Byron, Poe, and Miss Matilda

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THIS IS THE STORY OF MATILDA and her entrance into the writings of Lord Byron and Edgar Allan Poe, always pseudonymously and sometimes erroneously. Her full name had variety, for the Matilda to whom I refer was known as Anna Matilda and then as Laura Matilda and also as Rosa Matilda; behind these names are the traces and evidence of four or more women, such as Mrs. Hannah Cowley, Mary Robinson, Charlotte Dacre, and a mysterious Rosa King. The unweaving of the thread will take us back to an English social and literary circle of Florence, in 1785, then to the London of 1787 where the leader of the circle, Mr. "Della Crusca" or Robert Merry, engaged "Anna Matilda" or Mrs. Hannah Cowley in public, amatory, verse dialogues, with the incidental participation of Mrs. Mary Robinson or "Laura Maria." Then we shall proceed to the witty denunciations of the 1790's published by the Tory satirist, William Gifford; thence over to America with the expatriate Merry. Next, back we shall go to take note of Byron's 1809 derogations of "Rosa Matilda," a Rosa with imputed characteristics of Anna Matilda but strangely and mistakenly identified with a Rosa King. Then we shall observe the gentle parody of Horace and James Smith in "Drury's Dirge" (1812) by "Laura Matilda," and finally another trip to America will show us the critic, Edgar Allan Poe, wrongly, I think, accusing Rosa Matilda, the Gothic terror novelist, of exemplifying the vogue for superficial love tales. This is the devious path that I shall expect the reader to follow with me along the footstones that I shall try to place with a firm foundation and deliberate care.

Fortunately, the first part of this story has already received enough treatment to warrant a brief summary only, stripped of confusing details. A circle of Englishmen in Florence had published a collection of their poetic effusions called the *Florence Miscellany* (1785), including nineteen poems by Robert Merry, living on the remnants

of his large patrimony.[1] He had belonged to the liberal, enlightenment-oriented Accademia della Crusca, which had been abolished by the autocratic Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany.[2] This participation was an augury of Merry's later liberal beliefs and actions which had repercussions on his reputation in England and America. His circle included Mrs. Hester Lynch Piozzi (later Mrs. Thrale), Bertie Greathead, and William Parsons. Poems from the *Miscellany*, reprinted in London, served to publicize Mr. "Della Crusca," whose new poem, "The Adieu and Recall to Love" in John Bell's *The World* (June 29, 1787), was answered by "Anna Matilda" or Hannah Cowley in her poem, "The Pen," also in *The World* of July 10, 1787. Merry's reply of July 31, 1787, "To Anna Matilda" set in operation a two years' exchange of verses, which included the incidental and always pseudonymous contributions of others from the Florentine group besides Merry as well as poems to Della Crusca from "Laura Maria" or Mrs. Mary Robinson (also signing herself as "Oberon" and "Julia").[3] These antiphonies were eagerly followed by the literate public of London, who read them not only in the newspaper columns but also in the volumes of poetry issued by the enterprising John Bell and others.[4]

One reason for the termination of the exchange was the blighting effect of the first interview between the thirty-four year old Merry and the plain, forty-six year old Mrs. Cowley in 1789, as Merry's poem, "The Interview" in the April, 1789 *New World* delicately shows.[5] The strain of writing in the Della Cruscan style may have helped to terminate the long, repetitious series, not to mention the fatigue of the hitherto faithful public. English poetry at the time was in a state of doldrums, between eras so to speak, and the Della

[1] John Mark Longaker, *The Della Cruscans and William Gifford* (Philadelphia, 1924), p. 30. Also see the *DNB* on Merry.

[2] James L. Clifford, "Robert Merry — a Pre-Byronic Hero," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, XXVII (Dec., 1942), 74–96, specifically 81.

[3] See R. B. Clark, *William Gifford* (New York, 1930), p. 38. The first name came from Petrarch's Laura.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 39; Longaker, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 and 41. See *The British Album. Containing the Poems of Della Crusca, Anna Matilda, Arley, Benedict, The Bard*; I have used the first American edition from the fourth British (Boston, 1793), the place and date being important.

[5] Longaker, *op. cit.*, p. 35. Mrs. Cowley had achieved a degree of success and skill with her plays: *The Belle's Stratagem, A Bold Stroke for a Husband, A Day in Turkey, The Fate of Sparta*, and *The Runaway*.

Cruscan poets struck a public hungry for something seemingly fresh and new. The seeds of subsequent Romantic developments lay in their verses, despite their extravagant use of epithet, occasional obscurity, general excess and lack of restraint, and "orgies of sentiment."[6] Since it will be necessary later to evaluate the allegedly Della Cruscan tone of poems by Rosa Matilda, I should like to offer a few lines from Anna Matilda's reply to Della Crusca's "Adieu and Recall to Love":[7] "O! Seize again thy golden quill, / And with its point my bosom thrill; / With magic touch explore my heart, / And bid the tear of passion start. / The golden quill Apollo gave / Drench'd first in bright Aonia's wave, / He snatched it fluttering through the sky, / Borne on the vapour of a sigh. / Another good example is from "Stanzas to Della Crusca" (p. 28): "Hush'd be each ruder note! – soft silence spread, / With ermine hand, thy cobweb robe around; / Attention! pillow my reclining head, / Whilst eagerly I catch the golden sound." The pretentious use of Greek mythology, the apostrophes, the single and singular epithets, the emotional but static posturing are all debased forms of neoclassic poetic mannerisms. In a sense it is a literary analogue to the rococo style in painting and domestic decoration.

