associated with the earlier romance tradition.

The lineaments of Reynolds's Urban Gothic landscape are discernable in the passage which opened this chapter. As noted above, Reynolds employs in this passage aspects of the Gothic and the fantastic, evoking sublime and supernatural imagery to signal the mode in which he operates. This imagery heightens the effect of this passage; and yet it does not obscure entirely the tangibility of the situation described or account for all its supposed terrors. The

⁴ Maxwell, 'G. W. M. Reynolds, Dickens, and *The Mysteries of London*', 194.

⁵ Humphreys, 'The Geometry of the Modern City'.

lightning may suggest dragons and enchantments, and evoke associations with the Radcliffian sublime, but that which it illuminates is nonetheless a recognizable urban locale which is in itself endowed with moral significance. Whilst to dispense with the fantastic associations and sublime language would certainly diminish the impact of this opening, it would not alter the ‘horrible[ness of] the neighbourhood’, its ‘foulness’ and filthiness, nor the labyrinthine environment through which Eliza wanders. It is these things which ‘affright’ her, provoking ‘wonder’, ‘disgust’ and ‘fear’. The innocent who has stumbled into this neighbourhood does not have the benefit of the narrator’s ‘poetically inspired’ representation of her situation, and yet still she is terrified. The environment of Smithfield, with its dark and narrow streets, ‘low-life ruffians’ and ‘foul and fetid dens’, is fearful in itself. Indeed, the houses themselves are read ‘physiognomically’—their ‘very aspect appeared to speak of hideous poverty and fearful crime’—transferring a characteristic Gothic device to the environment itself.⁶ ‘The Old House in Smithfield’ thus announces a Gothic which resides in a new landscape of fear. Some of the properties of this landscape will now be mapped out.

When Reynolds compares the streets of this low-life district of London to a ‘labyrinth’ he employs a representational trope that was becoming increasingly prominent at this time. The image of the labyrinth provides a model for organizing a dichotomous city, and for suggesting that secrets and mysteries may lurk in its darker recesses. These darker places of the city were increasingly and almost exclusively associated with its poorer districts. Such beliefs and representations testify to a complex interplay between civic and architectural ‘fact’, and poeticized or imaginative expectation. They are nonetheless a product of history, of seeing the city in a certain way, and interpreting its meanings. Richard Maxwell explains this development:

Labyrinths have long been a subject of allegorical works, such as *The Faerie Queene*. The widespread tendency to see cities as mazes is a related

⁶ On the importance of physiognomy in Gothic fiction see John Graham, ‘Character Description and Meaning in the Romantic Novel’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 5 (1966), 208–18.

but more recent phenomenon, a product, I would guess, of historical memory. Once Paris and London begin to be modernized—once streets are widened and straightened to facilitate the circulation of traffic—the older, usually poorer neighborhoods exert a new fascination. Here there are many narrow, winding alleys; here traffic easily gets itself into knots; here, the visitor who is not a native may well feel mystified.⁷

A closely-knit collection of courts and alleys is one thing—an observable topographical phenomenon that can be charted by cartographers—a ‘labyrinth’ remains a figure of speech. It carries a range of associations, suggesting secrets and anxieties and even hinting at half-human monsters prowling its precincts. And yet even as such urban districts were mapped and explored (the objects of social concern or reformist endeavour), they were nonetheless subject to the poeticized figuration associated with the labyrinth. The following is an impression of the notorious ‘rookery’ of St Giles, from 1842, shortly before it was broken up for civic improvements. The writer describes it as, ‘one great maze of narrow crooked paths crossing and intersecting in labyrinthine convulsions, as if the houses had been originally one great block of stone eaten by slugs into innumerable small chambers and connecting passages’.⁸ Whilst purporting to describe this district, the observer sees only chaos: ‘one great maze of . . . labyrinthine convulsions’. His extravagant simile of a slug-eaten block suppresses all sense of architectural intention or design, implying instead the random burrowings of repellent life-forms, or the ‘convulsive’ twitchings of a diseased organism. To label even the most crooked architectural complex ‘labyrinthine’ reveals less about its actual condition than the concerns of the perceiver, and these are, as Maxwell suggests, historically determined.⁹

⁷ Maxwell, *Mysteries of Paris and London*, 15.

⁸ W. Weir, ‘St. Giles, Past and Present’, from Charles Knight (ed.), *London*, 6 vols. (London: Charles Knight & Co., 1842), iii. 267.

⁹ James Winter remarks on the motivations and architectural obsessions of civic reform: ‘it is probably fair to say that most mid-Victorian liberals equated “reform” with “modern” and “modern” with “rational”’. Few of these reformers had serious reservations about removing reminders of the past from the path of planned highways. Progress for them meant making the irregular straight, the cluttered orderly, the unbridled controlled, the communal impersonal, the narrow wide, the dark

The transformation of specific low-life localities into (Gothicized) labyrinths by sensational fiction and historical representation is traceable. Its development allows us to understand the conditions for the emergence of Urban Gothic fiction, and helps to define its characteristics. Henry Fielding evoked a version of the urban labyrinth when he enquired into the *Late Increase of Robbers* in 1750. As he observes:

Whoever indeed considers the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*, with the late vast Addition of their Suburbs; the great Irregularity of their Buildings, the immense Numbers of Lanes, Alleys, Courts and Bye-places; must think that, had they been intended for the very Purpose of Concealment, they could scarce have been better contrived. Upon such a View, the whole appears as a vast Wood or Forest, in which a Thief may harbour with as great Security, as wild Beasts do in the Deserts of *Africa* or *Arabia*.¹⁰

Fielding is describing a similar environment to those depicted by Reynolds and Weir. Again, the irregularity of the alleys, courts and by-ways is cause for alarm or dismay. However, Fielding does not quite employ the image of the labyrinth, and, more importantly, he does not attribute irregularity or impenetrability to specific parts of the city. His equal wide survey takes in the whole of London and its suburbs, comparing it with a forest which baffles attempts to monitor or prevent crime. Whilst the London of Fielding's day was not exempt from the partitioning along class lines which became conspicuous in accounts from the next century, Fielding does not reserve labyrinthine imagery for the poorer or 'criminal' districts, but encompasses the whole city in a figure of tangled impenetrability.

light', *London's Teeming Streets 1830–1914* (London: Routledge, 1993), 32. For a detailed and highly readable account of this process See Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996); arguably the best introduction to London history.

¹⁰ Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers etc. With Some Proposals for Remedying this Growing Evil*, 2nd edn. (London: A. Millar, 1751), 116–17. On the growing awareness for architectural reform on a 'rational' model, and its relationship to the new models of penal practice, see John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 63–84.

Thomas de Quincey's representation of labyrinthine London from 1821 appears to mark a development in this respect. 'The Pleasures of Opium' details the opium eater's midnight rambles through London, describing how he often 'came suddenly upon such knotty problems of alleys, such enigmatical entries, and such sphynx's riddles of streets without thoroughfares, as must, I conceive, baffle the audacity of porters, and confound the intellects of hackney-coachmen. I could almost have believed, at times, that I must be the first discoverer of some of these *terrae incognitae*, and doubted, whether they had yet been laid down in the modern charts of London.'¹¹ This passage presents its own puzzles and problems, not least of which involves the extrication of the 'hallucinatory' from the 'topographical'. For nearly all is metaphor, refracted through the lens of the opium experience. And yet there emerges here an awareness of the metropolis which differs from Fielding's all-embracing image of the city as forest. Moreover, it implies an historical perspective which survives the qualifications and allowances necessitated by de Quincey's hallucinatory prose. For it is now only certain parts of London which are appropriate for this figurative mode of representation. The suggestion that these districts are *terrae incognitae* is of course a metaphor, which extends the exotic imagery of the 'sphynx's riddles' which these streets resemble; it nevertheless implies that a tangible, ordered, and knowable London which *is* mapped in modern charts exists beyond these circumscribed regions. The labyrinth has narrowed,

¹¹ De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, ed. Alethea Hayter (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 81. Franco Moretti's fascinating chapter on mapping 19th-cent. London and Paris, from *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900*, contains an intriguing observation which suggests that, as he puts it, 'novel-writing and map-making [were] perfectly in step with each other' at this time. As he observes: 'In early nineteenth-century maps, detail is rapidly lost as the map moves away from the West End; the London maps published by Bowles (1823), Wyld (1825), and Fraser (1830), for instance, all agree on the number of streets that intersect Bond Street, or lead into Grosvenor Square—but they are in total disagreement on those that lead into Smithfield (13, 9, 10), or on the alleys around Saffron Hill . . . or on the number of lanes that run into the river between Blackfriars and Southwark Bridge (9, 12, 16)' (London: Verso, 1998), 83. Perhaps such regions truly were *terrae incognitae*, allowing for the 'stumbleings upon' and 'penetrations' of described in Urban Gothic narratives. Moretti's extremely interesting and welcome book appeared when the present work was delivered to press.

and is now confined to certain parts of the capital isolated from its modern precincts. De Quincey's fantasy, however, does not necessarily associate these regions with criminality or even poverty.¹²

Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831) does make this imputation; implying a relationship between a specific and isolated urban labyrinth and the criminality which can be discovered there. Hugo's 'Court of Miracles'—the refuge for the criminal population of fifteenth-century Paris—is approached by traversing 'intersecting houses, cul-de-sacs and converging streets . . . [which have the stranger] more securely hobbled and ensnared in [its] tangle of dark alleyways, [than] the maze of the Hôtel des Tournelles'.¹³ This region, like parts of de Quincey's modern London, is a *terra incognita*, but one 'where no law-abiding man had ever penetrated at such an hour' (100). The hour is late, and the innocent Gringoire finds himself in this 'new world, unknown, unprecedented, shapeless, reptilian, teeming, fantastic' (101). He only escapes hanging by the intervention of Esmarelda, when he becomes her 'truand' husband. This passage comes closer to, and obviously inspired, Reynolds's own representation of a labyrinthine topography of crime into which an innocent strays. However, there are still important differences between the two writers' emphases. By establishing these differences a preliminary definition of the Urban Gothic as practised by Reynolds can be offered.

¹² The regions de Quincey depicts can probably be identified as St Giles or Seven Dials which were close to the Oxford Street and Soho centre of his London experiences. Whilst the passage quoted comes directly after his descriptions of sojourns into poor districts, de Quincey shows sympathy with the poor (impoverished himself in the period described), and concentrates on their pleasures rather than their miseries. He does not suggest that to stray into the poorer districts is an occasion for anxiety. Ch. 49 and 50 of Bulwer Lytton's *Pelham* from 1829, which describe a trip to St Giles are also interesting in this respect. Such an excursion is still very much an adventure in the Pierce Egan tradition. There is no mention of the architectural layout, or the environment, no labyrinth to 'penetrate'. In fact they almost stumble into the area, and when they visit a gin shop they find versions of the familiar (a disreputable Latin scholar, a ruined idealist), not the terrors of the unknown.

¹³ Victor Hugo, *Notre Dame of Paris*, trans. by John Sturrock (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 97.

