

John Moore. *Zeluco*, ed. Pam Perkins. Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2008. 456pp. US\$22.95. ISBN 978-193455551-4.

Sophia Lee. *The Two Emilys*, ed. Julie Shaffer. Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2009. 328pp. US\$19.99. ISBN 978-193455553-8.

Ann Radcliffe. *The Veiled Picture*, ed. Jack G. Voller. Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2006. 124pp. US\$12.95. ISBN 978-097778418-9.

Valancourt Books are to be congratulated for the services they have rendered to the study of the Gothic. Generally referred to as the “trash” of the circulating libraries, Gothic novels failed to survive their heyday (1790–1820) in large numbers, with volumes perishing en masse, as changes in use and fashion dictated. Copies survived in odd pockets, such as Castle Corvey, Germany, where Victor Amadeus, Landgraf of Hesse-Rotenburg, sated his bibliophilia by buying everything, trash included. Britain’s great copyright libraries and the libraries of its ancient universities also have scattered collections. Being rare, Gothic novels naturally appealed to collectors and cognoscenti such as Michael Sadleir and Montague Summers, whose efforts did much to ensure a virtually complete corpus survived, including (to a lesser extent) chapbooks. Accessing the material remains difficult, however, even in the age of Google Books and Eighteenth-Century Collections Online. Devendra Varma’s efforts, through reprint series such as Arno, ensured that a basic canon remained widely accessible. Still, for really rare items, and for non-canonical material, there was nothing for it but to sharpen one’s note-taking pencil and travel.

The publisher of Valancourt Books, James D. Jenkins, a Missouri lawyer, may be described as a latter-day Summers, a dedicated amateur (in the best sense), who started the press in 2005, beginning with its flagship series, Gothic Classics. As the name suggests, many of these are now standard works, readily available in earlier reprints, such as the “horrids” mentioned in Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (published in a set by Varma) or the less popular works of such canonical Gothic authors as Ann Radcliffe, Charles Robert Maturin, and Charlotte Dacre. But many others exist in such small numbers that reading them would entail considerable expense, if not for the Valancourt editions. For a relatively modest sum, readers can now luxuriate in a reading of Edward Montague’s *The Demon of Sicily* (1807). “Infinitely more extravagant than *The Monk*,” was how Summers put it. The Valancourt blurb is blunter: *The Demon* “outdoes Lewis’s novel in its outrageous depiction of sex and violence.” Working my way through Summers twenty years ago, I was agog to read *The Demon*, finally having to make to do with a speedy skim in the British Library as I made my way

through the pile. Other Valancourt titles include *Love and Horror* (1812) by “Ircastrensis,” a “bizarre and comical pastiche” featuring a heroine named Annabella Tit, a “sinister Armenian merchant,” and a talking frog; *The Mystery of the Black Tower* (1796) by John Palmer, an important early historical romance; and *The Forest of Valancourt; or, The Haunt of the Banditti* (1813) by Peter Middleton Darling. *The Forest of Valancourt* is the first in a special hardback series devoted to the “rarest of the rare,” Gothic novels that exist in only one or two copies. In the case of *The Forest of Valancourt*, only one copy is extant, in the Bodleian.

More recently Valancourt Press has branched out into rare early twentieth-century Gothics, and to neglected classics from the eighteenth century. *Zeluco* and *The Two Emilys* are the first two volumes in the latter venture. *The Veiled Picture*, from the Gothic Classics series, is the heavily redacted version of Radcliffe’s *Udolpho*, as Catherine Morland, for one, could instantly tell you. Anyone interested in a Gothic literary history, not of works produced, but of works consumed, will want a copy of this chapbook. All three works have been edited, introduced, and annotated by highly respected scholars in the field. These are not reprints: all have been reset in readable type and are lovely objects in themselves.

Zeluco (1789) fills the most obvious hole. Barbauld quite rightly included *Zeluco* in her 1810 edition of the standard British novels. John Moore was an urbane Scottish physician who had already established his reputation as a peerless travel writer, his *A View of Society and Manners in Italy* (1781) being especially influential, not least on his fellow progressive Whig Radcliffe, who drew on it extensively for *The Italian* (1797). *Zeluco* was an instant success. The novel is essentially Godwinian, even though pre-Godwin. As Pam Perkins points out, the novel’s action is framed by *Zeluco*’s two stranglings: the child *Zeluco* strangles a bird and later the adult *Zeluco* strangles his infant son in a fit of jealous rage at his blameless wife. In between, the novel charts a transatlantic career of venal mayhem and cruelty, ranging from the slave plantations of the Caribbean to the Naples that Moore knew well from his travels. As Perkins points out, *Zeluco* is less a harbinger of the coming fads for Gothic excess and Byronic misanthropy, and more the work of an Enlightened rationalist bent on illustrating the baneful effects of unrestrained passion. The uncorrected child, who wrings a sparrow’s neck without remorse, will contain no inner governor capable of dealing with the destructive passions inevitably elicited by a world driven, incoherently, by a “love of distinction,” as Godwin would put it. For Moore and Godwin alike, the capacity to resist the love of distinction inherent within the commercial system—and thus attain a rational good—is more a matter of discipline and training, than it is of inherent benevolence or original sin. Written in the pivotal year of 1789 by a supporter of the French Revolution soon to be horrified by it, *Zeluco*

interestingly looks both ways, as regards theme and form. An example of the moral picaresque told by an urbane narrator detached from his deplorable protagonist—a kind of inverted *Tom Jones*—*Zeluco's* form presupposes the rationality of the reader, prodded into introspection by spectacles of hapless violence and cruelty all too common in the passing scene. Instead, it was eventually received as an early version of what it distinctly was not: an invitation to thrill vicariously through the exploits of a terrifying over-reacher, in the manner of Lewis's *The Monk*. Thanks to Perkins's excellent and beautifully introduced volume, readers will have the leisure to enjoy a seminal, and much neglected, novel.