One strange aspect of the development of Della Cruscanism was the popularity of the style in the United States. I pause over this for a moment because of its persistence into the periodical literature and annuals of the nineteenth century. Lewis Pattee attributes its rapid adoption in America to the tendency toward flamboyant expression, to which not only poetry but also "oratory and essay" contributed with their "artificial manner and ornament."[8] It grew into a "jungle" of Della Cruscan shoots, especially at Boston, where a parallel series of poetic effusions had been published by Dr. Joseph Ladd in his "Poems of Arouet to Amanda" (1786) in almost every issue of Matthew Carey's *American Museum.*

[6] These are the qualities ascribed by J. L. Clifford, *op. cit.*; see also a brief list in the *DNB* and the definition of M. Ray Adams, "Della Cruscanism in America," *PMLA*, LXXIX (June, 1964), 259–265: "amorous superlatives, dithyrambic apostrophes, pretentious ornament overflowing in flowery epithets, and a heady romanticism..." (259).

[7] *The Poetry of Anna Matilda* (London: J. Bell, 1798), p. 14.

[8] *The First Century of American Literature*: 1770–1870 (New York, 1935), pp. 107–110. This work and the study of M. Ray Adams give many more examples than the few which I have had space to cite.

Significantly, in 1791 the same magazine published four of the Della-Crusca Anna-Matilda poems; then Carey included them in his *Beauties of Poetry*. The *Columbia Centinel* of Boston "solicited," to use its word, a correspondence between "Philenia (Sarah Wentworth Morton) and "Alfred," for "Philenia" had ended her pamphlet *Ouabi* with a three-page epistle to Della Crusca. The *Gazette of the United States*, of Philadelphia, had published a series which probably involved Dr. Elihu Smith, friend later of Charles Brockden Brown, and finally the popular "Philenia-Menander" series ran in the powerful *Massachusetts Mercury*. "Menander" or Robert Treat Paine, Jr., it might be observed, was probably the most extravagantly overpaid and overpraised poet in American literary history. All this symptomized a full-fledged American Della Cruscan movement. I shall return to this phenomenon after observing a new phase of Della Cruscanism in England.

William Gifford was moved by several factors to two timely and highly effective counterblasts. Personally he was more inclined in his taste to a strict neoclassicism, with an emphasis upon more restraint and clarity than was possible in the Della Cruscan canon. Moreover, the Tory Gifford, later editor of the *Quarterly Review*, deplored the political tendencies of a few of the Della Cruscans themselves. Robert Merry frankly espoused the odious cause of the French Revolution, having visited Paris in 1789.[9] Finding the climate of opinion in war-torn and politically oppressive England increasingly hostile, be eventually migrated to the United States with his actress wife, Elizabeth Brunton, and died in Baltimore, December, 1798.[10] Mrs. Mary Robinson, the Della Cruscan "Laura Maria," probably the most gifted of the women of the circle, wrote a long series of poems and prose works, most of them innocuous politically, but her *Thoughts on the Condition of Women*, in its probable derivation from Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, shows clearly the dangerous tendency of the celebrated "Perdita's" thoughts.

[9] See J. L. Clifford, *op. cit.*, and M. Ray Adams, "Robert Merry, Political Romanticist," *Studies in Romanticism*, II (1962), 23–37.

[10] See the *DNB* article for his publication of *The Laurel of Liberty*, his presenting a treatise to the Convention, *The Nature of a Free Government*, and for his ode, "The Fall of the Bastille," declaimed on July 14, 1791 to 1500 auditors at the Strand Theatre.

The animus of Gifford against the style and content of Della Cruscan verses is clear in the *Baviad* of 1791 and in the long delayed *Maeviad* of 1795, circulated in manuscript before publication.[11] Gifford singled out for major attack three Della Cruscan guises: Anna Matilda, Laura Maria, and Della Crusca himself. The British public, disenchanted with the poetic froth of the circle and swept by surging patriotism and anti-French hysteria, eagerly bought and discussed Gifford's works. They also gave him training for the anti-liberal pasquinades of the *Anti-Jacobin; or Weekly Review* which he helped to edit a few years later. Numerous editions of the *Baviad* and *Maeviad* followed, widely disseminating the ridicule of these three figures. In his preface to the collected edition, Gifford explains how, after Della Crusca came over and Anna Matilda answered him, Laura Maria caught the "infection." "From one end of the kingdom to the other, all was manner and Della Crusca."[12] In several places he conjoins the two women in one line or in one sentence, a fact which is germane to the development of the fictitious personality of "Laura Matilda." Thus: "And Anna frisks, and Laura claps her hands" (p. 17). Della Crusca is dying "for love of Laura Maria, and now for love of Anna Matilda" (p. 40). His notes link the two together (p. 55), and he speaks of those "who nought but Laura's tinkling trash admire / And the mad jingle of Matilda's lyre" (p. 76).[13] It would be too much to say that Gifford killed the school in England, but he certainly helped to discredit a fad that was even then yielding to healthier currents as evidenced in the early publications of the major Romantic poets. It is interesting to note that for her lovely face and presence Coleridge found much more to admire in Mary Robinson than in his wife and grieved over her rapid decline and death in 1800.[14] Mary must not have felt the onus of Gifford's charges keenly, for she

[11] Clark, *William Gifford*, pp. 48–51.

[12] Gifford, *The Baviad and the Maeviad* (8th ed., London, 1811), p. xv.

[13] I must express gratitude to Miss Rita Keckeissen, Columbia University reference librarian, who helped me to find a series in *Notes and Queries* that provided clues, piecemeal, to the identity of "Laura Matilda": LXXVII (Jan. 14, 1888), p. 29; Feb., 18, 1888, pp. 135–136; and May 19, 1888, p. 271.