Hugo's Court of Miracles is set in the fifteenth century, and therefore employs a version of the distancing and medievalist tendency of the early Gothic tradition. Further, this Court of outcasts involves a bizarre mocking inversion of its aristocratic counterpart. Here is found a rigid hierarchy and a code of ethics, albeit of a debased or perverse kind. The denizens of this realm are outcasts, colourful bohemians who are not necessarily impoverished or destitute. The Court attracts and offers refuge to the outcast of every nation, including 'gypsies, unfrocked priests, ruined students and wastrels from every nation' (100). Many here have fallen from higher estate, and are not germane to this 'sewer . . . [of] vice, mendicancy and vagabondage' (100).¹⁴ They resemble Gothic banditti, located in an urban but still medieval setting. Furthermore, as with the de Quincey passage, many of the grotesque and fantastic aspects of this area are attributable to the poeticized consciousness of the intruder through which the scene is refracted. Hugo even provides a deflation of the Court's phantasmagoric properties which he had carefully established:

To this hallucination there gradually succeeded a less distraught, less magnifying vision. Reality dawned around him . . . and demolished, piece by piece, the terrible poetry by which he had earlier thought himself surrounded. . . . he was walking not through the Styx but through mud; [and] he was being jostled not by devils but by thieves . . . In short, when he took a closer and less feverish look at the rout, he descended from the witches' sabbath to the tavern.

The Court of Miracles was in fact no more than a tavern, but a tavern of brigands, as red with blood as with wine. (102)

¹⁴ To a large extent Hugo is following Walter Scott, whose *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822) depicted the sanctuary of Whitefriars, or 'Alsatia' as it was known, as an alternative 'Dukedom' of bankruptcy. Scott's Alsatia, although physically and morally isolated from law-bound Jacobean London is, it is satirically implied, no less of a community than the Temple with which it rubs shoulders and often does business: 'In short, the two communities serve each other'. Moreover, it lacks a distinctive topographical character (a mere gate or a flight of steps separates it from the Temple or Fleet St.); and, whilst it could hold perils for the unwary, it is also a place where a gentleman might easily enjoy 'a frolic', Scott, *The Fortunes of Nigel* (London: Thomas Nelson, n.d.), 245, 240. The importance of sanctuaries for the Urban Gothic imagination will be discussed below.

This deflation makes the passage and the environment less fantastic. It also prevents it being considered an example of 'Urban Gothic' according to the definition which will now be offered. For Hugo implies an opposition between the phantasmagoric and fearful imagery with which he first embellishes this district and its 'truth'. Reality, as it is finally perceived and acknowledged, and the 'Gothic' diverge at this point and appear to be incompatible. Furthermore, the bathos implied in the admission that the Court was 'no more than a tavern . . . of brigands', implies that this is less fearful *in itself*. Gringoire is still threatened with his life, but this criminal den, the low-life labyrinth of urban reality, cannot recover from its unfavourable and deflated contrast with the grotesquerie which preceded this admission. In Reynolds there would be no such admission. The Old House in Smithfield in 1831 is no more than a thieves' kitchen, but this is cause enough for terror. The aspect of this district and its houses provokes in Eliza the recognition that the 'haunts of crime and appalling penury of which [she had] read in romances' are real, and 'exist in the very heart of the metropolis of the world' (Reynolds, i. 22). And yet this 'reality' does not suffer a deflation when it is compared with 'romance', rather, the anxiety is heightened as a consequence. For very shortly Eliza finds herself, like Hugo's Gringoire, in the clutches of thieves, while the room over the Fleet Ditch actually exceeds the supposed terrors of the Inquisition about which she could only have read. The Urban Gothic of Reynolds is a Gothic of the here and now, it dispenses with the exotic distancing devices associated with the earlier mode, and its principal terrors are localized, being confined largely to specific parts of the capital. These low-life locales, and the inhabitants germane to them, are in themselves objects of horror. And whilst the properties of 'romance' embellish the terrors of the real, they never surpass them. On the contrary, reality exceeds romance in its terrible actuality.¹⁵

¹⁵ The Urban Gothic has received some critical notice. Seymour Rudin's 'The Urban Gothic: From Transylvania to the South Bronx', however, places the emergence of the genre too late, seeing it as a 20th-cent. development of the Gothic tradition, *Extrapolation*, 25 (1984), 115–26. Kathleen L. Spencer's 'The Urban Gothic

To leap from Hugo in 1831 to Reynolds in 1844 when tracing the construction of the Urban Gothic labyrinth, is to omit a novel which perhaps even more than Hugo's helped to demarcate a low-life topography of urban terrors and thus encourage Reynolds's representations—Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1837–9). Here, perhaps for the first time, is found the situation of an innocent entrapped in the labyrinthine coils of a criminalized district brought up to date and placed in a recognizable part of the modern metropolis: 'Darkness had set in; it was a low neighbourhood; no help was near; resistance was useless. In another moment [Oliver] was dragged into a labyrinth of dark narrow courts, and was forced along them at a pace which rendered the few cries he dared to give utterance to, unintelligible.'¹⁶ This is not Oliver's initiation into London's low-life labyrinth (his first entry into the capital with the Dodger took him through the winding ways and 'little knots of houses' around Fagin's den near Smithfield (103)); it depicts his reclamation by the gang who are determined to ruin him. Oliver has set out on an errand for his new benefactor Mr Brownlow, returning a parcel of books to a shop near Clerkenwell. However, on the way he makes a wrong turn, and discovers to his cost that the two Londons of his limited experience—the respectable and the outcast—nestle in alarming proximity:

Meanwhile, *Oliver Twist*, little dreaming that he was within so very short a distance of the merry old gentleman, was on his way to the bookstall. When he got into Clerkenwell, he accidentally turned down

in Britain: *Fantastic Fiction 1880–1930*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of California at Los Angeles, 1987), notices its emergence in the late 19th cent. However, her discussion of the mode focuses on fictions which merely occur in the city, while she does not suggest that the city itself could evoke terror. Alan Pritchard's 'The Urban Gothic of *Bleak House*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 45 (1991), 432–52, provides a very useful reading of Dickens's text, and rightly sees the emergence of this mode occurring earlier in the century. However, he discusses Dickens's novel in isolation, and fails to consider its precedents or discuss why Dickens should focus on the city as site of terror. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁶ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist; Or, The Parish Boy's Progress*, ed. Peter Fairclough (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 158. All subsequent references are to this edition.

a bye-street which was not exactly in his way; but not discovering his mistake until he had got half-way down it, and knowing it must lead in the right direction, he did not think it worth while to turn back; and so he marched on, as quickly as he could, with the books under his arm. (156)

Oliver marches into a 'low neighbourhood' and is soon 'dragged into a labyrinth of dark narrow courts' (158), and once more into the clutches of crime. Here the philosophical *flâneur* of de Quincey is replaced by the innocent boy who is hedged in by the perils which lurk in the urban labyrinth and use its intricacies for concealment and entrapment. Clerkenwell borders on Cow Cross, Saffron Hill, and Smithfield, and therefore, to the unwary, a wrong turn could be disastrous. Dickens implies that a class-based polarity is built into the very fabric of the city. There are the spacious and open squares of Pentonville (where Mr Brownlow offers Oliver sanctuary), and broad thoroughfares like the Gray's Inn Lane; and yet there are also the courts and alleys which make up and metonymically represent the criminalized districts of the capital. These distinct provinces exist cheek-by-jowl in the modern metropolis. The fearful recognition of this and the melodramatic possibilities it presents is the basis of the Urban Gothic mode.¹⁷

As was demonstrated earlier, a degree of distance is fundamental to Gothic fiction. In the early tradition, historical and/or geographical distancing ensured that the world of the text (the scene of terrors) and the world of the reader are kept separate. This is spelt out in Jane Austen's satirical tilt at the Gothic novel

¹⁷ The proximity of the respectable and the outcast forms a set piece in both fictional and factual accounts of discovering 'darkest London'. John Saunders remarked of the soon-to-be-demolished St Giles in June 1844, that 'There is not a nook or corner of it throughout that lies above a stone's throw from respectable and crowded thoroughfares', 'A Parting Glimpse of St Giles's', *Illuminated London Magazine*, 3 (1844), 79–84, 80. William Harrison Ainsworth's novel *The Revelations of London* from October 1844 represents St Giles's in similar terms: 'THE ROOKERY! Who that has passed Saint Giles's, on the way to the city . . . but has caught a glimpse, through some narrow opening, of its squalid habitations, and wretched and ruffianly occupants! Who but must have been struck with amazement, that such a huge receptacle of vice and crime should be allowed to exist in the very heart of the metropolis', *Ainsworth's Magazine*, 6 (Nov. 1844), 377.

Northanger Abbey (1818), where the rational Henry Tilney explains to the romance-reading Catherine Morland that what takes place in *Udolpho* cannot occur in modern England, asking her to remember 'the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians.'¹⁸ Dickens appears to dispense with such assurances, insisting instead on the proximity and contemporaneity of his narrative. That this was a conscious strategy on his part is suggested by his 'preface' to the 1841 edition of the novel. Here Dickens, like Austen, sets up an opposition between Romance conventions and real life as it was lived and perceived in contemporary England. And like Austen's Henry Tilney, his object is to clarify the grounds upon which the 'truth' of Gothic representation must rest. However, Dickens inverts the terms of this opposition, and consciously attacks the kind of disavowals which inform Tilney's position. For Dickens situates 'horrors' (35) in the very localities from which Austen categorically debar them—in the heart of modern England.

Dickens's preface defends his depiction of what he refers to as 'the most criminal and degraded in London's population' (33). His motive in charting the Parish Boy's Progress was a moral but also a novel one: 'It appeared to me that to draw a knot of such associates in crime as really did exist; to paint them in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid misery of their lives . . . forever skulking uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life . . . would be to attempt a something that was needed, and which would be a service to society' (34). He needs to stress the deformity of vice not because the public refused to contemplate crime or criminals, but because it demanded certain conditions for its representation. Dickens's argument is with those, like Austen's narrator, who find 'horrors' 'charming' (Austen, 174) as long as the novelist employs the distancing devices of the Gothic and Newgate schools of fiction. As he asserts, *Oliver Twist* has none of the romantic attractions found in such works as Bulwer Lytton's *Paul Clifford* (1830), or Ainsworth's *Rookwood* (1834). It

¹⁸ Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Marilyn Butler (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), 172.

depicts 'no canterings on moonlit heaths, no merry-makings in the snuggest of all possible caverns, none of the attractions of dress, no embroidery . . . no crimson coats and ruffles [and] none of the dash and freedom with which "the road" has been time out of mind invested' (34–5). As Dickens implies, crime has been romanticized by being packaged in fancy dress with Gothic trappings. Such paraphernalia serve to distance or disguise what he regards the true 'deformity' of crime and vice. As he observes, the public certainly relish depictions of 'criminal characters' but

to suit them, [they] must be, like their meat, in delicate disguise. A Massaroni in green velvet is an enchanting creature; but a Sikes in fustian is insupportable. A Mrs Massaroni, being a lady in short petticoats and a fancy dress, is a thing to imitate in tableaux and have in lithograph on pretty songs; but a Nancy, being a creature in a cotton gown and cheap shawl, is not to be thought of. It is wonderful how Virtue turns from dirty stockings; and how Vice, married to ribbons and a little gay attire, changes her name, as wedded ladies do, and becomes Romance. (35)

Massaroni was a stage brigand who featured in a Melodrama by Planché from 1828. He stands here as the generic Gothic type, a figure from the Radcliffian school of terror which situated crime in exotic settings. This emphasis, as Dickens suggests, has become clichéd, commodified, and even domesticated, suitable for respectable consumption in the form of songs, tableaux, and lithographs. This process of commodification has rendered the terrors of the Radcliffian Gothic safe, and therefore unsuitable for the purposes of the moralist who strives to show the 'deformity' of vice (not to mention the novelist who seeks to thrill his readers). In effect, Dickens is calling for, and defending, a new Gothic, a new way to depict horrors, stripped of disguises and redundant stage properties. Significantly, this new Gothic retains an emphasis on appropriate environment; it represents 'The cold wet shelterless midnight streets of London; the foul and frowsy dens, where vice is closely packed and lacks the room to turn; the haunts of hunger and disease; the shabby rags that scarcely hold together; where are the attractions of these things?' (35). He goes on to refer to these

things as ‘horrors’. Thus whilst Dickens rejects certain Romance conventions for his depiction of horror, he is still concerned with an appropriate environment for its representation. Indeed, his comments suggest that certain environments—now the midnight streets of London, rather than banditti-infested Italian forests—are in themselves horrific, and can be considered Gothic properties. The narrative itself supports this inference.