The Lee sisters' *Canterbury Tales* (1791–1805) was, if anything, even more influential than *Zeluco*. Partially republished twenty years ago by Dale Spender in a cheap paperback edition, *Canterbury Tales* is now hard to come by. Most readers will know Sophia Lee's earlier work, *The Recess* (1783–85), even at the time universally recognized as a landmark in the history of the Gothic. Fewer will know her sister Harriet's *Kruitznier; or, the German's Tale*, perhaps the most artistically accomplished of the tales, a view also held by Byron, who adapted it as *Werner. The Young Lady's Tale: The Two Emilys* formed the whole of volume two of the tales. As Julie Shaffer helpfully points out, the Lee sisters' own experience of social and political marginalization as the daughters of incessantly travelling actors informs their fiction. Indeed, the forte of the Lee sisters was to imagine situations in which their characters were helplessly trapped by circumstances shaped by history's hidden logic. The bourgeois Kruitznier is disaffected from, and disinherited by, his aristocratic father, a proud embodiment of the medieval order. Kruitznier's attempt at rapprochement is undermined by the arrival of his son, unknown to him, now a chief of banditti, and the proud embodiment of his grandfather's tribal values. Menaced by a nameless Hungarian who is privy to the secrets of his own questionable past, Kruitznier is released by the timely death of his enemy; unfortunately, it is a reprieve darkened by suspicion that his son was the questionable agent of his release. Harriet Lee refreshes the hackneyed theme of the inescapability of the past by realizing it, not through the hokum of haunted castles, but through artful plotting. The same can be said of *The Two Emilys*. The two Emilys are scions of an ancient Irish house, one legitimate, the other not; one the embodiment of sensibility, the other her scheming antithesis. On the death of her aunt, Emily Arden comes into the family property, much to the surprise of her aunt's companion (and presumed natural daughter) Emily Fitzallen. Too proud to accept anything from her kinswoman, Emily Fitzallen decamps, swearing revenge. Emily Arden, meanwhile, has been betrothed since birth to her Scottish cousin, the Marquis, and future Duke of Aberdeen. Gibing at the arranged marriage, the Marquis embarks on a grand tour, accompanied by his uncle, Emily's

father. Unknown to him, Emily Arden has disguised herself as a girl of humble circumstances, hoping to win the Marquis' heart, which she does, but before she can disclose that he has unwittingly fallen in love with his own betrothed, the Marquis leaves for the Continent, where he is seduced by his page, Hypolito, who is, naturally, a cross-dressing Emily Fitzallen. They secretly marry in Messina, with the consummation of the marriage interrupted by the earthquake that levelled the area. The Marquis presumes Emily Fitzallen is dead; he encounters his cousin, Emily Arden, on her way to see her father in Naples; his old love for the quondam anonymous stranger is awakened, and the Marquis is delighted to marry his cousin, as intended. Alas, promenading in Naples, the other Emily shows up, flaunting her wedding ring, and threatening the Marquis and Emily with ruin, as a bigamously married couple who are now parents. In her preface to the revised 1832 edition of *The Canterbury Tales*, Harriet Lee calls the tales "gossiping long stories." *The Two Emilys*, for instance, is two hundred pages long, without a chapter break. Rather than a succession of scenes striving for verisimilitude, the Lee method is to develop exemplary stories, with an elaborate given, where the entrapment of the characters grows organically out of plot, in the case of the *Two Emilys*, one thickened by aristocratic hauteur, marriage law, and the differences inherent in politics and geography. Aably introduced and edited by Julie Shaffer, *The Two Emilys* is a welcome addition to the print canon of early Gothic.

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Lucien Bonaparte. *La Tribu indienne, ou, Edouard et Stellina*, ed. Cecilia A. Feilla. London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2006. 128pp. ISBN 978-0-947623-66-1.

Lucien Bonaparte is best known today as Napoleon's brother and one-time statesman under the Consulate, but, as Cecilia Feilla reminds us with this re-edition of *La Tribu indienne* (1799), French politicians have long dabbled in literary pursuits. An alumnus of the prestigious École Normale Supérieure, Georges Pompidou (president from 1969–74) published a well-respected *Anthologie de la poésie française* (1961); Valérie Giscard d'Estaing (president 1974–81) has published two novels—*Le Passage* (1994) and *La Princesse et le président* (2009). Giscard was even elected to the Académie Française in 2003, but his ascension was not without controversy; critics pointed out that Giscard had written only a single novel of dubious quality, and,