[14] Alois Brandl, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the English Romantic School*, English trans. by Lady Eastlake (London, 1887), pp. 271–273, was one of the first to trace this relationship in the poems of both; Brandl is mentioned in the *Notes and Queries* series above.

continued to use her pen name of Laura Maria in verses that she published from 1798 to 1800 in the *Morning Post* and in 1800 for *The Mistletoe. A Christmas Tale, in Verse.*[15] She had striven to make the name her cachet, as we can see from the Dedication to her *Poems*: "Many of the following Poems having been honored with publication and repeated marks of attention from some of the most accomplished writers of the present age, when published in The Oracle, under the signature of Laura, Laura Maria, Oberon, etc., the author was induced to acknowledge, and arrange them in their present form."[16] Her publicizing success may be seen in the fact that Mary's friend, the Della Cruscan "Peter Pindar" (Dr. John Wolcot) and the inveterate adversary of Gifford, began his poem, "Mrs. Robinson's Handkerchief" thus: "A handkerchief, that long had preserved / The snows of Laura's swelling breast. . ."[17] Her novels, however, such as *Walsingham; or, The Pupil of Nature* and *Vincenza; or, The Dangers of Credulity,* never bore this pseudonym, which was perhaps saved for verse. Incidentally, the identity of "Anna Matilda" was not equally clear to the British public, despite Gifford's differentiation of the two ladies. David Rivers' *Literary Memoirs of Living Authors* of 1798 credits Mary Robinson with being "Anna Matilda of *The World*" (*DNB* on Mary Robinson). At that time also Hester Lynch Piozzi Thrale was sometimes thought to be Anna Matilda.[18] Even in 1887 it was possible for a new reference work, *Sobriquets and Nicknames,* to make the same error.[19]

With the death of Merry in 1798 and Mrs. Robinson in 1800 and the well-received ridicule of Gifford and his anti-Jacobin friends one might anticipate the complete cessation of Della Cruscanism.

[15] Robert D. Bass, *The Green Dragon* (New York, 1957), p. 399. *The Mistletoe* is given only in the British Museum *Catalogue.*

[16] Dedication to *Poems* (London: J. Bell, 1791). Her poems were also published in 1791–1793 and, by her daughter, in 1806, in three volumes. No critical study of her very popular works has been published.

[17] Wolcot, *The Works of Peter Pindar* (London, 1824), p. 72.

[18] James L. Clifford, *Hester Lynch Piozzi* (Oxford, 1941), pp. 337–338, indicates this error as a conjecture in the *Catalogue of Five-Hundred Celebrated Authors of Great Britain Now Living* (London, 1788), this is the earlier form of the 1788 work cited in my text. See also *Thraliana,* Catherine C. Balderstone, ed. (Oxford, 1942), II, 716, n. 3.

[19] Albert R. Frey, in his review of the work in *Notes and Queries,* LXXVII (Jan. 14, 1888), 38.

It dwindled and all but expired as a movement in England, despite its flourishing in America. Yet there was something invincibly useful about such verses for filler in newspapers and magazine and also something attractive to a pretentious middle class group of readers, who liked their poetry to be larded with mythological learning, gaudy ornaments, and conventional emotional posturings. The persistence of a *sub rosa* Della Cruscanism may therefore be observed.

Lord Byron felt, apparently that it had to be exterminated more thoroughly than his highly respected friend, Gifford, had managed to do. Hence, in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, published in March, 1809, he asks pointedly:

> "Why slumbers Gifford?" once was ask'd in vain;
> Why slumbers Gifford? Let us ask again.
> Are there no follies for his pen to purge?[20]

Byron obviously felt that part of his satire should be directed against the continuing Della Cruscan verses in periodicals and books and said so in the preface to the second edition, of October, 1809:

> Imbecility may be pitied, or, at worst, laughed at and forgotten: perverted powers demand the most decided reprehension. No one can wish more than the author that some known and able writer had undertaken their exposure; but Mr. Gifford has devoted himself to Massinger ... A caustic is here offered ... [for] the numerous patients afflicted with the present prevalent and distressing *rabies* for rhyming (p. 421).

A portion of the Argument that he intended to prefix to the first edition reads thus: "Return to poesy – scribblers of all sorts – lords sometimes rhyme; much better not – Hafiz, Rosa Matilda, and X.Y.Z. – Rogers, Campbell, Gifford, etc. true poets." This Argument was followed up in the text with references twice to "Matilda" and with some rather confused and confusing footnotes.

> Far be't from me unkindly to upbraid
> The lovely Rosa's prose in masquerade,
> Whose strains, the faithful echoes of her mind,
> Leave wondering comprehension far behind. [n.1]
> Though Crusca's bards no more our journal fill,

[20] For Byron's intellectual relationship with Gifford see the documentation in Leslie Marchand, *Byron* (New York, 1957), too extensive to cite. The excerpt is in *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (London, 1859), p. 433, to which all succeeding textual references will be made.

> Some stragglers skirmish round the columns still;
> Last of the howling host which once was Bell's,
> Matilda snivels yet, and Hafiz yells;
> And Merry's metaphors appear anew,
> Chain'd to the signature of O.P.Q. [n.2] (p. 432)

The text, I should note, seems to differentiate between a prose writer, "Rosa," and a versifier, "Matilda," who must have been "Anna Matilda" since she is part of Bell's host. But Rosa Matilda or Charlotte Dacre was only five years of age in 1787, when Bell's *World* was carrying the Della Cruscan exchanges. The differentiation is contradicted by the Argument previously quoted and by Byron's notes; the text of 1832 in which Moore printed an addition to the first note taken from Byron's manuscript comments in the 1811 text of the poem, adds fresh and erroneous information:

> N. 1: This lovely little Jessica, the daughter of the noted Jew King, seems to be a follower of the Della Crusca school, and has published two volumes of very respectable absurdities in rhyme, as times go; besides sundry novels in the style of the first edition of the Monk.
>
> N. 2: These are the signatures of various worthies who figure in the poetical departments of the newspapers.