Dickens’s charting of a new Gothic terrain goes as far as to identify the very streets through which Oliver, Fagin, and Sikes pass. And yet despite this emphasis on the recognizable and the proximate he still emphasizes distance and defamiliarization. The distance he establishes is between the characteristics (moral and architectural) of the respectable and the outcast districts of the same city. Certain parts of London, despite their distance from the castles and monasteries of the Radcliffian landscape, are rendered as strange and remote in their own way as these more traditional Gothic locales. This situation of distance within the proximate, and the strange within the familiar, is most apparent when the narrator describes the setting for Bill Sikes’s grand exit. Chapter 50 opens thus:

Near to that part of the Thames on which the church at Rotherhithe abuts, where the buildings on the banks are dirtiest and the vessels on the river blackest with the dust of colliers and the smoke of close-built low-roofed houses, there exists the filthiest, the strangest, the most extraordinary of the many localities that are hidden in London, wholly unknown, even by name, to the great mass of its inhabitants.

To reach this place, the visitor has to penetrate through a maze of close, narrow, and muddy streets, thronged by the roughest and the poorest of waterside people . . . he makes his way with difficulty along, assailed by offensive sights and smells from the narrow alleys which branch off on the right and left . . . Arriving, at length, in streets remoter and less-frequented than those through which he has passed, he walks beneath tottering house-fronts projecting over the pavement . . . [and is confronted by] every imaginable sign of desolation and neglect. (442)

This passage introduces, or rather ‘discovers’, Jacob’s Island, a place that would become infamous if not legendary in

journalistic and sociological discourse following Dickens's fictional description.¹⁹ It is 'wholly unknown' to the majority of Londoners, and it is the narrator's role to render it knowable, to put it into writing and on the map. And yet the very act of describing or charting this *terra incognita* involves, and I would argue, necessitates a mode of writing which defamiliarizes and distances that which it purports to reveal. Jacob's Island demands superlatives. It is the blackest, filthiest, strangest, most extraordinary place, inhabited by the roughest and poorest of a peculiar caste of people. The passage is presented from the perspective of a visitor who has stumbled across this place by accident. It combines the perspective of a Gringoire or an Oliver with that of an objective narrator whose role it is to reveal the 'truth' of this locality. This visitor has to penetrate with difficulty a 'maze of close, narrow and muddy streets'. Each superlative, every blind alley, serves to remove the object from the known, placing it beyond fixed referents, and establishing its remoteness from all experience. Jacob's Island itself, the heart of darkness which exists at the journey's end, is even stranger than the labyrinthine passages through which the visitor must stumble to discover it. Surrounded by a muddy ditch and reached by wooden bridges, Jacob's Island presents a scene to excite the 'utmost astonishment' of any stranger who encounters it, including,

Crazy wooden galleries common to the backs of half a dozen houses, with holes from which to look upon the slime beneath . . . rooms so small, so filthy, so confined, that the air would seem too tainted even for the dirt and squalor which they shelter; wooden chambers thrusting themselves out above the mud, and threatening to fall into it—as some have done . . . every repulsive lineament of poverty, every

¹⁹ See Dickens's preface to the 1850 cheap edition of *Oliver Twist*, for his influence on public awareness of Jacob's Island. Jacob's Island was described as the 'capital of cholera' and the 'Venice of Drains', by Henry Mayhew who investigated it in September 1849, 'a Visit to the Cholera Districts of Bermondsey', *Morning Chronicle*, 24 Sept. 1849, 4. Charles Kingsley used, but did not name, Jacob's Island in ch. 35 of *Alton Locke* (1850), a passage which owes much to Dickens but more to Mayhew. See Anne Humphreys, *Travels into the Poor Man's Country: The Work of Henry Mayhew* (Sussex: Caliban Books, 1977), 191–2, for a comparison of Dickens's, Mayhew's, and Kingsley's accounts of this place.

loathsome indication of filth, rot, and garbage;—all these ornament the banks of Folly Ditch . . .

They must have powerful motives for a secret residence, or be reduced to a destitute condition indeed, who seek a refuge in Jacob's Island. (443)

The narrator who acts as guide to this strange place nonetheless shares the utter amazement of the stranger who has stumbled upon it. This perspective differs from that found in 'Seven Dials' (another 'London Maze') when it was depicted in one of the *Sketches by Boz*:

The stranger who finds himself in 'The Dials' for the first time, and stands Belzoni-like, at the entrance of seven obscure passages, uncertain which to take, will see enough around him to keep his curiosity and attention awake for no inconsiderable time. From the irregular square into which he has plunged, the streets and courts dart in all directions, until they are lost in the unwholesome vapour which hangs over the house-tops, and renders the dirty perspective uncertain and confined; and lounging at every corner . . . are groups of people, whose appearance and dwellings would fill any mind but a regular Londoner's with astonishment.²⁰

The observer in this earlier topographical sketch is still the knowing Londoner who distinguishes himself from the stranger. It is implied that 'regular Londoners' will not be amazed by this district, and possess an awareness of its character. Furthermore, it is not suggested that the stranger need fear this encounter with the unfamiliar; rather he is encouraged to occupy himself in contemplating this 'curiosity' 'for no inconsiderable time'. Jacob's Island, on the other hand, is 'wholly unknown, even by name' to the majority of Londoners, while the narrator himself shares the stranger's amazement. Through such passages, Dickens demarcates a new Gothic terrain, an appropriate environment for intrigues, mysteries, and horrors. Dickens's text thus enables the transportation of the Gothic fictional mode which Reynolds's *Mysteries* realizes. In many respects, however, Reynolds out-Dickens Dickens.

²⁰ Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*, ed. Dennis Walder (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), 92.

A New Gothic Geography

In *The Mysteries of London*, Reynolds's low-life locales are also rendered different and distant from the world of respectable London. As seen above, he employs the figure of the labyrinth to evoke the distinctive terrain of outcast London. However, Reynolds's emphasis on the isolation of these districts, which, like Dickens, he takes pains to identify precisely, is, if anything, even more deliberate and self-conscious than Dickens's. As the narrator asserts:

The reader who follows us through the mazes of our narrative, has yet to be introduced to many strange places—many hideous haunts of crime, abodes of poverty, dens of horror, and lurking-holes of perfidity—as well as many seats of wealthy voluptuousness and aristocratic dissipation. It will be our task to guide those who choose to accompany us, to scenes and places whose very existence may appear to belong to the regions of romance rather than to a city in the midst of civilisation, and whose characteristic features are as yet unknown to even those best acquainted with the realities of life. (Reynolds, i. 75)

Reynolds's emphasis is overtly geographical and environmental. Even the metaphor for his story—the 'mazes of our narrative'—attests to the imaginative importance of place in the fabrication of his text. The phrase 'regions of romance' is more than a figure of speech in this context, as these are explicitly contrasted to the metropolis and its official identity. He draws attention to the fact that 'romance' (the romance of 'hideous' crime, and dens of 'horror') is generally associated with certain regions, and implies that this understanding should be modified to accommodate the 'realities' which he reveals. Gothic romance must be relocated in the strange places of the city, and it must be recognized that this romance is also 'real'. Indeed, Reynolds's narrative explicitly demonstrates the geographical relocation of fictional horrors, when the scene shifts to one of the more traditional regions of romance—southern Italy. Richard Markham (the closest Reynolds's text comes to a hero) leaves London to champion the cause of Castelcicalian independence. The narrator describes this

imaginary realm: 'The Grand-Duchy of Castelcicala is bounded on the north by the Roman States, on the south by the Kingdom of Naples, on the east by the Apennine Mountains, and on the west by the Mediterranean Sea' (Reynolds, ii. 103). In other words, this is prime Gothic territory according to the specifications of the Radcliffian model. It is the sort of place where Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* would allow that murders and abductions might take place. And yet this description which opens chapter 18 of the second volume follows directly a scene set in an East End brothel featuring the usual array of cut-throats, villains, and low-lives which people Reynolds's Urban Gothic landscape. The natives of Castelcicala, on the other hand, are 'brave, enlightened, and industrious' (ii. 103). This represents a departure from, and reversal of, the earlier logic which depicted Italy as a 'land of spooks and stabbers'.²¹ Aware of readerly expectations in this respect, the narrator is compelled to explain that, despite its location in the heart of the Radcliffian landscape of terror, 'the woodlands of Castelcicala were not characterised by that gloominess of foliage which invests the English and German forests with such awful solemnity' (ii. 133). Gloominess, and the terrors attendant on and associated with such characteristics, are now the preserve of the dark forest-like dominions of the urban labyrinth. The Italian passages provide a pastoral retreat from and contrast to the darkness, mud and squalor of the metropolitan citadels of iniquity relentlessly depicted by Reynolds. That these are the new regions of romance is made explicit in the following passage which describes that area of London known as The Mint:

The houses are old, gloomy and sombre . . . Most of the doors stand open, and reveal low, dark, and filthy passages, the mere aspect of which compels the passer-by to get into the middle of the way, for fear of being suddenly dragged into those sinister dens, which seem fitted for crimes of the blackest dye.

This is no exaggeration.

²¹ Roderick Marshall, *Italy in English Literature, 1755–1815: Origins of the Romantic Interest in Italy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 246.

Even in the day-time one shudders at the cut-throat appearance of the places into the full depths of whose gloom the eye cannot entirely penetrate. But, by night, the Mint . . . is far more calculated to inspire the boldest heart with alarm, than the thickest forest or the wildest heath ever infested by banditti. (ii. 187)

Reynolds deploys an urban sublime, transposing the moral and aesthetic meanings of the traditional Gothic landscape—thickest forests, wildest heaths—to specific parts of the metropolis. This is the corollary of the Italian passages which have been largely de-Gothicized by Reynolds's emphasis, and shows how parts of the modern city surpass what was once considered the preserve of the Radcliffian landscape.

