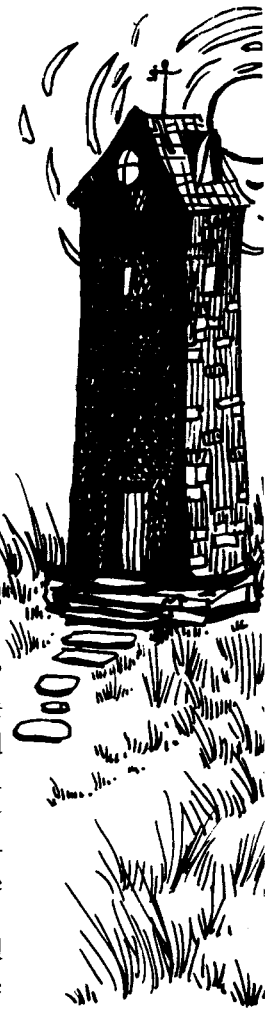
Somebody's Trying to Kill Me and I Think It's My Husband: The Modern Gothic



By Joanna Russ

What fiction do American women read? God knows.

When pressed, She mumbles about ladies' slicks, fashion magazines, best-sellers, *et al.*, but if you pray earnestly and add that you want to know about fiction read exclusively by women, She finally relents and hands you three genres: confession magazines, nurse novels—and the Modern Gothic.

Anywhere paperback books are sold you will find volumes whose covers seem to have evolved from the same clone: the color scheme is predominantly blue or green, there is a frightened young woman in the foreground, in the background is a mansion, castle, or large house with one window lit, there is usually a moon, a storm, or both, and whatever is occurring is occurring at night.

These are the Modern Gothics. If you look inside the covers you will find that the stories bear no resemblance to the literary definition of "Gothic." They are not related to the works of Monk Lewis or Mrs. Radcliffe, whose real descendants are known today as Horror Stories. The Modern Gothics resemble, instead, a crossbreed of *Jane Eyre* and Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* and most of them advertise themselves as "in the Du Maurier tradition," "in the Gothic tradition of *Rebecca*," and so on. According to Terry Carr, an

ex-editor of Ace Books, their history in this country:

> began in the early '60s. . . . But books like this have always been written especially in England, where they were called romances . . . from about 1950 on; they were never big things over there, just a steady small market. It started at Ace . . . [which] bought some novels by Victoria Holt and Phyllis A. Whitney. They sold like anything. . . . [Ace] continued and expanded the Gothic list here, including especially buying rights to early novels by Dorothy Eden and Anne Maybury . . . both now big-selling writers.*

Modern Gothics unlike nurse novels and the confession magazines, are read by middle-class women or women with middle-class aspirations, and for some reason the books written by Englishwomen have remained the most popular, at least at Ace. In 1970 I asked Terry Carr to provide me with some of their longest-selling and best-selling books; according to Mr. Carr they are "representative of the higher ranges of the field" and all seem to be reprints of earlier works (one as early as 1953).†

Also according to Mr. Carr:

> The basic appeal . . . is to women who marry guys and then begin to discover that their husbands are strangers . . . so there's a simultaneous attraction/repulsion, love/fear going on. Most of the "pure" Gothics tend to have a handsome, magnetic suitor or husband who may or may not be a lunatic and/or murderer . . . it remained for U. S. women to discover they were frightened of their husbands.**

Here are the elements:

To a large, lonely, usually brooding *House* (always named) comes a *Heroine* who is young, orphaned, unloved, and lonely. She is shy and inexperienced. She is attractive, sometimes even beautiful, but she does not know it. Sometimes she has spent ten years nursing a dying mother; sometimes she has (or has had) a wicked stepmother, a bad aunt, a demanding and selfish mother (usually deceased by the

*In correspondence, November 18, 1970.

†I was attracted to the field by happening to pick up Fawcett's *Columbella* by Phyllis Whitney, 1966. The books provided by Ace are: *Nightingale at Noon* by Margaret Summerton, 1962; *The Least of All Evils* by Helen Arvonen, 1970; *The Dark Shore* by Susan Howatch, 1965; *I Am Gabriella!* by Anne Maybury, 1962; *The Brooding Lake* by Dorothy Eden, 1953 (by Macdonald & Co., Ltd.).

**In correspondence, November 18, 1970.

time the story opens) or an ineffectual, absent, or (usually) long-dead father, whom she loves. The House is set in exotic, vivid and/or isolated *Country*. The Heroine, whose reaction to people and places tends toward emotional extremes, either loves or hates the House, usually both.

After a short prologue, this latter-day Jane Eyre forms a personal or professional connection with an older man, a dark, magnetic, powerful brooding, sardonic *Super-Male*, who treats her brusquely, derogates her, scolds her, and otherwise shows anger or contempt for her. The Heroine is vehemently attracted to him and usually just as vehemently repelled or frightened—she is not sure of her feelings for him, his feelings for her, and whether he (1) loves her, (2) hates her, (3) is using her, or (4) is trying to kill her.

The Super-Male is not the Heroine's only worry. In the emotionally tangled and darkly mysterious "family" set up in our House are hints of the presence of *Another Woman* who is at the same time the Heroine's double and her opposite—very often the Other Woman is the Super-Male's present wife or dead first wife; sometimes she is the Heroine's missing cousin, or the woman the Super-Male appears to prefer to the Heroine. The Other Woman is (or was) beautiful, worldly, glamorous, immoral, flirtatious, irresponsible, and openly sexual. She may even have been (especially if she is dead) adulterous, promiscuous, hard-hearted, immoral, criminal, or even insane. If the Other Woman is alive, the Heroine knows—in anguish—that the Super-Male cannot possibly prefer her to this fascinating creature; if the Other Woman is dead, the Heroine believes she cannot possibly measure up to the Super-Male's memories. Her only consolation is to be kind, womanly, and good, both to the Super-Male and (sometimes) to a *Young Girl*, often the daughter of the Super-Male and his first wife. The Young Girl (if she exists) is often being corrupted or neglected by the Other Woman (if alive); in one case there is a Young Man (son of the Super-Male) who is being neglected by his father. One Heroine has a younger sister, one a missing younger cousin (who is combined, in this case, with the Other Woman). The Heroine's task, in all cases, is to win the confidence of this young person, and convince her/him of her/his personal worth. If the person is a girl, this is done by buying her clothes.

In addition to the Heroine's other troubles, she gradually becomes aware that somewhere in the tangle of oppressive family rela-

tionships going on in the House exists a *Buried Ominous Secret*, always connected with the Other Woman and the Super-Male (whatever relation they happen to bear one another in the novel). The Super-Male is at the center of the Secret; when she unravels the mystery about him (does he love her or is he a threat to her?) she will simultaneously get to the bottom of the Secret. Then the plot thickens.

Her happiness with the Super-Male is threatened.
Her life is threatened (sometimes several times).
Minor characters are killed.
Storms take place.
There is much ad-libbing of *Ominous Dialogue.*
And so on.