Before explicating or rather "extricating" Matilda from this passage, I must indicate one last reference in *English Bards*:

> Let Stott, Carlisle, Matilda, and the rest
> Of Grub Street, and of Grosvenor Place the best,
> Scrawl on, till death release us from the strain,
> Or Common Sense assert her rights again. (p. 435)

Grosvenor Place is the residence of the Earl of Carlisle, Byron's relative; Grub Street matches Matilda and Robert Stott, who wrote in the *Morning Post* under the name of Hafiz and was earlier termed by Byron "the most profound explorer of the bathos" (p. 423; see also the preceding long quotation in my text).

In this reference too there is a decided lack of differentiation between Anna and Rosa, as the Grub Street association shows. In theory Hannah Cowley, being alive while *English Bards* was being written (deceased in 1809 at sixty-six), might still be eligible for the post of poetic "sniveler," save that her writings under the sobriquet of Anna Matilda, as far as I know, ceased in the 1780's or 1790's. She continued to collect her Anna Matilda verses, as shown by her volume of 1798, *The Poetry of Anna Matilda*, but no one has

mentioned the continuance of her verses in newspapers after the 1790's.[21] There is a very slight chance that Byron's familiarity with Gifford's *Baviad* and *Maeviad*, which closely links Laura Maria and Anna Matilda, may have led Byron to think of Matilda rather than Maria as connected with the *Morning Post* in a writing capacity. The reference to Hafiz or Robert Stott of the *Post* gives a slight credence to this, since "Laura Maria" or Mrs. Robinson was still writing verses under that name in the *Post* in 1800.

Another source of confusion about the identity of "Matilda" in the verses is the fact that Charlotte Dacre, known as "Rosa Matilda," had wed William Pitt Byrne, editor of the *Morning Post*. I have not been able to discover the date of the occasion, except that it probably occurred before 1816, a year which will soon be shown to have relevance for Byron's satire. Apparently the poetic productivity of "Rosa" continued, for the *Catalogue* of the British Museum lists among her many works *George the Fourth, A Poem*, published in sixty-four pages and dated 1822. I have not been able to discover a copy on this side of the Atlantic. Probably her marriage and her life lasted at least into the 1830's, for it was only on April 28, 1842 that Byrne was again married, to a woman named Julia Busk, according to Montague Summers, the only source for any details of "Rosa's" life.[22] Byron was certainly mistaken about her being the daughter of "Jew King,"[23] a prominent money lender of the period.[24] I have been able to find out very little about King, whose fashionable yellow chariot is mentioned by Captain Gronow.[25] It is of interest, however, to learn that William Godwin had many dealings with John King, in the years 1795 and 1796, according to his autobiographical notes. This "notorious" figure "was married to the Countess Dowager of Lanesborough," says Godwin, professing to be deliberately studying an unsavory

[21] This one volume collection of 1798 was published by John Bell. Longakre, *op. cit.*, p. 63, mentions the two volume London, 1788 edition. There is also a three volume *Poems* by Mrs. Hannah Cowley (London, 1813), published after her death.

[22] Montague Summers, ed., *Zofloya* (London, 1928), q. v.

[23] In the earlier editions that I have examined, of 1810, 1812, and 1825, it is simply "Jew K...." Moore fills it out in the 1832 edition from the manuscript.

[24] Ernest H. Coleridge, ed., *Works of Byron* (London, 1898), I, 358, corrects Byron.

[25] See Rees H. Gronow, *Reminiscences* (1889), I, 132–136, for a gossipy and insubstantial section on this strange figure. He mentions no daughter.

type of human character for his fiction.[26] In 1796 King asked Godwin to vouch for him in a court trial, but Godwin sent him a letter full of outraged concern for his own reputation, purporting to be unable to sacrifice his "independence" and judgment." King's reply, of January 26, 1796, speaks of his intention to continue his friendship with Godwin and invites him to dine with Robert Merry and Este.[27] It would therefore appear that the link of King with the Della Cruscans indicated by Byron was real, but not literary. I have been unable to discover whether King had a novel-writing daughter named "Rosa" as Earnest Hartley Coleridge hints.[28]

There is no question that Rosa Matilda was Charlotte Dacre, writer of Gothic terror fiction, as Byron's note says. Her first work in this style was entitled *The Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer. A Tale*, "by Rosa Matilda" (London, 1805). She was then twenty-three years of age, as is evident in her two-volume collection *Hours of Solitude. A Collection of Original Poems Now First Published*, "By Charlotte Dacre, better known by the Name of Rosa Matilda" (London, 1805). Clearly Charlotte Dacre was attempting to establish a cachet for her forthcoming torrents of prose not "in masquerade," as Byron designates her verses. In 1806 came her most famous work, *Zofloya; or, The Moor. A Romance of the Fifteenth Century.* This Gothic horror tale owes much to Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk*, including the author's pseudonym, "Matilda." The prototype of the genre, *The Castle of Otranto*, also had a character named Matilda. The "Rosa" part of the pseudonym might have been an exotic form of rose, flower of passion, or the last name of the picturesque, inordinately popular painter, Salvator Rosa. *Zofloya* was

[26] C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin* (London, 1876), I, 146–147. His full notes have still not been published but are now being edited by Jack W. Marken.

[27] *Ibid.*, I, 154–157. Lucyle Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England 1792–1793* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1967), pp. 32–33, 113–115, 146, 196, 222–224, and 260–61, furnishes interesting information about King's shift from his early liberalism, when he was friendly with Mrs. Robinson and Tom Paine.