However, Reynolds's Gothicization of low-life London goes beyond the establishment of geographical isolation, and the transposing of the language of the sublime to accentuate it; he combines these emphases with a distancing premised on temporal lines. Like the earlier practitioners in this mode, Reynolds deploys the imputation of anachronism for Gothic effect. Given the contemporary setting, this involves the suggestion of ancient 'vestiges'. He thus follows his self-consciously sublime description of old houses of the Mint with an account of the peculiar customs and traditions associated with them: 'The Mint was once a sanctuary, like Whitefriars; and, although the law has deprived it of its *ancient privileges*, its inhabitants *still maintain* them, by a tacit understanding with each other, to the extent of their power' (ii. 187; my emphasis). Recall the indignation of the English tourist in the preface to Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) when he learns that the Catholic Church harbours known assassins. His horror derives from his confrontation with an 'unenlightened' and out-moded practice, a scandalous vestige from a barbarous age which had been long since reformed in more 'civilized' cultures. But Reynolds denies this assurance, implying that there are outposts of 'ancient' uses still preserving such barbarous and out-moded customs if only by tacit agreement in the very heart of the English capital. This is a characteristic Gothic strategy. It uses an historical dimension to demonize a specific district and its *implied*

customs.²² For the imputation of anachronism is wholly metaphorical, the product of the observer's historically informed imagination. It is only *as if* the Mint still observes its ancient customs (depicted in Scott's fictional representation of the sanctuary of Whitefriars or 'Alsatia'), because it retains a criminal character today. Indeed, the 'unofficial' or tacit nature of the Mint's sanctuary status makes it all the more sinister and deep-seated. It remains like a bloody stain marking the scene of a crime in ghostly legend which refuses to be wiped clean. In this way Reynolds mobilizes a Gothic prejudice, making the perceived criminality of this district (and by implication, criminality *per se*) an anachronistic scandal. Criminality is Gothicized by being associated with the past, it perpetuates the errors of a benighted antiquity, or, according to the logic of the earlier Gothic, the un-Reformed continent. The oldness of the houses of the Mint along with their sinister aspect reinforces the imputation that this region is a Gothic vestige, a sanctuary from civilization in the heart of the modern metropolis.

That the deployment of an anachronistic dimension is a conscious strategy on Reynolds's part is suggested in the following comment. It comes, once more, from Eliza's account of the Old House in Smithfield: 'Civilisation appeared to me to have chosen particular places which it condescended to visit, and to have passed others by without leaving a foot-print to denote its presence' (Reynolds, i. 22). The notion that civilization is partial, and that some regions of modern Europe have been excluded from its benefits, enables Gothic fiction to represent or imagine anachronistic vestiges. Because a belief in progress informs so much of post-Enlightenment thought, notions of 'civilization' and 'enlightenment' are largely synonymous with 'modernity' and the pursuit of teleological goals. A temporal dimension is implied in

²² John Hollingshead referred to the Mint in 1861 as 'still the dear old collection of dens which it was in the days of our grandfathers', but does not imply that it still operates as a 'sanctuary', *Ragged London in 1861*, ed. Anthony S. Wohl (London: Everyman, 1986), 86. Hollingshead singled out Westminster, which had also been a sanctuary, as the worst 'of all the criminal districts in London', 54.

the above comments, which suggest that civilization is a *process*, but an uneven one. As seen in the previous chapter, the first Gothic novels singled out the Catholic South of Europe to situate their depiction of anachronistic terrors. The English tourist in Naples is confronted with an implied 'contemporary, continental medieval period',²³ while Gothic heroes and heroines have the horrors of such a situation inflicted upon them. With Reynolds this emphasis has shifted to certain isolated parts of the capital.

For Reynolds, therefore, the slums and rookeries of London exist in a pre-civilized state, analogous to the castles, convents, and Bastilles of the 'medieval' Catholic continent as depicted in the earlier tradition. Thus when Eliza finds herself in the cellar of the Old House in Smithfield and compares her situation with the victim of the Inquisition or the Bastille, her analogy is appropriate, indicating that these institutions have been superseded within this new Gothic mode. Indeed, as is revealed later, this house was once the hide-out of Jonathan Wild, the notorious thief-taker and outlaw executed in 1725. The criminals who use it in 1831 inherit its legacy of criminality. Like the town house depicted in Bulwer Lytton's 'The Haunters and the Haunted' (1859), the Old House is 'haunted' by the memory of its criminal uses, and its present occupants continue its venerable traditions. The very fabric of the house embodies the memories of its Newgate past, containing numerous sliding-panels, trap-doors, escape routes, and hidden passages, which determine the use to which it is put in the present age. Indeed, the implication that such houses are 'haunted' by criminal memories, and that their modern inhabitants inherit these memories appears in an article from 1852 on one of the Ragged Schools found in this area (West Street, the scene of Fagin's first den). As the author observes: 'Since the days of the notorious Jack Sheppard, who made this locality his hiding-place, this neighbourhood has never been without his

²³ Sister Mary Murial Tarr, *Catholicism in Gothic Fiction: A Study of the Nature and Function of Catholic Materials in Gothic Fiction in England (1762-1820)* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1946), 9.

successor.²⁴ Reynolds's emphasis, and the response of Eliza when she finds herself in such a house, and imagines scenes of 'mid-night murders', was not unique. As John Garwood remarks on 65 West St.: 'a slightly active imagination [might] call up visions of robberies and murders which have been planned in it, and of which it has been the scene.'²⁵ The memories of crime which haunt the houses in this locality (or at least the imaginations of their observers), prevent the present generation of rookery-dwellers moving into the modern age, they remain haunted by the legacy of the criminal past, isolated from the benefits of civilization. Therefore, although various aspects of 'modernity' (including industrial developments and demographic upheavals) may encourage writers to focus on the city and its problems, within the Gothic mode the emphasis is still on locating the source of disorder in the past. The Urban Gothic mode does not dispense with the 'displacements' of the earlier tradition, nor is it a 'primitivistic' rejection of modernity or industrialism. Rather, it adapts the 'historical' perspective found in the early novels when it implies that the terrors of criminality are anachronistic anomalies, vestigial stains on the city's modernity. This defines its status as Gothic.

Reynolds's imputation of anachronism to Gothicize low-life London stands in contrast to a very different tradition of writing about the capital. Sketches of picturesque vestiges 'discovered' in modern London are found in the works of Washington Irving,

²⁴ Anonymous writer from *The Ragged School Union Magazine*, Dec. 1852, cited by John Garwood, *The Million-Peopled City; Or, One-Half of the People of London Made Known to the Other Half* (London: Wertheim & Macintosh, 1853), 60.

²⁵ Garwood, citing an article from *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 17 June 1845, *Million-Peopled City*, 55. To some extent this writer is recalling recent revelations about the houses in this vicinity, upon which Reynolds also drew in his narratives. According to Lucy Moore, 'During rebuilding in 1844, the Red Lion tavern in West Street, Clerkenwell (called Chick Lane in Wild's time), and the chandler's shop next door to it were excavated. Human remains were found there, as well as instruments of torture and a knife engraved with the name "J. Wild". The two buildings were a tortuous maze of narrow staircases and twisting passages, with an underground opening leading on to the Fleet Ditch, a sewer that flowed into the Thames'; Lucy Moore, *The Thieves' Opera: The Remarkable Lives and Deaths of Jonathan Wild, Thief-Taker, and Jack Sheppard, House-Breaker* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1997), 124.

Charles Lamb, and Boz himself. In 'Little Britain' and 'London Antiquities' (1820) Irving celebrates isolated parts of the metropolis which resist change. Such 'London Antiquities' are 'swallowed up and almost lost in a wilderness of brick and mortar; but deriv[e] poetical and romantic interest from the commonplace and prosaic world around them'.²⁶ An example of how 'Geoffrey Crayon' discovers the Chapel of the Knights Templar bears comparison with Reynolds's technique, if not his emphasis. As Crayon recalls:

I had been buffeting for some time against the current of population setting through Fleet Street . . . The flesh was weary, the spirit faint, and I was getting out of humour with the bustling busy throng through which I had to struggle, when in a fit of desperation I tore my way through the crowd, plunged into a by-lane, and after passing through several obscure nooks and angles, emerged within a quaint and quiet court with a grass-plot in the centre, overhung by elms . . . I was like an Arab who had suddenly come upon an oasis amid the panting sterility of the desert. (230)

In Reynolds to plunge into a by-lane (especially in this vicinity which is close to the site of Whitefriars) is to court disaster. To encounter 'obscure nooks and angles' would register danger and recommend a hasty retreat to the broad thoroughfare of Fleet Street. It would not encourage expectations of quaintness, quiet, or oases. For Irving, and for Lamb's 'Elia' in sketches such as 'The old Benchers of The Inner Temple' or 'The South-Sea House' (1823), or for Boz in 'Scotland-yard', to discover the antique in the heart of London is to encounter a world to be regretted elsewhere. When change does come to Scotland Yard in Boz's sketch (an area like Irving's Little Britain cut off from the main current of life), with the building of the New London Bridge, the observer states: 'We marked the advance of civilization, and beheld it with a sigh' (Dickens, *Sketches*, 88). The unequal progress of civiliza-

²⁶ Irving, *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* (London: Everyman, 1963), 230. The area known as 'Little Britain', which Irving depicts in all its old-world charm, was in the very centre of the area which Reynolds paints in such lurid colours twenty-five years later. It is also represented negatively by Dickens, who displays Pip's disgust with this area in *Great Expectations*, vol. ii ch. 1 (1861).

tion, its tendency to miss isolated pockets of resistance, is here celebrated rather than feared. Even the isolated, labyrinthine, and vestigial aspects of the district around Todgers in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–4) are not cause for indignation or anxiety, but gentle humour. As the narrator observes, 'A kind of resigned distraction came over the stranger as he trod these devious mazes', being some times forced to go 'home again with a gentle melancholy on [his] spirits, tranquil and uncomplaining'.²⁷ The 'queer old taverns that [had] a drowsy and secret existence near Todgers', along with the 'gentry' of the region who are 'much opposed to steam and all new-fangled ways' (187), are vestiges from another age but are not quite objects of horror or indignation. Such positive sentiments attributed to isolated and anachronistic parts of the capital and suggesting 'secrets', are anathema to Reynolds's Urban Gothic, and would become rarer in Dickens's own fiction following *Dombey and Son* (1846–7).

Dickens's description of 'Todgers' does include references to the 'modernity' from which this area is predominantly exempt. He remarks how 'Among the narrow thoroughfares at hand, there lingered, here and there, an ancient doorway of carved oak, from which, of old, the sounds of revelry and feasting often came; but now these mansions [are] only used for storehouses' (186). This area, despite its general resistance to 'new-fangled ways', is in transition. These antiquities are reluctantly adapting to a modern mercantile climate. And if the 'gentry' generally disparages such new-fangled innovations as steam and ballooning, at least they are aware of them.²⁸ This area is like Irving's Little Britain or

²⁷ Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ed. P. N. Furbank (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 185. As David Trotter observes, although the 'approach to Todgers' [is] like the approach to Jacob's Island', the former 'seems an extraordinarily benevolent maze', *Circulation: Defoe, Dickens, and the Economics of the Novel* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 97. Trotter's book provides useful insights on Dickens's changing perception of the metropolis and his attitude to disease and destitution.