At some point—either because of other people's detective work or by chance—the *Secret is Revealed.* It turns out to be immoral and usually criminal activity on somebody's part centering around money and/or the Other Woman's ghastly (usually sexual) misbehavior. The six Gothics considered in this paper employ the following Secrets: jewel smuggling, theft, and murder (*Columbella*); murder, impersonation, drug addiction, and intended blackmail (*I am Gabriella!*); an insane mass-murderer (*The Least of All Evils*); another insane mass-murderer with a clothing fetish (*The Brooding Lake*); diamond theft and murder (*Nightingale at Noon*); murder and illegitimacy (*The Dark Shore*).

Coincidental with the revelation of the secret is the untangling of the Heroine's emotions—she is enabled to "sort-out" the Super-Male (who is invariably guiltless, although he may have appeared otherwise) from everyone else, especially from a character I call the *Shadow-Male*, a man invariably represented as gentle, protective, responsible, quiet, humorous, tender, and calm. The Shadow-Male either wants to marry the Heroine or has—in one case—actually married her. This personage is revealed as a murderer and (twice) as an insane mass-murderer of a whole string of previous wives. There are variations; sometimes two roles may be combined in one character, although in general it is astonishing how constant the elements remain. In one novel the Other Woman is a vanished cousin, in another an old school-friend; her villainy may range from crime to mere irresponsible flirting (which is, however, regarded very seriously by the novel). Sometimes the Other Woman is a minor character (*Nightin-*

gale) but in every case the Other Woman is more worldly than the Heroine, more beautiful, and more openly sexual. The Other Woman is *immoral.* The Heroine is *good.* The Super-Male's competence ranges from judo (*I am Gabriella!*) through a sardonic cynicism that always puts the heroine in the wrong (*Brooding Lake*) to the less tangible attributes of being a Canadian and a millionaire (*Dark Shore*). Although scenery ranges from exotic New Zealand to exotic Northern Ontario (the novelist is English in this case), the House, the Heroine, the Super-Male, the Other Woman, the Ominous Dialogue, the Secret and the Untangling are the staples of every one of these books.

Certainly the Gothic is worth some study as a genre written for women and by women; even the paperback editors who choose manuscripts are women, although their employers are men. In some ways these stories resemble the tales in the true-confession magazines. In a recent issue of the *Journal of Popular Culture* * David Sonenschein has analyzed 73 such tales and drawn the following conclusions:

> The main "other" was usually a male . . . older . . . either the narrator's spouse or a previously unmarried single male. (p. 404)
>
> . . . the feeling of uneasiness underlying each story. (p. 405)
>
> . . . we also get a sense of some of the risks that simply being a woman may entail . . . (p. 402
>
> Relationships are volatile, hostile, and even dangerous; in contrast to male-oriented erotica, *it is trauma, rather than sex, which is "just around the corner."* (p. 405, italics mine)

It is tempting to view the Gothics, with their perpetual Houses (in which, typically, the Heroine has a large emotional investment), their families or quasi-families, their triangles of young girl, older man, and older man's first wife, as a family romance. But the books are not love stories *per se*, nor are they usually concerned (except peripherally) with erotica; the culminations of the books' plots almost always involve attempted murder—the Heroine's being chased along a cliff by someone who wants to kill her (*Shore*), being locked into a room by a madman who earlier almost drowned her (*Lake*), being pushed over a cliff and later shut in a wall to suffocate (*Evils*), or being sexually attacked after having been exposed to diamond thieves,

**Journal of Popular Culture*, Fall 1970, IV, 2, "Love and Sex in the Romance Magazines," by David Sonenschein, Department of Anthropology, University of Texas, Austin Texas.

believing that literally everyone in her family is trying to kill her and her younger sister, *and* finding out that her adored blind father is a criminal and has pretended blindness for years, *and* believing that the man she loves is a murderer (*Nightingale*). As the Heroine of this one says, with some justification, all is "a swirling vortex of confusion." (p. 136) Other Heroines are trapped alive in caves, almost murdered, and flung against a wall by a "tall figure enveloped in a hooded robe" (*Columbella*, p. 204), and almost run over by a car. The commonest emotion in these novels is fear—but they are not horror stories; the plot always involves murder (but they are not stories of detection), and while the heroine is rewarded with love (without having caused it, deserved it, revealed it, or even asked for it) there is no tracing of the growing bond between the lovers. The Modern Gothic is episodic; the heroine does nothing except worry; any necessary detective work is done by other persons, often the Super-Male. Whenever the Heroine acts (as in *Lake*) she bungles things badly. There is a period of terror, repeated sinister incidents, ominous dialogue spoken by various characters, and then the sudden revelation of who's who and what's what. In terms of ordinary pulp technique, these novels are formless. Even so, they obey extraordinarily rigid rules. There must be a reason for these rules.

I would propose that the modern Gothics are a direct expression of the traditional feminine situation (at least a middle-class feminine situation) and that they provide precisely the kind of escape reading a middle-class believer in the feminine mystique needs, without involving elements that either go beyond the feminine mystique or would be considered immoral in its terms.

For example, the Heroines are either on vacation, on a honeymoon, or too young to do housework. If they spend ten years caring for an invalid mother, the book begins just after the mother's death; if they have married (and they marry wealthy men) the book begins with the honeymoon; if they are poor, they are too young to cook and clean and the poverty is only temporary, anyway. They always find themselves in exotic locales (the Virgin Islands, the French wine country, New Zealand, The Camargue, etc.). They are essentially idle women. *Nonetheless*, whenever the occasion arises—and it is always an interpersonal occasion, never a housewife's vocational one—they have a keen eye for food, clothes, interior décor, and middle-class hobbies (e.g., collecting sea shells, weaving, or collecting china).

The novels contain some extraordinarily impersonal descriptions of meals, rooms, and dresses, e.g., "crisp native pastry filled with cocoanut" (*Columbella*, p. 84), "the cool sharp tang of lime" (*Op. Cit.*, p. 57) and "coffee that had been perfectly brewed" (*Op. Cit.*, p. 37). In *Evils* the Heroine is treated to "airy little shells bursting with a delectable and spicy hot mixture" and later "golden wheat cakes and amber syrup, the crisp bacon and plump sausages, the chilled melon with gobbets of fat, whiskery raspberries clinging to it." (Pp. 30, 56) In *Nightingale* the heroine's family is too poor to buy good food (tea is "four pieces of bread and butter on a plate and one plain biscuit"—p. 24). When the family can afford steak, strawberries, and whiskey, however, it is not the Heroine who does the cooking. Even *Lake*, in which the Heroine hardly eats from arrival to attempted murder, contains the following housewifely diagnosis: "a plate of thick porridge, some toast which had already absorbed its butter and gone cold, and a cup of weak tea. Dundas had said that his daughter was a good housekeeper . . . did he really always have this kind of fare?" (pp. 98-99) If the above sound like ladies'-magazine articles, that is because they are; the vacationing protagonists of *Gabriella* subsist on hotel food, which allows the author to produce the following:

> *fricasée de poulet* with puffed out, golden potatoes and apples crystallized whole in sugar (p. 23) . . . jellied eggs with mushroom mayonnaise, *canard a l'Orange* . . . with a few drops of orange curacao liqueur sprinkled on the slim slices of duck (p. 61) . . . River trout and then . . . purple grapes folded into a kind of *crepe suzette* (p. 137) . . . a long, crusty French loaf, some cheese, half a pound of wild strawberries, some cream, and a bottle of wine. (p. 160)

The oddity of such technical expertise in the midst of terror, romance, and murder is not that of the great detective's playing the violin; it is merely off-key. Consider:

> I played with a beautiful *omelette fines herbes* and managed a *souffle*. But all the time I was conscious of the slow approaching shadow of menace and our unrealized part in it. (*Gabriella*, p. 107)

Even more relentless is the author's eye for female dress. For example, in *Columbella* no female character ever appears without careful note being taken of her clothes:

> . . . a long-legged, graceful teenager in blue Bermudas and a nautical white middy with a blue tie that matched her shorts (p. 37) . . . She wore pale green capris that stretched tightly over her girlishly flat stomach, rounded hips, and hugged her thighs neatly with scarcely a wrinkle. A bit of sleeveless white pique tied in a bow between her breasts (p. 40) . . . I was dressed suitably enough for town in a blue denim skirt with deep side pockets that I found handy, and a blue cotton overblouse. (p. 130) The princess lines of the linen dress were subtle and set off the rounding of her slim young figure. From a circular neckline the dress curved gently at the waist and flared to wider gores at the hemline. (p. 134)

Dark, given more to the mystification possible with a mosaic of different points of view, still notes the various amenities of dressing, bathing, and noting what other women look like:

> She wore a plain linen dress, narrow and simple, without sleeves. (p. 117) . . . She didn't dare stop to re-apply her lipstick. There was just time to brush her hair lightly into position. (p. 73) . . . "Dinner will be in about half an hour and the water's hot if you should want a bath." (p. 71) Her mouth was slim beneath pale lipstick, the lashes of her beautiful eyes too long and dark to be entirely natural, her fair hair swept upwards simply in a soft, full curve. (p. 42) . . . there was even more of a rush to have a bath, change, and start cooking for a dinner-party . . . she had just finished changing . . . (p. 16)

Clothes in *Lake* play too much part as clues (a pair of shoes, a red nightgown, an old wedding dress) to be considered inorganic to the plot, but here, as in *Columbella*—the Heroine shows her goodness of heart by helping a young girl uncertain of her looks to dress up for a party; moreover, an evening memorable mostly for ghostly voices and a tropical storm includes "the pale blue satin nightdress . . . spread on the bed for her." The young lady of the house then enters in "a turquoise-colored velvet dressing-gown, her hair brushed down on her shoulders." (pp. 80-81) Later another girl chooses a green coat, "lingering over it longingly because it was the one she wanted most, but its price was too high" (pp. 146-147).

Despite the poverty of the family in *Nightingale*, we still have one character's brief scarlet shorts and snow-white sun top (p. 45), and a dress the Heroine borrows for a party, "an inch too short and a couple of inches too wide, but the color, a muted aquamarine, and

its straight, deceptively simple cut, had overcome my scruples." (p. 80) She too dresses up the Younger Girl (her half-sister) for the same party. (p. 81) If nothing else, she can reflect that she has "put on Lucille's blue dress, brushed my hair, and piled it high." (p. 102) Let a well-dressed stranger appear and the author immediately reverts to type:

> The shoes came first, black sandals with stiletto heels . . . slender legs, then an oyster* skirt, tight about slim thighs . . . Indigo-black, bouffant hair caressed her cheeks and forehead. (p. 84)

In *Gabriella* we have:

> A crocodile handbag, chocolate-brown gloves (p. 5) . . . an expensive suit of dark green raw silk, with a clip made of crimson stones shaped like an eagle, in her lapel (p. 18 . . . a pleated cream nylon dress and gold slippers (p. 82) . . . a jewel case with a soft zip top (p. 112) . . . a white silk dressing gown I had bought in Paris (p. 154) . . . a blouse . . . of hand blocked silk with green stars and moss roses . . . tan gloves (p. 118) . . . a tomato silk housecoat (p. 216)

When the Heroines of Gothics are not noticing other people's clothes (or their own) or being thrown off cliffs, or losing the men they love, they often spend their time thus:

> I unpacked quickly, showered, and put on a cool dress of black linen with touches of lime green. I slid my feet into high heeled black sandals and fixed fold star earrings in my ears. (*Gabriella*, p. 14)

Or they note interior décor:

> It was a room of austere beauty, comfortably but sparsely furnished to effect that cool, uncluttered look so necessary in the tropics. The ceiling was lofty, giving one a sense of space and grandeur. From the center of an elaborate plaster rosette hung a crystal chandelier, while carved plaster cornices decorated the far reaches of the ceiling. . . . Most of the

*Typically the word "oyster" here is a fashion-magazine word, not that of an artist or observer. The entire vocabulary is similar—"tomato silk," "chocolate-brown," "Lime green," "that cool, uncluttered look," and so on. The descriptions are magazine-ish set pieces, not part of the story. Typically, the "Chagall print" (above) does not lead to a discussion of art or the owner's taste or anything else.

> furniture had that simplicity of design which belongs to the countries of Scandinavia, fluid of line and built of smooth, light woods . . . near the foot of the curving stairs in one corner of the room hung a Chagall print of red poppies and green leaves in a tall vase . . . (p. 28, *Columbella*)
>
> We went through regal double doors and into a beautifully furnished room. Soft blues and greens in brocade and silk glowed in the single light from a standard lamp near the dressing table. In the fine old four-poster . . . (p. 197, *Gabriella*)
>
> I gasped involuntarily, barely noting the wide floor-boards, the sparsely utilitarian nature of the ancient furniture. My eyes went up the walls, from the simple panelled dado, about five feet in height, to plain plastered walls penetrated by stone mullioned windows that rose to a magnificently hammerbeam roof, enriched with elaborately scrolled Renaissance detail. (p. 14, *Evils*)*
>
> . . . the big brick fireplace with the dead remants of a fire, the low chairs and the large low settee covered with bright cushions, the pictures on the walls strategically placed to hide the discolored spots in the wallpaper, the large white rug in front of the fireplace, the gilt-framed mirror that gave back a dusky lamplit reflection of the room. The illusion of luxury . . . (p. 9, *Lake*)

These novels are written for women who cook, who decorate their own houses, who shop for clothing for themselves and their children—in short, for housewives. But the Heroines—who toil not, neither do they spin—know and utilize (sometimes bizarrely) the occupation of their readers. "Occupation: Housewife" is simultaneously avoided, glamorized, and vindicated.