[28] Coleridge, (n. 24 above), writes thus: "The novelist 'Rosa,' the daughter of 'Jew King' ... may possibly be confounded with 'Rosa Matilda,' Mrs. Byrne." No novelist named "Rosa" is given by *CBEL*, Halkett and Laing, or other reference sources. Sophia King, anti-Jacobin author of *Waldorff* (1798) and of *Cordelia* (1800), then not ignored but now lost in oblivion, could not have been confused by Byron through her last name, I believe. My gratitude is owed to Yale for my use of the first and to the Hunter College Stonehill Collection for the second.

a major inspiration for Shelley's novels *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne*, about a half dozen years later. Indeed, the sole reason for the place of Charlotte Dacre in literary history now often appears to be this connection with the poet; recent treatments of the theme spare me the need to enter into the nature of her work at all.[29] Unfortunately, *Zofloya* is the only work of Mrs. Byrne's that has received attention. Yet she also wrote *The Passions*, in four volumes, under the name of Rosa Matilda (1811–1812). Under "Charlotte Dacre, better known as Rosa Matilda," she published *The Libertine* in 1807.[30] In the major libraries of New York City, I have found only the 1928 reprint of *Zofloya*, once so widely read for its horripilating effect, and of the other novels only in Yale and the University of Virginia are copies available.[31] But in Byron's day there was little reason to attribute the birth of Charlotte Dacre to John King.

For one thing Byron had read at least part of her book, *Hours of Solitude* with its author identification. Indeed, does it not seem amazingly close, both in its main title and subtitle, to Byron's own book of 1807: *Hours of Idleness: A Series of Poems, Original and Translated?* Even the dactyl of "idleness" finds its correspondence in "solitude." I suggest no other correspondence, for Byron is correct in calling her poems "prose in masquerade, / Whose strains ... leave wondering comprehension far behind." But is she, in reality, a follower of the Della Cruscan school" as his footnote and text indicate? The only review of the work that I have been able to find does not think so; tersely it says: "Hours of Solitude are unequal in execution. It is perhaps enough to say they are chiefly

[29] See the list given by David G. Halliburton in "Shelley's 'Gothic' Novels," in the *Keats-Shelley Journal*, XVI (Winter, 1967), 39–49, n. 3. See especially Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror* (London, 1921), pp. 122–124, for Shelley's borrowing names from Charlotte Dacre. Yale has an apparently unique copy of a twenty-eight page novel by "Miss Dacre," entitled *The School of Friends, A Domestic Tale* (printed for Thomas Tegg, London, n.d.) with two hand-colored engravings by T. Rowlandson. It is listed in no catalogue or bibliography seen. A tale of courtship, utterly worthless in style and plot, it has a character named Matilda.

[30] It reached three editions, or at least reprints, in 1807 and a French translation in 1818. *Zofloya* had a French edition of 1812, but the British Museum *Catalogue* lists no other editions of her novels.

[31] Summers, *op. cit.*, p. xxvi, speaks of finding only six copies of *Zofloya* in 1928. Unfortunately, the rare copies of her other novels "don't travel," and could not therefore be studied.

amatorial."[32] The kind loan of its copy by Harvard University has enabled me to check into the matter. The book includes a notice "To the Public" explaining that at the age of twenty-three the author cannot plead "extreme youth" to extenuate the verses that are not captioned with her youthful age, as many of them are. They are all uniformly flat and derivative in style and content, composite of echoes of neoclassical mannerisms. For examples I cite "The Kiss": The greatest bliss / Is in a kiss – / A kiss of love refin'd, / When springs the soul / Without controul, / And blends the bliss with mind" (I, 22); "The Vanity of Hope": "Since to hope for true love is but folly, / And woman's the plaything of man, / My soul sinks in deep melancholy, / Corroding my life's little span" (I, 24); "The Emigrant": "Oh! I shall ne'er forget thee, wretched wight! / While memory holds forget thee shall I never; / Thy *conscious* form, that shunn'd the garish light, / The tatter'd garb, that mock'd thy vain endeavour" (I, 45); and "The Sovereignty of Love": "Ah, mock not me! for you have never lov'd, / Nor have you e'er, like me, its sorrow prov'd" (I, 126). I believe that one can readily see how much less original and sprightly are these than the verses of even Anna Matilda, as well as the others of the Della Cruscan school.

There is, however, a bit of justification for Byron's grouping Rosa Matilda's verses with theirs. First, one of her poems is addressed "To the Shade of Mary Robinson" (I, 130–133). It begins: "How sadly, sweet seraph, I mourn that I never, / I ne'er was so happy thee living to know!" and includes "Ah! around thy sad tomb not a weed gaily flaunting / Could Matilda's devotion permit there should be." Second, several of her poems are exchanges between Rosa Matilda (unnamed) and a young devotee and in two of these sets at least there is an indication of prior newspaper publication, despite her subtitle reference to "unpublished" poems. In no instance have I been able to verify whether Charlotte Dacre used her pen name in her original newspaper publication. In volume I, we read "To Him Who Says He Loves" (26–27), followed by "The Answer," printed as "By George Skeene, Esq. as it appeared in the Morning Herald." In volume II, we find "Alas! Forgive Me" (II, 4–6) with "The Reply" by "Azor" (II, 7–8), the author

[32] *Monthly Magazine*, XXI (July 25, 1806), 608. It appears not to have been reviewed in the *Edinburgh* and the *Monthly Review*.

identified in a footnote. "Azor" replies again, in "To –: My reason for being one Week absent from her" (II, 9–10). I must observe that "Azor's" poetry is just as dull and tedious as Rosa's. Another exchange follows: "Song, the Metamorphosis" and "In Answer" by "Azor" (II, 14–17). The "Azor" series bears no indication of newspaper publication, but the *Morning Herald* was again the instrument of amatory antiphony, for two pages contain a poem "Addressed to the Author / In the Morning Herald / By an unknown Hand / In Answer to her lines entitled 'The Philosopher'" (II, 51–52). Rosa Matilda spares us the need to read her primal effusion, which is not included in this collection. Despite these exchanges, however, the style of the poems removes them from the more striking and more novel Della Cruscan realm, despite Byron's somewhat tentative ascription.