²⁸ This is in contrast to Dickens's representation of Sir Leicester Dedlock in *Bleak House*, which is written partly in the Gothic mode. Sir Leicester displays his ignorance of industrial developments and his anachronistic political horizons when he disapprovingly assumes that Rouncewell the iron-master named his son Watt after Wat Tyler rather than Watt the engineer.

Boz's Scotland Yard, isolated but gradually succumbing to the encroachments of modernity. In contrast, the worlds of industry and ordinary commerce are largely excluded from Reynolds's fictional domain. Notwithstanding his implication that 'modernity' has neglected to visit the dark places of the city, he provides little evidence of this prevailing beyond these circumscribed and isolated regions. Reynolds's Gothic strategies operate according to a system of implicit exclusions and (historical) distortions. Various aspects of the world of his fiction, which persistently claims to reveal the reality of the contemporary scene, are conspicuous by their absence. The *Mysteries* carves up society into aristocrats and low lives, providing very few, if any representatives of the industrious or bourgeois classes. When he analyses the inequalities of the distribution of wealth and power, he shows how the 'industrious classes' are the most numerous and the 'most useful', and is scandalized that they have the least political influence. However, he does not rectify this by representing them in his text. He wrote for this class, but not about it. This is understandable, he was writing Gothic melodrama, and therefore dealt in horrors and extremes. And yet his middle-class or industrious 'heroes', who can be counted on one hand, do not figure prominently in his representations. Middle-class values and sensibilities are endorsed but largely under-represented; while the economic conditions which promoted and sustained this class are almost entirely excluded from the picture. As he explains in his prologue:

There are but two words known in the moral alphabet of this great city; for all virtues are summed up in the one, and all vices in the other: and these words are

WEALTH.

POVERTY.

Crime is abundant in this city: the lazarhouse, the prison, the brothel, and the dark alley, are rife with all kinds of enormity; in the same way as the palace, the mansion, the clubhouse, the parliament, and the parsonage, are each and all characterised by their different degrees and shades of vice. (i. 2)

Reynolds is only concerned with extreme wealth and extreme poverty (a poverty invariably indistinguishable from criminality). In a world made up of either palace or lazarhouse, the factory or counting-house of ordinary commerce or industry would introduce prosaic shades of grey into the picture. By focusing almost entirely on corrupt aristocrats and vicious criminals, and by largely excluding representatives of the middle classes (the class of the future) Reynolds more effectively achieves the transformation necessary for an Urban Gothic fiction.

Criminal Vestiges

To turn from the pages of Reynolds to more recent studies of Victorian London is to encounter some unfamiliar aspects of a situation which the novelist claimed to be describing. Here are found references to a phenomenon which is almost entirely absent from his representation of London's lower depths—the new or purpose-built slum. Reynolds stages his low-life melodramas almost exclusively in the older parts of the city. To acknowledge that some 'slums' were modern (jerry-built constructions erected in response to demographic pressures) would inhibit his anachronistic emphasis, thus making the move from the castle or convent of the early tradition to its urban equivalent more difficult. And yet modern slums did exist. As H. J. Dyos and D. A. Reeder remark: 'The actual age of houses seldom had much to do with [slum formation], and it was sometimes possible to run through the whole gamut from meadow to slum in a single generation, or even less.'²⁹ Similarly David R. Green and Alan G. Parton argue: 'The impression that all slums, however defined, developed in decaying and abandoned middle-class housing in central areas is an over-simplification. Outer-city shanties, sometimes jerry built and at other times constructed from little more than rubbish, vied

²⁹ 'Slums and Suburbs', in H. J. Dyos and M. Wolff (eds.), *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, vol. i (London: Routledge, 1973), 359–86, 364.

with inner-city rookeries in terms of squalor.³⁰ The existence of such dwellings was even recognized at the time. Thomas Beames's *Rookeries of London, Past, Present and Prospective* (1850) observes how 'In [various] districts, rows of small houses are constantly erected; the ground around them is not drained . . . These houses are badly built, mere lath and plaster, built, we should think, by contract, solely as a profitable investment.'³¹

However, Beames's comments rather stand out from the principal focus of his study, which largely shares Reynolds's emphasis on the slum as anachronism. He thus refers to the older rookeries of St Giles's and Saffron Hill, in contrast to the newer ones referred to above as 'genuine Rookeries' (82). Beames shares Reynolds's fascination with the crumbling old tenements which made up the labyrinthine topography of outcast London. Indeed his representation of the anachronistic and even 'Gothic' character of the slum world is even more pronounced and overt than the novelist's. It provides the central focus of, and abiding impression from, a book which Kate Flint has referred to as the 'first analytic study of London's slums.'³² An awareness of this helps contextualize the Urban Gothic, and suggests that Reynolds's depictions were not mere fanciful devices isolated from the dominant mode of 'factual' representation.

An emphasis on anachronistic status of the London rookery is conspicuous in Beames's study, the purpose of which is outlined in his introduction: 'Let us look back, then, and see how men were lodged of old, and at the same time . . . glean what information we can respecting those plague-spots which still remain, which under the name of Rookeries are so unenviably notorious' (10). Beames's introduction provides a potted history of the development of London from the sixteenth century, observing, 'We do not say that there were no Rookeries then, but rather that they were

³⁰ 'Slums and Slum Life in Victorian England: London and Birmingham at Mid-Century', in S. Martin Gaskell (ed.), *Slums* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1990), 17–91, 33. Dickens depicts such a reality in his scenes set in the brick-makers dwellings near St Albans in *Bleak House*.

³¹ Beames, *Rookeries* (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1850), 20.

³² Kate Flint (ed.), *The Victorian Novelist: Social Problems and Social Change* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 135.

common,—the distinction between the dwellings of the rich and the poor were not so obvious' (14). He explains how even the rich two hundred years before generally suffered from bad drainage, wretched roads and unsanitary dwellings, and observes that,

These anomalies have been in a degree removed; improvement has swept on with mighty strides; pity that there should still remain the monuments of this olden time in the Rookeries of London—that the close alley, the undrained court . . . [etc.] should still remind us of what London was once—what it still is to the poor. . . . the poor still remain sad heralds of the past, alone bearing the iniquities and inheriting the curse of their fathers; with them Time has stopped, if it have not gone back. (17, 20)

According to this emphasis the rookery is an isolated vestige of what was common two hundred years earlier. This implication corresponds with the perspective which has been argued underwrites Gothic fictional historiography (Beames even refers to the rookery 'curse', which the poor, like many Gothic figures, inherit as an unwelcome ancestral legacy). For the Gothic novelist monasteries and castles were reminders of the pre-Reformed and feudal past. Beames also depicts the past as a source of errors and abuses, asking rhetorically, 'Is it that by a perverse adherence to the errors of their forefathers men cling to these colonies, when others better adapted for their comfort are ready to receive them? That these strongholds of a corrupt antiquity yield advantages which decent habitations could not supply?' (8). Such phrases as 'the errors of their forefathers' and 'strongholds of a corrupt antiquity', signal the emphasis which motivates Gothic fiction—the representation of the nightmares of history. Here rookeries replace the castles and convents of the Catholic continent as the objects of an indignant rhetoric: 'Rookeries still survive by their very isolation, by their retention of past anomalies,—possessing still the errors, and handing down the discomforts of our ancestors,—sad memorials of the past' (41). What is largely implicit in Reynolds is made explicit here. Rookeries are isolated both geographically and temporally and therefore fulfil the major requirements of a Gothic environment or institution.

However, rookeries not only replaced the more traditional 'aristocratic' abodes of Gothic fiction when they inherited the sins of antiquity and the stigma of anachronism, they often resembled them, or had once enjoyed their status. Here Beames describes some of the London rookeries in more detail:

A large class of the genus Rookery are very ancient houses, deserted by those to whose ancestors they once belonged. The tide of fashion—the rage for novelty—the changes of the times have also changed the character of the population who now tenant those buildings. Thus, in the dingiest streets of the Metropolis we find houses, the rooms of which are lofty, the walls panelled, the ceilings beautifully ornamented . . . In many rooms there still remains the grotesque carving for which a former age was so celebrated. . . . and these features of the olden time [are] in keeping with the quaint and dust-stained engravings which seem to have descended as heirlooms from one poor family to another. . . . The names of these courts remin[d] you of decayed glory—Villiers, Dorset, Buckingham, Norfolk—telling you of the stately edifices which once stood where now you breathe the impure atmosphere of a thickly-peopled court. (21–2)³³

This passage provides an historical perspective on the rookery phenomenon. However, the phrase 'changes of the times' explains very little, and provides no information about when and why one class replaced another as the typical residents of these dwellings. The aristocratic age and the rookery age of the present appear to merge, the former lending the latter many of its associations along with the grotesqueries it bequeaths. And yet such an implication is appropriate to the Urban Gothic mode and could almost be read as a commentary on its development. With the Urban Gothic the aristocracy deserts the 'House' of Gothic fiction, and its new inhabitants, the outcasts of London, inherit its 'heirlooms' as they inherit the (cursed) focus of Gothic representation.

Henry Mayhew and John Binny's survey of *The Criminal*

³³ See also ch. 50 of Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849–50), for a similarly 'genteel' slum. The house in which Fagin imprisons Oliver also attests to a former glory; see ch. 18 of *Oliver Twist*.

Prisons of London published in 1862 includes a lengthy passage which imagines this process in operation. It occurs in a characteristically circumlocutory account of the house of correction at Tothill Fields. The occasion prompts Mayhew to speculate on the mixture of 'law-makers' and 'law-breakers' which characterizes the city of Westminster. Like Beames he employs an historical perspective, observing how 'much of the incongruous character of modern Westminster may be traced back to the peculiarities of the ancient city'.³⁴ It was, like the Mint and Whitefriars, a sanctuary, the privileges of which were abolished in 1653. Like Reynolds, however, he implies a continuity between ancient and modern uses, and explains the criminality of the district in terms of its adherence to ancient abuses. Indeed, Mayhew is prepared to account for a large percentage of London's crime in these terms and to substantiate what was largely a rhetorical gesture in Reynolds. He therefore states that 'It is well known that there were formerly many other such sanctuaries, or "privileged places" throughout London. From Edward the Confessor's time to the Reformation (a period of about five hundred years), any place or building that was consecrated by the clergy for religious uses, served to screen offenders from the justice of the law' (355). A typically 'Gothic' practice, like trial by ordeal or the ducking of witches, the logic of which is lost to the modern observer, who can only marvel at its absurdity and be thankful for its (official) abolition. However, the 'Gothic' character of such a custom, identified with the pre-Reformation social order, allows Mayhew to mobilize the rhetorical property of anachronism, and to cast the problem of contemporary criminality back into the dark ages of antiquity. As the Gothic novelist knew well, the benighted past has its uses:

Now, with the exception of Whitefriars, the old sanctuaries and privileged places continue to this day to be the principal nests of the London beggars, prostitutes, and thieves. True there are other quarters, such as

³⁴ Mayhew and Binny, *The Criminal Prisons of London, And Scenes of Prison Life* (London: Griffin, Bohn & Co., 1862), 354.