Modern Gothics are surprisingly conservative about sexuality, yet the sexuality that does appear in them is of a very prurient kind. Heroines are impeccably virginal (until married) and can even criticize a friend for being "mercenary" for accepting an expensive gift from a man she didn't intend to marry (*Lake*, p. 65). The Heroine who does so (this is in 1953) does not get beyond the "intense charm" (presumably erotic) of the moment when she buries her face against the Super-Male's tweed jacket, only a few pages from the end papers. The eighteen-year-old Heroine of *Nightingale*, whose family relation-

*How ancient any of this can really be is in question, since the house—Engleford Court— is situated in Northern Ontario. The heroine asks no questions, however. Picturesqueness—not authenticity—is what counts.

ships are so complicated that it takes the reader 94 pages to unravel them nonetheless feels "a leap of nausea that left me sick and shivering" at a stranger's mention of her father's mistress, although "The discovery of Hugo's relationship with Dodie was years old." (p. 40) The mad villainess of *Columbella*, eventually revealed to be a jewel thief and smuggler, is criticized in the strongest terms possible; she has not only stolen a bracelet as a school-girl, but:

> "I'm afraid she's merely graduated into taking more important property. Such as other women's husbands. And she's wildly extravagant." (p. 17)

When the villainess of this book actually threatens to run the Heroine over with her (the villainess's car) it is clear that she has passed beyond the pale not only of good manners or decency but of simple sanity. It would be interesting to compare criminal acts in modern Gothics with criminal acts in modern crime stories and weight the relative horribleness of the acts themselves in the two genres. The Heroine of *Shore* (1965) explains how she met the Super-Male:

> ". . . the next day he phoned and asked to take me out to a concert. I went. I shouldn't have because of Frank" [her escort] "but then . . . well, Frank and I weren't engaged, and I—I wanted to see Jon again." (p. 127)

Jon does not, however, as a Super-Male and an older, once-married man, impose such a stringent moral code upon himself:

> . . . he . . . would have despised himself for having a woman within days of his coming marriage. It would have meant nothing, of course, but he would still have felt ashamed afterwards, full of guilt because he had done something which would hurt Sarah if she knew . . . (p. 41)

This is as far as the Gothic seems to go in spotting even a Super-Male's purity. But for the married Heroine sex becomes an entirely different matter. No longer bodiless and yet within the code of romance—the result is a very strange fusion of prurience and exaltation, i.e., the confusion of values described by Firestone (sex = personal worth) combines with the "religious" eroticism Greer notes in romance stories.* Thus the Super-Male's erection becomes the criterion of the Heroine's self-approval—and yet the whole business must

*Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, Morrow, 1970, pp. 167-170; Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, McGraw-Hill, 1970, pp. 167-185.

somehow take place within the limits of the romantically sexless. As long as everything is kept vague, we are all right; thus in *Shore* the heroine's wedding night (blissful, by convention) is rendered thus:

> . . . when he stooped his head to kiss her on the mouth at last, she was conscious first and foremost of the peace in her heart before her world whirled into the fire. (p. 66)

> When he bent over her a moment later,* and she felt the love in every line of his frame flow into hers, she knew he would never again belong to anyone else except her. (p. 159)

We are one stage away from the non-kiss at the end of *Lake*. Still romantic, though perhaps a little dithery about what turns out to be only necking, is this passage in *Nightingale*:

> His free hand was on my throat, his lips pressed on mine, hunger and passion in them. That was all I wanted. It was mine, and I took it greedily. . . . When he pushed me from him, it was to demand in a voice that was harsh and breathless: "Melly . . . do you know what you're doing?" "Yes," I said. (p. 115)

What she is doing is not clear, but the married are under no such constraint. The Heroine of *Evils*, who gasps, "horrified," when she thinks her young cousin may have been rolling in the hay with a boy friend (p. 100), nonetheless describes her own romantic interludes thus:

> And seeing Mark, wide-shouldered and narrow-hipped, standing back turned to me, I knew the past didn't matter. . . . Only the present and the joyful future ahead of us, were real . . . he turned, our eyes met, and then he came to me swiftly, catching my hands up in his until finally we were close, one body, as our lips met. . . . "You're cold, darling," Mark whispered. "I know how to warm you." (p.34)

> He caught my shoulders, "Don't you know there have been lots of people killed in the tub?" he cried. *But his stern manner faded as his hands slipped.* A trio on my nearby portable radio sang of love and passion while my dripping arms held Mark close. . . . (p. 49), italics mine)

The more sexuality gets into these scenes, the more discordant becomes the insisted-upon romantic aura. Quintessentially:

> He shoved his cup into my unoccupied hand . . . and

*The Super-Male is *never* short.

> solemnly untied my other shoulder strap. I sat giggling like a school girl, each hand burdened with a teacup, my night-gown rumpled about my waist. . . . I didn't care about the unexpected trip. Not any more. *Only the moment mattered and the moment became increasingly beautiful and memorable.* (*Evils*, p. 56, italics mine)

Of course the Heroine's husband in *Evils* is not a Super-Male but a Shadow-Male; perhaps something is wrong with his technique. The Heroine of *Gabriella* is married to a genuine Super-Male, a lean, dark, tigerish judo expert who snaps at her in brusque, masculine fashion throughout the book. He is as romantic as any, sometimes:

> Then he lay, his arms around me, his body against mine. "Karen! Oh, Karen!' Above us, at last, a bird broke into song. (p. 161)

> Nick pulled me to my feet and drew me close. I could feel the hard beat of his heart as he kissed me; the strength that seemed to pour from his body into me. My blood raced, quivering, as he held me more tightly . . . it was the immediate passion of his love for me. . . . There was [sic] just Nick and I caught up in our lovely desire for each other. . . . (p. 136)

But there is always the possibility that desire is only desire:

> I lay close against Nick, strengthened by contact with that hard body. He put an arm under my shoulder and turned to me. But the problem Maxine had set us still lay heavily on my mind. "Tomorrow," I began, "we must—" "Let's leave tomorrow." He was drawing me closer. "Tonight is a long time darling!" I lifted my head and saw his eyes in the semi-moonlight. They were alight and alive. . . . Nick had raced through France for this—for *me*! (*Gabriella*, p. 41)

The birds had better sing like mad, or even a Gothic Heroine might wonder whether "this" and "me" are always identical.