For the sake of completing the Byron record concerning Rosa, I note his letter to Murray of April 9, 1814, about the "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte"; Byron suggests the need to print "quickening spell" in place of "*potent* spell," which phrase he calls "commonplace and Rosa-Matildaish" (*Works*, 1859, p. 461, n. 3). The last item in the record concerns an ambiguous reference, probably not by Byron at all although always printed as his; it is an addendum of 1816 to the notes for *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* concerning Matilda: "She since married the Morning Post – an exceeding good match; and is now dead – which is better" (*Works*, 1859, p. 432, n. 1). In his edition of the works, Coleridge says that the last part – "and is now dead – which is better" – in the manuscript is "in pencil, and possibly, by another hand" (I, 358). I am sure that all admirers of Lord Byron would prefer to believe that Thomas Moore initiated an error in first printing this part of the note as Byron's, especially since the facts concerning the continued existence of the wife of an editor of the Morning Post were easy to verify in 1816.

It would appear that this marked the end of Anna or Laury Matilda for a time, whether or not "Matilda" in *English Bards* did or did not refer to "her," but there was a new development that suggests that the Della Cruscan "personality" of the sobriquet "Matilda" had not become extinct. This concerns the celebrated affair of the poetic "address" to be read on October 10, 1812, at the opening of Drury Lane Theatre, rebuilt after the fire of 1809. A special com-

mittee had advertised the contest, and Lord Holland had tried to interest Byron in submitting an entry. After a brief attempt he had destroyed his few tentative lines, but the committee finally found none of the one hundred twelve anonymous offerings acceptable, and Byron complied with Holland's urgent request to submit one. His seventy-three line poem was read by Ellison, the well-known actor.[33] The occasion was remarkable, not only for these rather weak verses of Byron's, but also for the ludicrous and much publicized insistence by one aged applicant that his verses be read anyway. The clever, witty brothers, Horace and James Smith, seized the opportunity to produce within a month the volume *Rejected Addresses*, consisting of twenty-one "effusions" in prose and verse, supposed to have been sent to the committee, all of them in the style of well-known writers.[34] Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Scott were among the poets whose styles were parodied in these fancied treatments of Drury Lane. The popularity of the work was truly incredible, for it went into at least thirty editions, including several in the United States (1855, 1859, and 1871). Horace Smith explained in his preface to the eighteenth edition: "We had to confine ourselves to writers whose style and habit of thought, being more marked and peculiar, was more capable of exaggeration and distortion" (1833). It is of interest that Laura Matilda, for the first time as a unified personality, occurs among the "addresses," her name being signed to "Drury's Dirge."[35] The opening lines give the style: "Balmy Zephyrs, lightly flitting, / Shake me with your azure wing" (1812 ed., p. 329). The whole consists of fifteen quatrains. At the back is a note, "The authors, in gallantry bound, wish this lady to continue anonymous" (p. 404). Their reason for this statement was probably mystification, unless it be that Horace Smith wished to avoid displeasing the many friends of "Laura" or Mrs. Robinson, some of whom he knew. The biographer of the Smiths, Arthur A. Beavan, says that the press was all but unanimous in

[33] Marchand, *Byron*, I, 363.

[34] Arthur H. Beavan, *James and Horace Smith* (London, 1899), pp. 104–112.

[35] Given by Andrew Boyle in his edition of *Rejected Addresses* (London, 1929), pp. 23–24. An interesting coincidence in the use of "Matilda" is the *Morning Chronicle's* sardonic appeal, of November 13, 1812, to all the poets of England "down to Rosa Matilda and Mr. Fitgerald" to send in a Drury Lane address; her husband was editor of the *Chronicle's* political adversary, the *Post*.

praising the work.[36] Of particular interest is their response to the only "bifurcated" and anonymous "writer" among the twenty-one parodied. Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh Review* of November, 1812, declares it to be "not of the first quality ... The verses are, to be sure, very smooth and very nonsensical, as was intended." He then cites three of the stanzas.[37] He asks no question about the identity of the double name, possibly because he assumed it to be known from Gifford's satires. This, at least, is the assumption of Andrew Boyle, who comments in his edition of the *Rejected Addresses*: "The names were combined from Laura Maria and Anna Matilda. They were both dead, but their school still flourished in the Poet's Corner of newspapers and miscellanies."[38] Certainly the name "Laura Matilda" does not seem to have received any more currency from the Smiths' use of it, to judge from literary reference and from the curiosity of readers in the 1880's, who sent their questions to *Notes and Queries*.[39]

In America the pseudonyms of Anna Matilda and Laura Maria may have had more currency, even at the time of *Rejected Addresses* (1812). The critical response to the book offers a slight gauge. The *Analectic Review* of Philadelphia, of which Washington Irving was briefly the editor, wrote: "'Drury's Dirge' by Laura Matilda is well executed but out of time and place. The existence of the Della Cruscans is only to be remembered in their epitaph." They were "consecrated to elemental and eternal ridicule in the Baviad and the Maeviad." Only this keeps the "nameless sentimentalists" alive."[40] The reviewer is ambiguous about whether he refers to the satire of Gifford or of the Smiths in this perpetuation of Laura Matilda. Common sense would assert that the tradition of Della Cruscanism and the knowledge of the names of Laura and Matilda would be needed to cause the public to accept a descriptive designation, such as "Laura Matilda" and to use it for many years. And this, as I shall show, is what was going to happen.

The tradition was strong here since it had fortified tendencies that were already ripe and pervasive. The antagonism to it sprang from

[36] Beavan, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

[37] *Edinburgh Review*, XX (Nov., 1812), 434–451.