St. Giles and the purlieus of Brick Lane, Spitalfields, that are infested by a like ragged, wretched, and reckless population; *but these will be found to have been originally* the sites of hospitals, either for the poor or the diseased. (355, my emphasis)

Here Mayhew acts in the capacity of an antiquarian or folklorist of criminality, uncovering the forgotten history of the most notorious districts of the city and explaining their present uses by recourse to the historical archive. He thus moves from a consideration of medieval history *forward* to the 'nests' of contemporary crime, stressing a continuity of character and function. He then moves from the population of the avowedly worse districts *backwards* to the establishment of charitable institutions which stood on the sites which the criminal and the destitute 'still' haunt. Contemporary criminality and its localization thus becomes an historical issue. The pre-Reformation Gothic past still haunts the present in the perceived behaviour of a section of its population; or more accurately, it haunts the imaginations of those whose role it is to explain the anti-social elements of modern society. Like Reynolds, Mayhew implies that a cultural memory, a tacit or generational lore, has been handed down in these districts to the present day. The inhabitants of London's former sanctuaries indulge in crime, beggary and prostitution in observance of a venerable historical tradition which has survived the passage of time and the modernization of the city. Mayhew develops this inference as he warms to his theme: 'It would appear, then, that the several "rookeries," or vagabond colonies distributed throughout the Metropolis, were originally the sites either of some sanctuary, or refuge for felons and debtors, or else of some "spital" or "loke" for the reception of the poor, the impotent, or the leprous; and the districts in which such asylums were situate thus came to be each the *nucleus* or *nidus* of a dense criminal and pauper population' (356). As he is dealing with the traditions and customs of 'the people' rather than with written documents Mayhew's method is essentially that of a folklorist. The methodology for this practice is described by John Brand in the preface to his *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain* from 1795. Brand remarks on the 'folk' customs and beliefs which this book studies:

It must be confessed that many of these are mutilated, and, as in the remains of ancient statuary, the parts of some have been awkwardly transposed: they preserve, however, the principal traits that distinguished them in their origin.

Things that are composed of such flimsy materials as the fancies of a multitude do not seem calculated for a long duration; yet have these survived shocks by which even empires have been overthrown, and preserved at least some form and colour of identity, during the repetition of changes both in the religious opinions and civil polity of states.³⁵

Mayhew adopts a version of this approach when he explains the etymology of Spitalfields by noting that 'spital' is a corruption of 'hospital', and thus traces this district's criminality to its source in the charitable institution founded there in the Middle Ages. Criminality, like the various customs and beliefs observed by the early folklorists, is identified with pre-Reformation origins which have survived in defiance of 'civil polity'. As the English tourist encountering the Catholic continent represented its indigenous customs as being out of step with the general spirit of 'the age' (meaning Protestantism, enlightenment, and constitutional monarchy), so the folklorist turns his similarly conditioned perspective on the lower sections of his own country. Indeed, the affinity between these perspectives is attested in Brand's preface, where he cites a contributor to the *Gentleman's Magazine* (a forum for emergent folklorism) from 1783. As this writer remarks:

I have often wished to know the first foundation of several popular Customs . . . and been led to think how . . . they are derived from some religious Tenets, Observances, or Ceremonies. I am convinced that this is the case in Catholic Countries, where such like popular Usages, as well as religious Ceremonies, are more frequent than amongst us; there can be little doubt but that the Customs I refer to, and which we retain, took their rise whilst these kingdoms were wholly Catholic, immersed in Ignorance and Superstition. (Brand, p. ix)

³⁵ John Brand, Preface, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain: Chiefly Illustrating the Origin of Our Vulgar and Provincial Customs, Ceremonies, and Superstitions*, rev. and enlarged Henry Ellis, 3 vol. (London: Charles Knight & Co., 1841), vol. i. p. vii.

The folklorist devises an hypothesis—that a practice observed among a body of people who are ignorant of its origins derives from an earlier religious ceremony which served a purpose at some distant time. To support this he compares the custom with similar phenomena encountered in another culture where it still serves a definite purpose, and explains it as a survival from a period when this was observed in both places. Such an emphasis perpetuates, but also extends, the perspective discussed in the previous chapter, which explained the geographical settings favoured by early Gothic fiction. The folklorist reads the ceremonies and customs of Catholic countries as petrified relics of a general medieval culture, he then traces their outline in practices adhered to by a section of his own population. In short, what prevails on the Catholic continent among all classes persists in the lower sections of the folklorist's own country, who, at the time of the Reformation, kept alive an 'Oral Tradition . . . snatched out of the smoking ruins of Popery' (p. x). Folklore can therefore be seen as providing a model for the 'Gothicization' of outcast London in both factual and fictional discourse. The Urban Gothic mode turned from the localities marked out as anachronistic by travelogues and doctrinal polemics to the citadels of outcast London where the lowest section of the population are found. The traditional environments, themes, and strategies of the Gothic still function within the mode, but are adapted to accommodate new concerns and agendas. What these were, and what distinguishes the Urban Gothic from the earlier tradition will now be considered.

Drains Replace Devils

It is Dickens's *Oliver Twist* that once again helps identify the properties peculiar to the Urban Gothic. As remarked earlier, Dickens's depiction of the slum districts of outcast London contributed to their estrangement and isolation from its 'official' modern identity. This operated largely through metonymy,

a device characteristic of Dickens's art.³⁶ As in the fictions of Radcliffe and Lewis, Dickens's horrors are metonymically identified with topographically precise localities. If brigands, feudal tyrants, and villainous monks are germane to the mountains and forests of southern France or Italy, then Dickens ensures that his vicious characters are appropriate to, or even inextricable from, the courts and alleys of the low-life environments. The following passage observes Fagin's movements through the city:

The mud lay thick upon the stones, and a black mist hung over the streets [of Whitechapel]; the rain fell sluggishly down, and everything felt cold and clammy to the touch. It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as the Jew to be abroad. As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved: crawling forth, by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal.

He kept on his course, through many winding and narrow ways, until he reached Bethnal Green; then, turning suddenly off to the left, he soon became involved in a maze of mean and dirty streets which abound in that close and densely-populated quarter.

The Jew was evidently too familiar with the ground he traversed to be at all bewildered, either by the darkness of the night, or the intricacies of the way. (186)

This passage reinforces the strangeness of the environment and its inhabitants and establishes a distance between the respectable and the outcast, the observer and the observed. Fagin is not only familiar with the intricacies of the low-life labyrinth, he is almost literally in his element here. The narrator imagines that Fagin has been engendered by the slime through which he glides, and compares him to a reptile. However grotesque and fantastic the imagery of this passage it should not encourage the complete abandonment of the mimetic or the historical. The narrator, who

³⁶ On Dickens and metonymy see J. Hillis Miller's important essay, 'The Fiction of Realism: Sketches By Boz, Oliver Twist, and Cruikshank's Illustrations', in Ada Nisbet and Blake Nevius (eds.), *Dickens Centennial Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 85-153.

shows Fagin sliding through the mud and slime, also remarks how 'everything felt cold and clammy to the touch'. The narrator, a disembodied voice, imaginatively touches and recoils from the clamminess. With this detail an important difference is indicated, a difference which reinforces and to an extent supersedes the geographical distances which divide respectable from outcast London. It is a difference in sensibility. A distance is implied between those, like Fagin, who creep and crawl through the slime and darkness, and those who shudder at its cold clamminess; between those who notice that the 'air was impregnated with filthy odours', and those who exist in and contribute to this environment, and who are described as 'positively wallowing in filth' (103). Oliver and the narrator stand on one side of a divide; on the other exist the denizens of the criminal underworld and rookeries of London. Their isolation is more firmly rooted in their apparent insensibility to the stench and filth of their environments than the fact that they dwell in these topographically circumscribed districts of the city. These districts can be discovered, penetrated, and represented, but the observer always maintains a distance between himself and his object. In Oliver's case this is registered in his instinctive alarm when he first encounters Saffron Hill. The sights and smells of this place, which was the 'dirt[est] and most wretched place he had ever seen' (103), repel him, and he considers running away. But it is too late, they have reached Fagin's den. Oliver is given the opportunity to prove his more refined sensibility when he is removed to the country. As the narrator enthuses:

Who can describe the pleasure and delight, the peace of mind and soft tranquillity, the sickly boy felt in the balmy air, and among the green hills and rich woods of an inland village! . . .

Oliver, whose days had been spent among squalid crowds, and in the midst of noise and brawling, seemed to enter on a new existence there. The rose and honeysuckle clung to the cottage walls . . . and the garden-flowers perfumed the air with delicious odours. (290-1)

Oliver's delight in the 'delicious odours' of this pastoral idyll is in marked contrast to Fagin's rather different olfactory predilections.

Thus when Fagin turns into a court which is described as an 'emporium of petty larceny', the narrator remarks how 'as if conscious that he was now in his proper element, he fell into his usual shuffling pace, and seemed to breathe more easily' (235). The courtyard which constitutes Fagin's 'proper element' contains the familiar fauna and flora of the slum areas and evokes the usual adjectives. In this 'filthy', 'confined', 'narrow and dismal' environment, where 'mildewy' stolen goods are for sale, Fagin can breathe more easily. Fagin's proper element is among these smells, while Oliver's is with the delicious odours of the country.

To effect this distance in sensibility Urban Gothic often employs familiar features from the earlier tradition. This is found in the following passage from Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*. It involves a character called 'The Mummy' (a punning reference to the fact that she looks like an embalmed corpse, and also that she is the Resurrection Man's mother), and observes her at her work.

The horrible old woman was not afraid of the dead: her husband had been a resurrection man, and her only son followed the same business,—she was therefore too familiar with the sight of death . . . to be alarmed at it. The revolting spectacle of a corpse putrid with decomposition produced no [fearful impression on her] . . . she cared no more for the sickly and fetid odour which they sent forth, than the tanner for the smell of the tan-yard. (Reynolds, i. 125)

This passage presses into service a familiar item of Gothic furniture, the rotting corpse, but adopts it for a new use. The repellent nature of such an object and the horror it inspires (or should inspire) is transferred to the 'horrible old woman' herself. Her insensitivity, her lack of 'normal' reactions, is what arouses horror in the narrator and his readers. The narrator invokes the normal response by his use of such adjectives as horrible, revolting, sickly, and fetid, and establishes a horrified distance between those who share these reactions, and the object of horror—no longer the corpse itself but the woman who lacks an appropriate sensibility.