Most striking about these novels is the combination of intrigue, crime, and danger with the Heroine's complete passivity. Unconscious foci of intrigue, passion, and crime, these young women (none of whom is over thirty) wander through all sorts of threatening forces of which they are intuitively, but never intellectually, aware. Most of all, *they are of extraordinary interest to everyone*—even though they are ill-educated, ordinary, characterless and usually very hazily delineated, being (as one might suspect) a stand-in for the reader. Sometimes Heroines are very beautiful (although they don't know it) or

heiresses (which they don't know, either) or possess some piece of information about the Secret (which they are incapable of interpreting). Their connection with the action of the novel is always passive; they are focal points for tremendous emotion, and sometimes tremendous struggle, simply because they exist. At her most enterprising a Heroine may (like the Heroine of *Lake*, whose relation to the Super-Male is the nearest to equality of any shown in the books) recklessly toss about pieces of information that expose her to being drowned or pushed off a glacier. Alice (the Heroine) tries to solve the mystery of her school-friend's disappearance and does, in fact, unearth certain clues (which she misinterprets). But the Super-Male is the real detective of the piece. Even when faced with a miserably unhappy young girl, a Byronic Super-Male, and a mad, greedy, criminal Other Woman, the Heroine of *Columbella* can only display her womanly goodness and try to win the young girl's confidence by appreciating her drawings and buying clothes for her. As the Super-Male declares to her:

> "Perhaps now I've found a new source of sanity—and honesty and decency. Things I thought I'd lost for good during the last few years. A source that isn't a place but a person—you!" (p. 125)

Here too the Heroine finds clues to a murder—after the important persons in the book have already done so. In the midst of family relationships that would baffle Oedipus, the Heroine of *Nightingale* does—nothing at all. The Heroine of *Evils* has amnesia—she also bungles about looking for clues which the Super-Male already knows. The detective in *Gabriella* is the Heroine's husband, whom she trails perpetually—again, there are several attempts of hers which either come to nothing or land both of them in trouble (which he fixes).

In the face of this really extraordinary passivity—for if the protagonist of a novel is not active in some way, what on earth is the novel about?—it is tempting to see these books as genuine family romances with the Heroine as the child who is trying desperately to understand what the grown-ups are up to, a description that fits *Nightingale* perfectly. At their best Heroines merely stand (passively) for love, goodness, redemption, and innocence. They are special and precious because they are Heroines. And that is that.

I have called the Gothics episodic, but that does not mean that the books have no central theme. The emotional center is that "hand-

some, magnetic suitor or husband who may or may not be a lunatic or murderer"*—i.e., it is the Heroine's ambivalence toward the Super-Male that provides the internal dramatic action of the book. The Heroine of *Lake*, for example, does not know if her former sweetheart is the murderer of her friend or not (two other men may be one of whom—the Shadow-Male—starts out by being dependable and gentle and ends up with "tiger's" eyes and a collection of the clothing of the women he has killed). The Heroines of the Gothics are constantly reading men's expressions—in *Lake*, the Heroine's eyes meet the Shadow-Male's and:

> They gave an illusion of warmth because his mouth was tender. But really they were empty windows, waiting for that dark person to get out. (p. 130)

Another Heroine reacts to the Super-Male she will eventually love in this way:

> I didn't like the man. He seemed to cast off vibrations that put the entire room in a subtle turmoil. And seeing how Priss looked at him, I was afraid for her. . . . He looked as though he was glutonous. . . . He would ruthlessly take what he wanted. . . . (*Evils*, p. 4)

Similarly the Heroine of *Dark* begins by mistrusting her husband-to-be (things get worse):

> . . . she felt the other familiar feeling of nervousness . . . She loved Jon and knew perfectly well that she wanted to marry him, but he remained an enigma to her at times and it was this strange unknown quality which made her nervous. She called it the Distant Mood. (p. 58)

Even when the Super-Male is not a physical danger, sexuality itself provides enough threat, (or that and the possibility of being disliked or harshly judged). The Heroine of *Columbella* notes the hero's "straight, rather harsh mouth," his "grim" smile, while his "cold, judicial" comments about her outrage her. Even worse is his "disturbing presence" and "alarming gentleness." As she finally decides:

> I knew why I was uncomfortable with this man. It was because a current seemed to spring into being betwen us when we were together—a strangely disturbing current composed of

*Terry Carr, q. v.

> a mixture of antagonism and attraction, perhaps in equal parts, so that I did not truly know which force was the stronger. (p. 75)

We know, of course. But when the man the Heroine loves is trying to pin a murder rap on her father, the conflict becomes much worse; almost all of *Nightingale* is composed of tremendous emotional oscillations undergone by the Heroine, at one moment believing that the Super-Male loves her, at the next that he is only using her as a source of information, at one moment that her father (another Super-Male) is not a murderer, at the next moment that he is:

> I couldn't be sure. I wasn't sure of anything: whether Charles Lewis was a sane man who, for four years, had been driven by a trigger-hot passion for revenge, or whether he was a madman obsessed with a phantom nightmare. (p. 49)

> For a few seconds I was caught in a rush of hope that seemed as if it would bring me to the surface of the dark waters in which I'd been drowning. . . . I felt the smile break on my face, and then I saw his eyes watching me, narrowed and fiercely intent. And suddenly the offer he'd made seemed machine-tooled in treachery. I felt as sick as if I'd just escaped from stepping off a precipice. (p. 152)

It is no wonder that after ten chapters of such ups-and-downs, the Heroine remarks, "I had the eerie sense that I'd lost the power to evaluate the simplest emotion." (p. 100) When the most important person in your life is your man, when you can't trust him (and can't trust anyone else) it becomes exceedingly important to "read" other people's faces and feelings. This is what most real women spend their time doing; therefore the novels not only portray them doing it, but glamorize and justify what in real life is usually necessary, but boring. In one way the Gothics are a kind of justified paranoia: people *are* planning awful things about you; you *can't* trust your husband (lover, fiancé); everbody's motives *are* devious and complex, only the *most* severe vigilance will enable you to snatch any happiness from the jaws of destruction. In addition to hurricanes, madness, attempted murder, skeletons falling out of cupboards, diamond smuggling, theft, drug addiction, impersonation, and voodoo, the modern Gothics make extensive use of what I would like to call Over-Subtle Emotions, a "denseness" of interpersonal texture that is at its most complex, simply baffling, and at its simplest, bathetic. For example:

It was a long, slow glance, guarded, half-apprehensive, half-exultant, that passed between Ariadne and Jager. In a way I couldn't understand, much less explain, it possessed an element of familiarity, as if they were not strangers . . . but in some way allies, Vague, unresolved suspicions coursed through my mind and got nowhere. (*Nightingale*, p. 88)

Suddenly my mind cleared and I knew. Something fell sharply and shockingly into place. "Last night, up by the chateau, Johnnie threatened me . . . From—from a distance it could have seemed that he and I—" "Were in the throes of a love affair? Well?" "And Goliath saw us. He can't have heard what we said . . . But don't you see?—if he thought I was having an affair with Johnnie and you had found out—?" "Sweet heaven. You mean Johnnie was killed because he probably knew the truth behind Maxine's impersonation? And we were sent down here to find the body—?" "And be implicated! If Goliath told the police what you had seen, you could be regarded as the jealous husband." "Yes," he said slowly. "I see what you mean." (*Gabriella*, p. 142)

For some reason his seemingly idle discussion made me as uncomforable as did the shell. It was as if his talk of good and evil, his reference to flaws of beauty . . . the man spoke in symbols that carried a deeper significance—perhaps as a hint of warning, meant for me? Or was I being fanciful again? . . . Again I had that uneasy sense of a deeper meaning and knew that he watched me intently with his pale, luminous eyes. (*Columbella*, p. 49)

Where was Ada now? If she was downstairs . . . I would ask her. Plump and plain, I would ask her about Mrs. Engleford. Ask her about the skeleton in the garden. Ask her what *really* happened to Mark's mother. Because somehow I knew Ada had the answers, if only she would divulge them. (*Evils*, p. 125)*

It was curious how the pupils of his eyes expanded as she watched. Like a startled cat's, like a tiger's. Why should Katharine think his eyes were like a tiger's when the rest of his face was so bland and genial? (*Lake*, p. 114)

He was near Rivers now, but he could not see him properly. The man had not moved at all, and the odd half-light was such that Jon could not see the expression in his eyes. He was aware of a sharp pang of uneasiness, a violent twist of

*There is no reason for the Heroine to believe this at this time. She turns out to be correct, however.