[38] *Rejected Addresses* (London, 1929), p. 152.

[39] See Note 13, above.

[40] *Analectic Review*, I (March, 1813), 214.

circles equivalent to those in England – Federalist rather than Tory. But in the American realm of politics, the Democrats could be crushed for a short time only, at the end of the 1790's, and they came into their triumph with the election of Jefferson in 1800. In literature, the struggle of ideologies as well as of styles affected attitudes toward Della Cruscanism. I find it amusing that the *Columbian Centinel and Massachusetts Federalist* which had sponsored Della Cruscan exchanges, had become so anti-Democratic that the January 14, 1801 issue carried a satire, "The 'Enlightened Eighteenth Century,' or, the 'Age of Reason,'" which attacks the Merrys and Robinsons who "shed a new light."[41] There are many other examples to show that "the plague" of Della Cruscanism "lived on in this country far into the Nineteenth Century," as Charles Angoff says. He instances Robert Treat Paine, Jr. and Dr. Joseph Brown Ladd, both of whom have been mentioned, and Mrs. Rawson.[42] A boost to the tendency perhaps came from the publication of the complete works of Paine in 1812 with a Della Cruscan prose introduction of extravagant praise. Still later, in 1818, Solyman Brown, in his *Essay on American Poetry* in rhymed couplets used a Della Cruscan style.[43]

There was a broad and persistent opposition to the style, of course, in addition to the isolated attacks like that of the 1801 satire. The *Monthly Anthology* of Boston, for example, in January, 1810, burst out against its "unintelligible fustian" at the same time that the review columns praised Paine's "The Ruling Passion."[44] One of the major sources of literary opinion, the "Colon and Spondee" columns in the *Farmer's Museum*, from 1801 to 1810, inveighed against the Della Cruscans. Joseph Dennie, who was to be so important in the Philadelphia *Port Folio*, wrote the "Colon" prose parts and Royall Tyler, the clever and satirical verse. A fine instance of the latter is given in the important anthology of Evert A. and George L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia of American Literature*, namely, "Address to Della Crusca, humbly attempted in the sub-

[41] *Columbian Centinel*, XXXIV, No. 39. For a reprinting of the 108 lines with comments see my article, "A Federalist Farrago" in *Satire Newsletter*, IV (Fall, 1966), 29–34.

[42] Charles Angoff, *Literary History of the American People* (New York, 1931), II 214–215.

[43] Pattee, *op. cit.* pp. 109 and 116–117.

[44] Pattee, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

lime style of that fashionable author by Della Yankee."[45] In these clever lines Anna Matilda still receives her just derision: Della Crusca's soul is in vain "confin'd / Which fills all space – and e'en Matilda's mind! Anna's capacious mind, which all agree, contain'd a wilderness of words in thee." Tyler advises Merry to "let loose ... / Thy epithets ... those dogs of verse, / Draw forth thy gorgeous swords of damask'd rhyme / And ride triumphant through Columbia's clime." Finally he says, "Rise Della Crusca, prince of bards sublime / And pour on us whole cataracts of rhyme." Despite the many instances of satire in this vein during the first twenty years of the century, I must confess to their being limited to these two decades, largely, I suspect, because the wits were deflected into other literary channels. There is need for a study in depth of the continuing Della Cruscanism of American literature; I offer a small but significant piece of evidence that literary men were wont to refer to a Laura Matilda school of writing, including prose as well as poetry in that sobriquet.

I shall ask the reader to leap into the year 1833, the month of July, when the Baltimore *Saturday Visiter*, a weekly newspaper, was offering a prize of $50 for the best short story and $25 for the best poem submitted.[46] The judges appointed by the proprietor were John P. Kennedy, Dr. James H. Miller, and John Hazlehurst Boneval Latrobe (1803–1891). These three eminent men of good taste were pleased to find at the bottom of the pile of utterly unworthy prose manuscripts six stories in a small, hand-lettered book entitled "Tales of the Folio Club"; they were all by the same author, who turned out to be, of course, Edgar Allan Poe. The judges awarded the prize for prose to his "Manuscript Found in a Bottle" and

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[45] Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia* (New York, 1855; Philadelphia 1882 rev. ed. used), I, 432. M. Ray Adams, in his excellent article in *PMLA*, LXXIX, 259–263, reprints Della Yankee's poem of May 16, 1797, but ignores its being reprinted in *The Spirit of the Farmer's Museum* (Walpole, New Hampshire), pp. 221–223 in deploring no reprint until Duyckinck's; see p. 290 also for Anna Matilda as establishing the "obnubulous" style. Adams treats eighteenth century instances chiefly with two of 1806 cited. His notes cite many interesting studies of Merry.

[46] Arthur Hobson Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe* (New York, 1941), pp. 201–204, gives the best account. (Hereafter cited in my text as "Quinn"). See also Hervey Allen, *Israfel* (New York, 1926; ed. of 1960 used), 280–284, and *The Complete Works of Poe*, ed. J. A. Harrison (N.Y., 1902), I, 116–117, hereafter cited in my text as "Harrison."

were inclined to award the poetry prize to the "Coliseum," written in the same hand, but chose another contestant's verses for the sake of variety. The award rescued Poe from one of his most desperate states and brought him the very helpful friendship of the important Mr. Kennedy. The notice about the "distinguished merit" of Poe's six tales, which the committee "enjoined" Poe "to publish" appeared in the October 19, 1833 issue, together with the prize story.[47] Its importance to the hitherto discouraged Poe may be gauged from his reprinting the account, plus the judges' letter in the *Southern Literary Messenger* when he had become editor through the aid of Kennedy. There he speaks highly of the three, including Latrobe.[48]