An attention to filth and stench, conspicuous in so many of the passages quoted above, is an important characteristic of the

Urban Gothic mode. This indicates the historical conditions which inform its obsessions and the strategies of its fictional representations. It also marks a development within the Gothic. In general the early Gothic romances were not conspicuous for their attention to smells. 'Dark and dismal' is the underground passage which takes Isabella from the Castle of Otranto, but Walpole's novel neglects to mention what it smelt like.³⁷ In Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) Julia and Hippolitus are locked in a bandit's personal charnel house where the unburied bodies 'exhibited a spectacle too shocking for humanity'.³⁸ The smell is not mentioned. The opening chapters of Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) evoke in great detail the desolation of the Melmoth mansion. Its crumbling walls, weed-clogged and miry gardens, its 'wainscotting dark with dirt', and even the old closet 'which no foot but that of old Melmoth had entered for nearly sixty years', are all described: its smell is not.³⁹ The horrors of the first Gothic novels were principally associated with sight and touch (significantly smell does not feature in Burke's anatomy of sublime sensual stimuli). In contrast, one of the first things which Jonathan Harker notes about Count Dracula is his bad breath. And in a later novel, *The Lair of the White Worm*, Stoker describes the smell of the eponymous terrain: '[It] was like nothing that Adam had ever met with. He compared it with all the noxious experiences he had ever had—the drainage of war hospitals, of slaughterhouses, the refuse of dissecting rooms—the sourness of chemical waste and the poisonous effluvia of the bilge of a water-logged ship whereon a multitude of rats had been drowned.'⁴⁰ Within a hundred years Gothic fiction has become more fastidious about smell. As this passage suggests, stench could itself become a Gothic property and evoke its own horrors. This

³⁷ Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. W. S. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 27.

³⁸ Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance*, ed. Alison Milbank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 166.

³⁹ Charles Robert Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, ed. Alethea Hayter (1820; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 63, 53.

⁴⁰ Stoker, cited by Leonard Wolf, *The Essential Dracula* (New York: Plume/Penguin, 1992), 302.

development within a literary mode corresponds with what historians have noticed in the wider sphere. Alain Corbin in his history of modern attitudes to smell, translated as *The Foul and the Fragrant*, refers to this process as the 'Redefinition of the Intolerable'. Corbin explains how the bourgeoisie reinforced class difference by emphasizing the smell and dirtiness of the lower orders—the great unwashed, a distinction that was not useful before the end of the eighteenth century. He observes how, from the 1830s onwards,

the discourse of public health and the language of novels, as well as nascent social research, spoke of smells to the point of suggesting an obsession with the human swamp. . . . The social significance of this behaviour is flagrantly obvious. The absence of intrusive odour enabled the individual to distinguish himself from the putrid masses, stinking like death, like sin . . . [this] helped the bourgeois sustain his self-indulgent, self-induced terror.⁴¹

The phrase 'self-indulgent self-induced terror', used here to characterize an obsession with smells, helps explain why stench has been a constant point of reference in the passages of Urban Gothic or urban investigation examined in this chapter. As seen above, Reynolds used smell and an individual's response to it to enforce a distance between the horrible and the horrified. For urban investigators, often motivated by sanitary concerns, the stench of the rookeries (and the supposed miasmatic dangers associated with its properties),⁴² organized their responses and tested their powers of representation. On a trip to the East End in 1841 Lord Ashley (later Shaftesbury) found such 'scenes of filth,

⁴¹ Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: The Sense of Smell and its Social Image in Modern France* (Basingstoke: Picador, 1986), 142, 3. See also Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, 'The City: the Sewer, the Gaze and the Contaminating Touch', in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), 125–48.

⁴² On miasma theory and how this permeated into the popular and literary consciousness, see Susan Williams's excellent book, *The Rich Man and the Diseased Poor in Early Victorian Literature* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987). On the 'Sanitary Idea', and the measures taken in the wake of the cholera epidemics, see M. W. Flinn's introduction to Edwin Chadwick's *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (1842; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1965), 1–73.

discomfort, disease! [such] scenes of moral and mental ill . . . No pen or paint-brush could describe the thing as it is. One whiff of Cowyard, Blue-Anchor, or Baker's Court, outweighs ten pages of letter press.⁴³ Smell provides the index to the 'truth' of urban misery, yet this truth cannot be described in language. This is the corollary of Stoker's passage of 'olfactory' Gothic. In Stoker, the narrator gropes for analogies gleaned from 'clinical' or sanitary situations and experiences to evoke that which cannot quite be described, whereas the investigator of these very things is denied recourse to their metaphorical properties and must either describe the things themselves or allow their truths to remain ineffable. The new Gothic landscape of the slum thus demands an appropriate language to evoke its horrors, and employs the familiar Gothic trope of the unspeakable (discussed in Ch. 5). While in the earlier Gothic the terrors which defied description were usually associated with fearful spectacles—the glance which the Wanderer casts at his victim, or the emotional state of a heroine who wakes to see a ghastly face at her casement window, in Urban Gothic horror is found in the sanitary sphere. Thus when Jonathan Harker records the exploration of Carfax Abbey, Dracula's principal London lair, he remarks how

the place was small and close, and the long disuse had made the air stagnant and foul. There was an earthy smell, as of some dry miasma, which came through the fouler air. But as to the odour itself, how shall I describe it? It was not alone that it was composed of all the ills of mortality and with the pungent, acrid smell of blood, but it seemed as though corruption had become itself corrupt. Faugh! it sickens me to think of it. Every breath exhaled by that monster seemed to have clung to the place and intensified its loathsomeness.⁴⁴

The characteristics of the urban slum are evoked to demonize a monster's lair. It is old, small, and confined, while its principal horror is stench. This passage suggests how effective the exchange between the sanitary and the sensational was in producing

⁴³ Lord Ashley, cited by F. S. Schwarzbach, "'Terra Incognita': An Image of the City in English Literature, 1820–1855", *Prose Studies*, 5 (1982), 61–84, 78.

⁴⁴ Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. Maurice Hindle (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 323.

an Urban Gothic mode. In this case it is a traditional Gothic abode—a ruined abbey, not the pseudo-abbey of the rookery, and a traditional Gothic monster—an aristocrat with supernatural associations. If slums can become objects of Gothic horror, then perhaps horrors should be prepared to slum it occasionally. A text in which this process can perhaps be seen in formation, and which constitutes the highpoint of the Urban Gothic at the mid-century, is Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852–3; 1854).

*The Mansion, the Slum, and the Lawcourt:
Dickens's Bleak Houses*

In *Bleak House* the Urban Gothic mode comes into its own, employing many aspects of the exchange which this chapter has explored. The importance of *Bleak House* in the Gothicization of the city has been recognized by a number of critics.⁴⁵ For Alan Pritchard the novel constitutes 'a highly original adaptation of Gothic conventions for new literary purposes . . . [which] grows out of Dickens's perception that the remote and isolated country mansion or castle is not so much the setting of ruin and darkness and mystery and horror, as the great modern city: the Gothic horrors are here and now'.⁴⁶ To establish this Pritchard shows how Dickens transfers the traditional Gothic properties of mansions, mysteries, and monsters (Vholes as vampire, Krooks as goblin, Smallweed as ogre) to the legal districts and slums of the metropolis. However, whilst Pritchard's examples are useful for understanding Dickens's art and the way he adapted conventions in his text, he implies that *Bleak House* is *sui generis*, isolated from the literary and historical contexts and precedents which informed Dickens's representations of a Gothic London. The following discussion will show how the Urban Gothic properties which

⁴⁵ See Alice Van Buren Kelley, 'The Bleak Houses of *Bleak House*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 25 (1970), 253–68; Ann Ronald, 'Dickens' Gloomiest Gothic Castle', *Dickens Studies Newsletter*, 6 (1975), 71–5; Richard Maxwell, ch. 8, 'Mystery and Revelation in *Bleak House*', in *Mysteries of Paris and London*, 160–90.

⁴⁶ Pritchard, 'The Urban Gothic of *Bleak House*', 432–52, 433, 35–6.

Pritchard identifies in *Bleak House*, engage with and develop the themes and concerns which this chapter has examined.

It has been argued that the Urban Gothic imaginatively relocates the traditional Gothic mansion in the heart of the modern city. This development is noted by Pritchard, who observes that, 'Movements in the novel back and forth between Chesney Wold and the London setting establishes comparisons between rural and urban Gothic' (438). An example of this process concerns the architectural parity between the two domains: 'While the conventional Gothic setting of Chesney Wold is described in our final view of it as a ghastly "labyrinth of grandeur" . . . Dickens uses the phrase "labyrinth of streets" in his description of the frantic search of Esther with Inspector Bucket for her mother through London' (349). However, as seen above, labyrinthine London had already been firmly established as the modern urban equivalent of the Gothic castle or mansion. It could be argued, therefore, that instead of the 'ghastly' labyrinth of Chesney Wold reflecting on the city, the by now established Urban Gothic property of the labyrinth reflects on Chesney Wold and suggests a connection between the mansion and the slum. Perhaps (as seen in the much later passage from *Dracula*) Urban Gothic conventions had begun to have their own influence on the representation of more traditional Gothic phenomena. This can be pursued further in another detail which the Gothic mansion of Chesney Wold shares with an Urban Gothic locale. Chesney Wold, like all Gothic abodes or institutions, is an anachronism; its horrors derive from its obsolescence and its isolation from the modern world. The third-person narrator describes here the 'World of Fashion' which Chesney Wold represents: 'But the evil of it is, that it is a world wrapped up in too much jeweller's cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds . . . It is a deadened world, and its growth is sometimes unhealthy for want of air. . . . On Sundays, the little church in the park is mouldy; the oaken pulpit breaks out into a cold sweat; and there is a general smell and taste as of the ancient Dedlocks in their graves.'⁴⁷ This

⁴⁷ Dickens, *Bleak House*, ed. Nicola Bradbury (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), 20–1.

passage describes a traditional Gothic mansion and displays common Gothic themes and obsessions—anachronism, isolation, ancestry, and death. It combines this however with emphases associated with the Urban Gothic as defined above—suggestions of pathology, lack of air (literal stagnation), and of course smell. The imagery of this passage might compare with descriptions of similarly unwholesome locales found in the text. The overcrowded and ‘reeking’ city graveyard where Nemo is buried, upon ‘whose walls a thick humidity broke out like a disease’ (913), is the most obvious. Of course, what Pritchard calls ‘charnel horrors’ (Pritchard, 444) are traditional Gothic properties, while an ancestral vault is pre-eminently so; however, smells and a concern with unhealthy or insanitary environments are a relatively recent addition to the Gothic repertoire. Dickens’s connection between the mansion and the overcrowded city graveyard,⁴⁸ perhaps suggests that the Urban Gothic helped influence his depiction of the traditional Gothic of Chesney Wold as well as vice versa. The characteristics of Chesney Wold compare with other Urban Gothic locales which are depicted in Dickens’s novel. The first thing that is revealed about the ‘Place in Lincolnshire’ is its dampness. Here are found a ‘stagnant river’ and ‘quagmires’ in the fields, while ‘the vases on the stone terrace in the foreground catch the rain all day’ (21). Similar features are also found in an environment many rungs down the social ladder from Chesney Wold—the ‘cluster of wretched hovels in a brickfield’ which Esther visits with Mrs Pardiggle: ‘with pigsties close to the broken windows, and miserable little gardens before the doors, growing nothing but stagnant

⁴⁸ Reynolds also depicted the overcrowded city graveyard and the horrors it contained, in chapters entitled ‘The Grave-Digger’ and ‘The Bone House’. The emphasis compares with Dickens’s: ‘The soil was damp; and a nauseous odour, emanating from it, impregnated the air . . . that sickly, fetid odour penetrated into every house, every room, and every inhabited nook and corner, in that vicinity; and the clothes of the poor inmates smelt, and their food tasted, of the damp grave!’ (i. 323). In these chapters Reynolds dramatizes details found in G. A. Walker’s *Gatherings from Graveyards*, one of the first works to draw attention to this problem. According to Kate Flint, Dickens possessed a copy of Walker’s *The First of a Series of Lectures on the Actual Condition of the Metropolitan Graveyards* (1846), Flint, *Victorian Novelist*, 157. See also Trevor Blount, ‘The Graveyard Satire of *Bleak House*’, *Review of English Studies*, 14 (1963), and David Trotter, *Circulation*, 104–6.

pools. Here and there, an old tub was put to catch the droppings of the rain-water from a roof, or they were banked up with mud into a little pond like a large dirt-pie' (129–30). As the narrative reaches its climax Lady Dedlock, no longer 'bored to death' in one damp dwelling, visits its slum counterpart to change identity with one of its denizens before her actual death at the city graveyard. This later confrontation has been imaginatively prefigured in these earlier passages which transfer the damp, dirt, and smell of the slums to the stately mansion. The slum may well have replaced the mansion or castle in the new mode, but mansions can sometimes be read as slums.