> memory, which was so vivid that it hurt, and then an inexplicable wave of compassion. (*Dark*, p. 35)*

The Heroine is such a virtuosa at this sacred version of everyday gossip that she knows even more than the mere fact that danger exists; she knows *it has all happened before*. The eeriest plot element in these books is the constant "doubling" of the Heroine—she is always in some fashion a "stand-in" for someone else, usually someone who has been killed. This someone is often the Other Woman (who is or was wicked) but it may be (as in *Columbella*) the Other Woman's daughter, who is being destroyed by her mother just as the Heroine's confidence has been undermined by *her* selfish, vain, attractive, irresponsible mother. In *Gabriella*, the Heroine's cousin is the double—she vanishes and in her turn impersonates a girl who has been killed. In *Evils* the Heroine has several predecessors, including her kind aunt, who was better to her than her own (bad) mother.† The Heroine of *Nightingale* has a younger half-sister, who suffers with her, and for whom she is very concerned, and a "mother" in the person of her father's mistress, irritable, aging, selfish, and vain, whom she starts out hating and learns—gradually—to pity. In two of the books, *The Dark Shore* and *The Brooding Lake*, the "doubling" is so explicit that the characters themselves comment on it. Sarah, the Heroine of *Dark*, has married a man whose first wife was murdered; not only does Sarah constantly compare her inadequate self to the dead Sophia (even their names are similar) but several characters remark that the two women look alike. Eventually the doubling goes so far that Sarah is warned:

> "It's all happening again, can't you realize that? It's all happening again—we're all here at Clougy . . . and you've been assigned Sophia's role." (p. 132)

In *Lake*, in order to resolve the mystery of a friend's disappearance, the Heroine begins to "impersonate" her friend, Camilla. She dresses like her, wears her "mantle—of trouble or danger, or whatever other complicated atmosphere it carried." (p. 46) She writes

*This is not explained for almost 100 pages.

†She keeps having *déja vu* experiences—recollections *via* her aunt's letters which seem to be intended to warn her of her aunt's fate—in fact she remembers the letters only in time to avoid being murdered by the same man (her own husband).

to the absent Camilla (who has in reality been murdered):

> Why were things getting dangerous? Seriously, you must tell me because it looks as if your mantle (and a troubled one) has fallen on me and I shall have to cope with these three indignant swains. (p. 48)

So far does the doubling go that Alice is proposed to by the man who was going to marry Camilla. Alice accepts:

> The queer thing was that she didn't know whether she was being herself or Camilla as she answered, "You're so kind. How can one refuse you?" She was almost sure she would never have answered a proposal of marriage in those words. It was as if Camilla had spoken them. (pp. 117-118)

The doubling goes even farther; the fiancé (a Shadow-Male) almost drowns Alice as he drowned Camilla; then the theme escalates into the grotesque as Alice is trapped in a room containing two wax dummies dressed in wedding gowns belonging to the madman's earlier-murdered brides, while a minor character in wig and Camilla's squirrel coat impersonates the dead woman outside in order to terrify the madman into a confession.

What does this doubling mean? Is it that every woman fears the same man and undergoes the same fate? Is it an echo of the family romance in which Heroine plays daughter, the Super-Male is father, and the Other Woman/First Wife plays mother? Are the two identical?

The Super-Male may indeed be a disguised version of the Heroine's (wished-for) father. He is older than the Heroine, more intelligent, taller, stronger, cooler-headed, richer, and of higher social position. And the Heroine is certainly presented as a kind of child; she is precious to the Super-Male simply because she exists (like a child) and she is never independent. She has no profession in any of the books except for *Lake*, where there is some unconvincing background about her having been part of a traveling acting company. This particular Heroine is a bit snippy about her "independence," which soon collapses into an engagement with a madman and rescue by the Super-Male, who remarks:

> "Little Alice! . . . Silly little lamb! You see, it took the sheep in wolf's clothing to rescue you." (p. 186)

The Gothics obviously envision the relation between Super-Male

and Heroine as neither abnormal nor unusual, but as the standard, even ideal, relation between men and women.

Independent women or women who have professions occur as follows:

> *Lake.* An (ugly) young girl who will be a doctor and a sympathetic but stereotyped spinster teacher (a minor character).
>
> *Gabriella.* A middle-aged woman, owner of a chateau in the French wine country who is a drug addict and dependent on her manager. She commits suicide.
>
> *Evils.* A deaf, ugly, deformed, middle-aged woman who makes an elaborate hobby of weaving. She finds happiness with a deaf, ugly, deformed, middle-aged man.
>
> *Dark.* The Super-Male's beautiful, brilliant, illegitimate half-sister, who loves music and plays the piano. She is in telepathic communion with the Super-Male, but unfortunately she depends on him (in this strange, telepathic way) while he can get along without her. She becomes promiscuous, then frigid, and goes into retreat in a convent, after taking upon herself the blame for the death of the Super-Male's first wife.

The Modern Gothics are neither love stories nor stories of women-as-victims. *They are adventure stories with passive protagonists.*

After all, what can a Heroine do?

1. She can be attached to a man.
2. She can be unknowingly involved in some family/criminal secret.
3. She can be threatened by murder.
4. She can be saved.
5. She can be uncertain of her man's real intentions toward her.
6. She can guess at his and other people's intentions or emotions.

And she can do all this within the confines of the feminine mystique.*

Since the Gothics are escape reading, they leave out women's real, tedious, everyday work—childbearing, child-rearing, and housekeeping. These have no place in the Gothics; only the prelude to

*Carol Carr, science-fiction writer, calls the helplessness of the Gothic Heroines, "the feminine version of conquering the environment." In conversation, Dec. 1970.

them (the capture of, or relations with a man) is allowed, and that is very much glamorized.

The problem of the female protagonist in literature is still with us. If we assume that everything outside the domestic affections, and the capture of a husband is masculine, we have a protagonist who cannot:

1. Solve an intellectual puzzle (whodunit or science fiction)
2. Build a career (the success story of the bright boy from the provinces)
3. Travel and have adventures (the adventurer has adventures; the adventur*ess* has sexual adventures only)
4. Carry out a political conspiracy
5. Head a religious movement
6. Grow up and form her character (the *bildungsroman* matters only if the protagonist is going to be someone in particular or do something; the Heroine's destiny is always the same—marriage. No matter what sort of character she has, she will not become a philosopher, artist, general, or politician).

