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E.J. Clery. *Women's Gothic from Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*. Horndon, Tavistock, Devon: Northcote House, 2000. viii + 168pp. £9.99. ISBN 0-7463-0872-8.

Markman Ellis. *The History of Gothic Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. ix + 261pp. US$22. ISBN 0-7486-1195-9.

E.J. Clery's *Women's Gothic from Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* and Markman Ellis's *The History of Gothic Fiction* exemplify some recent trends in the study of the Gothic: an historical rather than psychoanalytic approach, an interrogation of the kind of feminist criticism that focuses on patriarchal oppression and on the supposed difference of women's writing, an exploration of the interplay between high and popular culture, and the rejection of a simplistic opposition between the Enlightenment and the Gothic. Clery's book has the clearer and stronger argument; Ellis's reveals the more extensive research and is especially enjoyable to read.

Clery begins by focusing on Sarah Siddons in the role of Lady Macbeth. What women Gothicists take from the actor and her signature role is "the Siddonian ideal"—that of "a character elevated beyond the limitations of her sex" (p. 110), in part by exemplifying "the key passion of the modern commercial state"—economic self-interest (p. 19). While Clery sometimes seems overly insistent in bringing in every possible connection to Siddons, overall she is successful in showing that seemingly incidental contact between Gothic writers and Siddons had a crucial impact on their work. Clery, who examines not just the novel but the whole "variety of Gothic modes" (p. 99), is concerned with the late eighteenth-century resurgence of tragedy and with what she terms "the novelization of tragedy" (p. 41).

Ellis begins his book with a discussion of three examples: the London surgeon John Sheldon's coldly scientific mummification of his beloved in 1799, the mystery of the black veil from Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and the conjunction between folklore and science in Fuseli's *The Nightmare*. Unfortunately, the second example does not inspire reader confidence: Ellis mistakenly cites the passage when Emily St Aubert actually sees a corpse instead of when she mistakes a waxen effigy for a corpse. He more successfully analyses the interplay between public Enlightenment science and hermetic alchemy in Frankenstein's creation of his monster, and between enlightened antiquarian research and folk culture in the case of vampire tales. The opposition between folklore and science, moreover, recapitulates the opposition between romance and novel. Ellis argues that the Gothic novel reconciles the two fictional forms, since it "approaches the supernatural as if it can be described or observed in the mode of formal realism" (p. 22). The Gothic functions historically for Ellis by presenting a "contest between rival forms of thought" or by transgressing the boundaries between them (pp. 227, 228).

Clery distinguishes "women's Gothic" from "Female Gothic," the latter term referring to the purported preference of women writers for the novel of terror over the novel of horror. Charlotte Dacre is important for Clery's argument, since recent critics have found in *Zofloya* a rejection of the Female Gothic. The concept of "women's Gothic" focuses on "the author's claim to imagination, genius, originality, and on her aim to represent and transmit powerful emotion in a way which ... responds to the demands and opportunities of the

marketplace" (p. 126). Clery, whose favourite word in this book is "affect," claims that what "most crucially characterizes" Gothic literature is the investigation of the passions (p. 117). While Markman Ellis retains the category "Female Gothic," he appears to agree that an exploration of the passions is a defining characteristic of the mode. He defines the Gothic as an experimental "tone or mood" deriving from the "culture of sentimentalism" (pp. 8, 9) and as an unsettling "almost hallucinatory tone" (p. 217), which may result in "epistemological insecurity" (p. 128). Ellis believes that Matthew Lewis understood the feverish tone of Radcliffe's fiction "as a discourse on the passions" (p. 84).

One wonders if it is necessary to de-emphasize didacticism to the extent Clery does in order to focus on the passions. She appears to think that the best way "to help create a market for early women's writing" (p. 24) is to assert that women writers rejected "safely 'improving' fiction" (p. 53). Students of the literature of this period are unlikely to be convinced by Clery's generalization that, "in all Gothic writing, the purpose of instruction is a fig-leaf; the fundamental pleasure is amoral" (p. 98). After quoting Joanna Baillie's traditional Horatian aim of enlarging "the sources of pleasure and instruction," Clery oddly praises Baillie for innovation and for composing a manifesto "not bolstered by didacticism" (p. 92). Clery's dismissal of the didactic may not accord with her own recognition of a tradition in which the moral sense is equated with the aesthetic sense. By contrast, Ellis recognizes that a Gothic writer such as Charles Brockden Brown remained convinced that "the novel must ... serve a moral purpose" (p. 123).

Ellis's title is only superficially hubristic (*"The" History of Gothic Fiction*), since he aims to analyse the Gothic mode *as* historiography and to concentrate on the history *within* the Gothic novel. In the early chapters, Ellis does not always succeed in persuading the reader that the history he recounts actually operates within the novels he discusses. His interpretation of *The Castle of Otranto* is based on unpersuasive echoes of John Wilkes's imprisonment on a General Warrant. Similarly, Ellis intersperses Matthew Lewis's letters from Holland with a summary of the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary events of the mid-1790s, without fully demonstrating either the relevance of this material to *The Monk* or that Lewis's novel in fact "transgressed ... the anti-sedition measures" of Pitt's ministry (p. 113). In chapter 5, however, in addition to providing a concise history of vampire folklore and literature up to Bram Stoker, Ellis writes exemplary historical criticism in tracing the use of the vampire as a metaphor for commercial corruption from the time of the opposition to Robert Walpole to the works of Karl Marx. Ellis concludes by treating the zombie, like the vampire, as a figure for the encounter between modernity and folklore, adding that "The zombie allows for the remembering and occultation of the history of African slavery" (p. 208), while it also "articulates the alienation endured by labour in modern capitalism" (p. 233).

Clery's focus on the marketplace is celebratory rather than critical, as she concerns herself with the exchange value of "leisure commodities" (p. 14). She is careful to cite the amounts that women writers earned for their Gothic works. She sets, for example, Baillie's successful career against "recent misguided attempts by some feminist critics to represent Baillie as an oppressed and marginal writer" (p. 86). In her argument against what she regards as a superseded stage of feminism, Clery questions the dominance of the ideology of the "proper lady." Instead of finding "an alternative feminine aesthetic,"

characterized by a "stress on sympathetic identification" (p. 91), she notes that an author such as Charlotte Dacre possessed a "competitive instinct" (p. 103). Clery finds, in the early reviews of Gothic works, little evidence of a "sexual double standard" (p. 132). When women writers transcend gender and when institutions of criticism ignore the sex of authors, however, one might ask if the tracing of a women's tradition is still important. A criticism of feminism as insistent as Clery's might well undermine a project on "women's Gothic." To the extent that her book remains feminist at all, the subtext about the market and the competitive urges of women writers suggest that *Women's Gothic* promotes a variety of free-market feminism.

Given the larger format and size of font, *The History of Gothic Fiction* is the more attractive of these two books. Whereas Clery refers more than once to limitations of space, Edinburgh University Press seems to have left Ellis at liberty to draw upon his fascinating research through extensive quotation, though a copy editor might have prevented his quoting the same passage twice (pp. 96, 110) and helped to eliminate some of the annoying typos. Both books have several illustrations, but most of the plates in *Women's Gothic* are simply portraits of the authors. The beautifully reproduced illustrations in *The History of Gothic Fiction* are more integral to the book, since Ellis generally discusses them at length. Still, these fine books reveal a critically sophisticated and historically informed interest in Gothic fiction that shows every sign of continuing in current and future literary study.

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