If the labyrinthine Gothic mansion of Chesney Wold, with its 'waste of unused passages and staircases' (985), is imaginatively connected with the 'many devious ways, reeking with offence' (262) of the unwholesome parts of the city, what connects both is the Court of Chancery and all it stands for: 'Never can there come fog too thick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds, this day, in the sight of heaven and earth' (14). Filth, *amazement*, disease, and antiquity, properties central to the Urban Gothic mode, thus figure in the much-quoted opening to a narrative which addresses the cause of the Gothic side of familiar things. That Chancery constitutes the master-labyrinth which reflects on or is responsible for others in the text is suggested in the following passage.⁴⁹ Here John Jarndyce attempts to explain the Chancery suit to Esther:

The Lawyers have twisted it into such a state of bedevilment that the original merits of the case have long disappeared from the face of the earth. . . .

And thus, through years and years, and lives and lives, everything goes on, constantly beginning over and over again, and nothing ever ends. And we can't get out of the suit on any terms . . . But it won't do

⁴⁹ On the legal labyrinth and its relation to Gothic writing see Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), esp. ch. 4.

to think of it! When my great uncle, poor Tom Jarndyce, began to think of it, it was the beginning of the end! (118–19)

Similarly, Richard Carstone who follows Tom Jarndyce in ‘thinking of it’ and shares his fate, states of Alan Woodcourt: ‘he is only an outsider, and is not in the mysteries. . . . He can’t be expected to know much of such a labyrinth’ (784). However, the legal labyrinth in this Urban Gothic novel not only resembles the topography of the slum districts of the city, it can also produce them and their counterparts. Thus John Jarndyce continues his narrative of Tom all alone in the newly named Bleak House: ‘He gave it its present name, and lived here shut up: day and night poring over the wicked heaps of papers in the suit, and hoping against hope to disentangle it from its mystification and bring it to a close. In the meantime, the place became dilapidated, the wind whistled through the cracked walls, the rain fell through the broken roof, the weeds choked the passage to the rotting door’ (119). Bleak House (although not in Chancery ‘its master was’) was rapidly resembling an urban slum. When John Jarndyce saved it from complete ruin it was on the way to becoming like Tom all Alone’s, which is in Chancery, and is caught up in the toils of the same interminable case. John Jarndyce points to this as his narrative continues: ‘There is, in that city of London there, some property of ours, which is much at this day what Bleak House was then . . . It is a street of perishing blind houses with their eyes stoned out [etc.]’ (119–20).⁵⁰ The most terrifying labyrinth of all is Chancery, for it creates slums. Dickens thus transfers the attributes now firmly associated with the figure of the labyrinth (in Urban Gothic writing), to its cause—the legal labyrinth. The dirt,

⁵⁰ It is not quite made clear that Tom’s is the place to which John Jarndyce refers. However, there are reasons to believe it is. The ruinous Bleak House is said to resemble Tom: ‘the brains seemed to me to have been blown out of the house too’ (119). Tom’s is also personified: ‘As, on the ruined human wretch, vermin parasites appear’ (256). The reason the third-person narrator is unable to confirm whether Tom’s is actually caught up in Jarndyce and Jarndyce, and is thus named after ‘the original plaintiff or defendant’ in the case (257), is surely another way of pointing to the obfuscation and confusion of Chancery and its prize case. Clear answers are never possible with Chancery, and so the narrator cannot confirm the imputation.

damp, and decay associated with the labyrinthine districts of London soon transform 'The Peaks' into a version of Tom's, but are a consequence of a more fearful labyrinth yet. St Giles's, Saffron Hill, and Jacob's Island,⁵¹ can be razed to the ground, but the legal system along with the Constitution which endorses it, can continually produce new rookeries and slums. Dickens therefore deploys the Gothic imputation of anachronism and obsolescence in his depiction of the slum with more subtly and imaginative force than Reynolds or Beames. Chancery is responsible for Tom's. The ruinous condition of Tom's is indeed a consequence of the Gothic past, but is not in itself an anachronism. The anachronistic Chancery, and the Constitutional stagnation it reflects, are responsible for Tom's and all the horrors that now lurk and breed there. This suggests a further connection between the traditional Gothic mansion of Chesney Wold and the slum. Chesney Wold is both likened to Chancery and is seen as responsible for allowing it to persist in its abuses: 'Both the world of fashion and the Court of Chancery are things of precedent and usage; oversleeping Rip Van Winkles, who have played at strange games through a deal of thundery weather'; 'Sir Leicester has no objections to an interminable Chancery suit. It is a slow, expensive, British, constitutional kind of thing' (20, 25). Dickens goes beyond Gothicizing the slum by comparing it with the mansion (this, as seen above, had already been accomplished), he suggests an essential connection between them. The horrors of the slums, with their 'stagnant pools' of mud and ignorance (129), are a consequence of the political stagnation, isolation, and wilful ignorance of the Gothic House of Britain. If attributes of the Urban Gothic mode (labyrinthine ways, stagnant puddles, and unwholesome smells) are reflected in the description of Chesney Wold this is only fitting, and testifies to the intimate connection between the two domains. The unsanitary horrors and physiological taint of the slum has its political origins in the Gothic mansion. Thus the smell and taste of the ancient

⁵¹ Of course, the last named, like Tom's, is 'in Chancery' when Dickens describes it in *Oliver Twist*, 443, providing an early example of his satirical tilt at this institution and its victims.

Dedlocks in their graves which permeates the estate of Chesney Wold, is the smell of a feudal past which appeals to precedent, custom, and ancestry.⁵² This smell and its 'pestilential' taint seeps into the British constitution and mingles with, because it is the cause of, the unwholesome smell of the city graveyards and slums. However, as Dickens suggests, the wind can change, and the process can be reversed:

Much mighty speech-making there has been, both in and out of Parliament, concerning Tom, and much wrathful disputation how Tom shall be got right. . . . In the midst of which dust and noise, there is but one thing perfectly clear, to wit, that Tom only may and can, or shall and will, be reclaimed according to somebody's theory but nobody's practice. . . .

But he has his revenge. Even the winds are his messengers, and they serve him in these hours of darkness. There is not a drop of Tom's corrupted blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere. It shall pollute, this very night, the choice stream . . . of a Norman house, and his Grace will not be able to say Nay to the infamous alliance. There is not an atom of Tom's slime, not a cubic inch of any pestilential gas in which he lives, not one obscenity or degradation about him, not an ignorance, not a wickedness, not a brutality of his committing, but shall work its retribution, through every order of society, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high. (708–10)

The choice stream of Norman blood which sustains aristocratic stagnation—tainting all with the smell and taste of ancestry—can

⁵² Although Dickens is renowned, in his novels, journalism, and speeches, for his condemnations of current abuses and conditions, his arguments with the past, with the 'Ages of darkness, wickedness, and violence', is also conspicuous (*The Chimes*, cited by Andrew Sanders, *The Victorian Historical Novel, 1840–1880* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 70). As Sanders puts it: 'History, to Dickens, is not an escape, or a release, or a relaxation, or even an object of amusement; it is as much a nightmare as the present can be . . .', 71. Dickens's *A Child's History of England* (1851–3) reveals his essentially Whiggish attitude to the past, dispensing praise or blame to historical figures or events according to their furtherance or resistance to progressive values. Significantly, it ends in January 1688, when 'England's great and glorious revolution was complete', Dickens, *Holiday Romance and Other Writings For Children*, ed. Gillian Avery (London: Everyman, 1995). How this attitude emerges in his fiction in the figure of Darnay, the bourgeois aristocrat in *A Tale of Two Cities*, will be discussed in the next chapter.

in turn be polluted by its slum counterpart. In this passage Dickens assembles all the horrors and fears of the Urban Gothic mode which performs the familiar elision between dirt, disease, and vice; but he does this with a difference. The slum is personified: Tom (standing for all slums) becomes a Gothic villain, who plans and executes his revenge through various means. Dickens's use of personification here suggests a development in his approach to the spectacle of the slum. It has been argued that in *Oliver Twist*, the passages which depicted Fagin slinking through the miry ways of the urban labyrinth, or the drunken denizens of Saffron Hill 'literally wallowing in the filth' (*Oliver Twist*, 103), served to metonymically associate them with their environments, using filth and stench to effect a distance between the respectable and the outcast. In the above passage personification reverses this relationship, and attributes to an individual (or the 'maggot numbers' of his representatives), the unwholesome, pathological or violent characteristics of the slum 'culture'. *Oliver Twist* helped to demarcate and isolate outcast London, *Bleak House* fears its transgressive 'tainting, plundering, and spoiling' (710) outside its circumscribed locales. Indeed, in the very opening of the novel it is no longer only the outcasts of Saffron Hill who wallow in the filth, for we find 'Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foot-hold at street corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke' (13). As Dickens warns, the mud and the 'infection' are spreading. The Gothic worlds of slum or mansion, united by the labyrinth of legal and political fog and stagnation, can engulf all classes, and not just the proudest of the proud or the lowest of the low. In short, the horror of *Bleak House* is not the horror of the mansion as anachronistic vestige of the 'errors of our forefathers'; nor the horrors of the slum as the criminalized or unsanitary equivalent to this: it harnesses both these concerns, but emphasizes their connectedness. The Gothic abodes of the mansion and the slum are not only related to each other, but that which unites them (political inertia and self-interest) also affects the lives of ordinary people, people like the reader.

This inability to isolate horror in rural mansions or urban rookeries results in the numerous casualties of Chancery (Tom Jarndyce, Richard Carstone, the man from Shropshire, Miss Flite), but also imagines worse fears—the vengeful spirit of pathology and plunder, the nemesis of neglect.