The Love Story is—for women—*bildungsroman*, success, failure, education, and the only adventure possible, all in one.*

As I said before, the modern Gothic is an accurate reflection of the feminine mystique and a glamorized version of the lives many women do live. The apparent sado-masochism of the genre is partly an artifact of the narrative premise—that the Heroine must remain passive (or incompetent) in situations that call overwhelmingly for activity and decision; therefore any connection the Heroine has with the situation must be that of Victim. Part may be "feminine masochism" but even where the sado-masochistic overtones are strongest (as in *Nightingale*) the Heroine's suffering is the principle action of the story *because it is the only action she can perform.* The Modern Gothic, as a genre, is a means of enabling a conventionally feminine heroine to have adventrues at all. It may also be a way that conventionally feminine readers can see their own situation—dependent and limited as it is—validated, justified, and glamorized up to the hilt, without turning Heroines either into active persons or into sexually adventurous persons, both of whom violate the morality of conven-

*Consider the recent film about Isadora Duncan, which concentrated on her sex life, not her dancing or her Bolshevism, which the film managed to make merely silly. Even so, "Isadora" had to be re-titled, and became "The Loves of Isadora."

tional feminity.

1. Housework, etc., is banned. I'm on holiday.
2. I'm upper-middle-class, not lower-middle-class.
3. My upward mobility is achieved through marriage.
4. I'm a good girl—modest, not too pretty but quite pretty, not too rich but rich enough, womanly, loving, dependent, and somehow "average" (even though I am uniquely precious).
5. The Super-Male *really exists* (all evidence to the contrary).
6. *He really loves me*, even though I am not strikingly beautiful, brilliant, talented, famous, or rich. I do not see why he loves me, but he does. He may appear to treat me badly or brusquely; still, he loves me.
7. I do nothing. I do not have to do anything. Merely because I exist, violent emotions and acts spring into being.
8. I am rewarded for being good. Aggressively sexual, beautiful, worldly women are wicked and are punished accordingly. Men don't *really* like them.
9. I have intense emotional relations with places—houses, weather, nature. (Scenery-painting is often the best-written parts of these books.)
10. I have pretty, romantic clothes (but not sexy or flamboyant ones). Clothes really are very important.
11. *My sexual value is my personal value and is respected by all except villains and villainesses.* Men's desire is a testimony to my personal, individual worth. I have no character, interests, or achievements but those who do come to a bad end (if female).
12. I am a virtuosa at interpreting faces and feelings. This ability is not "wasted" on the everyday drudgery of infants' needs or husbands' grumpiness—it is vital in saving my life and the happiness of all about me. (Even if I come to the wrong conclusions, my intense over-reading of everyone else's emotions is still justified.)
13. If I don't know what's happening, that's all right; my man does.
14. I can't save myself, but my man will do it for me.
15. Life with the Super-Male is *really satisfying.*

TRANSLATION:

1. If I must be passive, I might as well make the most of it.
2. If I must suffer, I will do so spectacularly and luxuriously.

3. I really want to get in on those jewel-smugglings and murders and exciting stuff.

4. If my man treats me badly, that's because he's masculine, not because he's bad. There are bad men and good men; the problem is simply telling which is which. There are bad women and good women; I'm not a bad (read: sexual, aggressive) woman.

5. Conventionally masculine men are good men (even if they treat me badly) and conventionally feminine women are good women. This makes behavior very easy to judge. It also validates conventional sex roles.

6. I am bored and therefore make much of trifles.

7. *Something* is trying to hurt me and tear me down—but I don't know what it is. I suspect it's my man, or men in general, but that's an unthinkable thought.

8. Nobody respects me except when they're sexually attracted to me or benefiting from my selflessness (read: treating me as a convenience).

CONCLUSION: I will go read another Gothic novel.

APPENDIX (verbatim)

SUPERMALES

Lake. . . . his peculiar, mocking merriment (p. 12) . . . his tilted eyes narrowed with laughter (p. 20) . . . brows drawn down in one of their storms of impatience . . . Suddenly she knew what the three men were like: the squat, alert-eyed keas; and they, trembling Katherine, Margaretta in her hot childish dress, and herself, foolish and impulsive, and not very brave, were the defenseless lambs.

Gabriella. Nick could move swiftly as a tiger when he chose. (p. 39) . . . all my explanations did not check Nick's anger with me. (p. 106) . . . he had that whippy look of a healthy, disciplined man. His hair was very dark and his mouth long and mobile . . . (pp. 6-7) I knew that light of determination on Nick's face only too well . . . (p. 47) . . . Nick was a master of judo . . . (p. 71)

Columbella. . . . in his late thirties, forceful, tall, rather overwhelming. The sort of man who used to alarm me at first glance. (p. 20) He was a ruggedly built man and I had to look up at him, for all that I am fairly tall. His eyes were a very dark brown, with heavy brows slashed above, emphasizing the angular, marked bone structure of his face. His hair was as dark as his eyes . . . there were deep creases running down each cheek . . . (p. 21)

Evils. . . . a great hulking fellow . . . stood there facing us belligerently,

(p. 39) . . . almost sneered now, looking down at his own huge feet in their dirty sneakers . . . he flexed a wicked looking hand. . . . He looked as though he was gluttonous in all his appetites. He would ruthlessly take what he wanted . . . (p. 41) . . . his blatant masculine appeal . . . (p. 85) Here was a man who could juggle women with bravado . . . (p. 96) . . . brazen effrontery . . . (p. 97) I could feel it. The sheer, unrestrained animal vitality . . . this brutal, stalking, almost savage man . . . this turbulent avalanche of raw sexuality. (p. 98)

Dark. Those eyes. You looked at those eyes and suddenly you forgot . . . tiresome things which might be bothering you . . . as soon as he touched those piano keys you had to listen. He moved or laughed or made some trivial gesture with his hands and you had to watch him. (pp. 17-18) Jon always got what he wanted. . . . He wanted a woman and he had only to crook his little finger; he wanted money and it flowed gently into his bank account; he wanted you to be a friend for some reason and you became a friend. . . . (p. 22) Jon ordered the meal, chose the wines, and tossed both menu and wine-list on one side. (p. 61) . . . Jon spent two hours making involved transatlantic telephone calls and dealing with urgent business commitments. . . . (p. 66)

Nightingale. . . . arrogance, an aura of dark metaled pride . . . (p. 12) . . . tall, dominating . . . (p. 13) The same face, lean and dark under a high proud brow, from which near black hair rose in a thick crest. Grey eyes, cooly assured under vigorous brows. (p. 34) Like lightning fury struck his face. His voice had the cutting quality of fine-honed steel. (p. 39)

HEROINES

Columbella. Often enough my mother had told me that I was born to spinsterhood and the service of others. (p. 9) . . . all my natural instincts to aid, to support, to defend . . . (p. 27) . . . an enveloping loneliness crept upon me . . . (p. 34) His cheek was against my hair and I could hear without astonishment the words he was whispering. Soft endearments they were—words like "dearest" and "beloved". . . (p. 124)

Gabriella. I wear glasses. . . . Heaven knew, when I first had to wear them I was plunged in gloom. . . . I have the large family mouth and short nose, like Maxine's, only hers has beautiful, flaring nostrils that give her face a defiant, dramatic look. (p. 13) ". . . they and their ancestors were born in captivity. Karen, dear, some things are better that way. *You* are!" (p. 185) He suffered the same reaction as a mother who, fearful for her child's safety, slaps him when he comes home unharmed. (p. 106)

Evils. I was twenty-four. Until Mark came into my life, I'd never—not ever, not even once—had a date with anyone. "It's not that you're unattractive," . . . my only close friend said to me once. "You've got a lovely, calm face and those nice neat features. Why, you've even got a goshdarn good figure, if you'd ever wear anything decent . . . you're so quiet and withdrawn no one ever gets a chance to know the real you. . . ." (p. 7) . . . when I was twelve, Mother sent me . . . to a summer camp (mostly, I realized even then, to get rid of me) . . . (p. 8) "Yes, Tracy, you were bound to a selfish, bad-tempered woman. . . .

She'd sent you to the basement for a bottle of wine. . . . You . . . dropped the bottle, and . . . your mother struck you, turned on her heel, and left you to stumble and fall backwards down the basement steps." (p. 87) ". . . I knew from the first minute I saw you that I'd never let anything happen to you, hurt you, ever. You're the sweetest little thing, so serious, so . . ." (p. 118)

Lake. ". . . my father would have to sandwich me somewhere between the wing structure and the undercarriage of his new plane and I'd simply be an embarrassment to my mother . . ." (p. 14) Obedience to his direction . . . had become a habit. (p. 15) Alice felt immeasurably forlorn . . . (p. 65) She felt so alone, so unwanted. (p. 82) . . . his eyes had grown hard and contemptuous. (p. 109) If one hadn't known him so well . . . one would not have been conscious of the subtle undertones of contempt . . . (p. 123) "Oh, my darling! My poor little Alice! My wonderful crazy brave little fool!" (p. 189)

Nightingale. . . . my appalling innocence . . . (p. 12) I'd outlived the stage of being embarrassed by our hermit life. (p. 17) I was as lonely as Emma. She begged money from strangers. I begged love! (p. 44) I tried to imagine what it was like to be on a holiday, with gay outlandish clothes and money in your pocket. I couldn't. (p. 104) "Melly, don't you believe in your own beauty? Aren't you used to men appreciating it?" I shook my head . . . (p. 107)

Dark. . . . her clear, unsophisticated view of life and the naive trust which he loved so much. (p. 40) Sarah's voice, very clear and gentle . . . (p. 45) Sarah, beneath her gay smile and excited eyes, felt very small and lost and nervous . . . she was caught in a violent wave of homesickness and the tears refused to be checked. (p. 65) She felt ashamed, inadequate, tongue-tied. (p. 72) . . . unwanted tears pricking at the back of her eyes . . . everything became blurred and she could no longer see. (p. 73) "I love you" he said . . . and his voice was unsteady . . . "I love love love you and you're never never going to have to go through anything like this again." (p. 158)

SHADOWMALES (all murderers)

Evils. . . . gentleness . . . tender consideration of everything I did and said, the quiet humor . . . a composite of all the elegant English stars I've seen on the late night movies . . . the mild blue eyes were crinkled, the long lashes tangled, the handsome narrow face alight with amusement. (p. 13) . . . the gently sensual mouth . . . (p. 35)

Lake. . . . a round, fresh-colored, surprisingly young face beneath gray hair. The man's eyes were light-colored and smiling. He looked very pleasant . . . his solid figure and firm handshake . . . (p. 19) He gave an impression of kindness and common sense and utter dependability. (p. 35) . . . his mild, old-fashioned way. (p. 37) He smelled pleasantly of shaving soap. (p. 102)

Dark. . . . a tall man, unobtrusively good-looking, with quiet eyes and a strong mouth . . . as she echoed the greeting, the lawyer's cautious scrutiny faded into a more formal appraisal and there was warmth in his eyes and kindness in the set of his mouth. (p. 112) He could cope with the situation . . . He's spent his life dealing with other people's problems. (p. 126) He didn't

hurry . . . calmly, with a slight air of irritability. (p. 134) . . . forced to fight back in self-defense. (p. 135)

THE OTHER WOMAN

Columbella. I had never seen anyone so arrestingly alive . . . (p. 25) . . . she was a figure of such loveliness in her red and gold . . . (p. 62) She was a dangerous woman . . . and evil—evil! (p. 82) She could move like a panther . . . a spoiled child . . . dangerous . . . with the ready cruelty of a child. . . . (p. 94) . . . her strange warped nature . . . (p. 119) . . . the only man she had never owned . . . she would never stop until she destroyed him completely. (p. 138)

Nightingale. . . . a sophisticated young woman who wore her model clothes as if she'd been born to them . . . her gestures were free and graceful like those of a princess in undisputed possession of every horizon in sight. (p. 84)

Lake. Camilla had thrived on emotional complications. To her they were the spice of life. (p.15) ". . . she has the whole male population at her feet. . . . How does she do it?" (p. 13) She was a scamp. . . One always ended by reluctantly forgiving her for her outrageous behavior. . . . (p. 117) Camilla's eyes had that sleepy adoring expression whenever she wished. (p. 24) . . . the flighty little witch . . . (p. 26) She was attractive . . . but silly, easily flattered, unreliable, and . . . extraordinarily deceitful. (p. 32)

Gabriella. . . . rich russet hair swathed round a small, imperious head; greenish-bronze eyes that even in a "still" photograph seemed restless; a wayward mouth, full and a little pouting, and a figure so slim it fooled you into thinking she was fragile. (p. 8) She had been brought up to believe that what money could buy would always be hers. She was not trained for work and had an innate dislike for discipline. . . . But her assets were enormous. Not only was she beautiful, but she had that female magnetism that is the strongest weapon any woman can have in life. . . . (p. 11) . . . always headstrong and impulsive . . . (p. 198)

Dark. . . . the voluptuous indolence, the languid movements, the dreadful stifled boredom never far below the lush surface. . . . (p. 23) . . . how much she loved life, even if life merely consisted of living . . . far from the glamor of London. (p. 63) She behaved like a spoiled child. . . . She flirted at her weekend parties and made Jon go through hell . . . with her tantrums and whims. . . . She flaunted her infidelity. . . . (p. 103) She wore skin-tight black slacks and . . . a halter—some kind of flimsy arrangement which left her midriff bare and exposed an indecent amount of cleavage. (p. 104)

Professor Russ is on the English Faculty at Harpar College, Binghamton, N. Y. She is a writer of as well as a critic of science fiction.