I mention Latrobe specifically because he has left an account of the judges' procedure which brings us back to "Laura Matilda." Latrobe was asked to give his reminiscences of Poe at the Poe Memorial Exercises in Baltimore in 1877.[49] He wrote: "I remember well that the first production taken from the top of the prose pile was in a woman's hand, written very distinctly, as indeed, were all the articles submitted, and so neatly, that it seemed a pity not to award it a prize. It was ruthlessly criticized, however, for it was ridiculously bad – namby-pamby in the extreme and of the school known as the *Laura Matilda* school." He continued with the account of their delight in reading aloud all six of Poe's tales." Latrobe himself had been chosen as judge not simply because of his excellently family background and education, but also because he had distinctly literary tastes. Indeed, under the name of "Godfrey Wallace," he wrote for the *Atlantic Souvenir*, Matthew Carey's annual. In 1876 he published *Odds and Ends*, a volume of poems, and was always noted for his "clearness of perception."[50] I mention this in confirmation of his accuracy in using the term "Laura Matilda school." It will be noticed that it was in connection with a

[47] A paragraph with Latrobe's name signed is given in *Israfel*, p. 282.

[48] *Southern Literary Messenger*, I, No. 12 (Aug., 1835), 716. This full column, largely about the letter, has not been collected by Harrison, although obviously by Poe.

[49] A long excerpt of Latrobe's "Reminiscences of Poe" in Sara Sigourney Rice, *Edgar Allan Poe: A Memorial Volume* (Baltimore, 1877), pp. 57–62, is reprinted in *Israfel*, 280–281, but Latrobe does not italicize the name, Laura Matilda, in the original.

[50] *DAB*, XI, 27–28.

contest crucial to Poe's entire career. It may be assumed also that when Poe met Latrobe he used the same phrase in discussing the judging of the contributions.[51]

Since the name, "Laura Matilda," was derived from a poem by Horace Smith, there is significance in Poe's evident familiarity with Smith's name and works in connection with these very "Tales of the Folio Club." The six stories submitted to Kennedy, Miller, and Latrobe were only a portion of the original eleven tales, which Poe had vainly tried to publish as a book, with a preface describing each of the putative authors of what were intended to be satires on contemporary best sellers in fiction. One sentence is relevant: "Then there was Chronologos Chronology who admired Horace Smith, and had a very big nose which had been in Asia Minor." The corresponding item is "A Tale of Jerusalem," which is named precisely after the phrase used as a subtitle for the popular three-decker novel by Horace Smith, entitled *Zillah*. Poe actually borrowed phrases for his story from the novel, in deliberate parody.[52] In February, 1836, Poe alluded again to Horace Smith, this time as being "as learned" as Bulwer Lytton, in his review of the latter's historical novel *Rienzi* (Harrison, VIII, 223). A third allusion links Poe and Smith and leads us directly to the work, *Rejected Addresses*. It is found in the last part of his cryptography articles, the one entitled "Secret Writing," in *Graham's Magazine* of August, 1841. Poe prints a letter from F. W. Thomas with an enclosure from Thomas's friend, Dr. Charles S. Frailey, posing an "exceedingly ingenious cipher" (XIX, 96). Poe's article concludes with a letter acknowledging the correctness of his solution. In the November issue of the magazine, Poe printed Frailey's letter in full together with his solution of the cryptogram passage, which was taken from "Johnson's Ghost," one of the *Rejected Addresses*.[53] This strongly implies either Poe's familiarity with the work or an interest in the source which might easily have led him to dip into its pages at the time.

[51] Latrobe's "Reminiscences," p. 60; see also *Israfel*, p. 283.

[52] For a good appreciation of Poe's satiric intention and parody of *Zillah* see James Southall Wilson, *American Mercury*, XXIV (October, 1931), 215–220), "The Devil Was in It." For the Introduction by Poe see Harrison, II, xxxix, and Quinn, *Poe*, p. 745.

[53] The identification of the source of the cryptogram is made by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., *PMLA*, LVIII (1943), 754–779, n. 57, "What Poe Knew about Cryptography."

Poe, I strongly believe, knew the phrase "Laura Matilda," directly from the pages of the book and also from its wide currency as a designation of what Latrobe and others called "namby-pamby" writing.[54] This knowledge was to form the basis for the final episode in my tale of Miss Matilda. It must be remembered that Poe was one of the editors of *Graham's Magazine*, 1841–1842, and is usually given the major credit for the extraordinary increase in Graham's subscription list, from 5,000 to 40,000 by the end of 1842.[55] Graham wished to limit Poe's demands upon him for a proper salary or, rather, for a proprietary interest in the journal. On the last page of the December, 1841 number he inserted a note: "Our editorial list will be as follows: Geo. R. Graham, Chas. J. Peterson, Mrs. E. C. Embury, Mrs. A. S. Stephens, and Edgar A. Poe." Peterson had been a hold-over from the days of the *Casket*, before Graham merged that magazine with Burton's, and Poe had been on the staff when the April, 1841 issue was being prepared.[56] The newcomers to the list of five are the two ladies, Ann S. Stephens and Emma C. Embury, taken on probably to ensure a flow of properly feminine stories to counterbalance the serious and often grim pieces of Poe, whose conditions of staff membership apparently entailed one creative contribution a month (Quinn, p. 342). Witness his "Murders in the Rue Morgue" of April, 1841; "Descent into the Maelstrom" of May, 1841; "Colloquy of Monos and Una" of August, 1841; "Never Bet Your Head" (later printed as "Never Bet the Devil Your Head") of September, 1841; and the "intellectual" articles on Autography in the issues of November and December, 1841 and January, 1842 – all climaxed by "The Mask [sic] of the Red Death. A Fantasy" of May, 1842. This was the sort of horrifying thing being contributed by the mainstay of the editorial staff, while in the same city of Philadelphia Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale was furnishing only sweetness and light to the readers of *Godey's Lady's Magazine*, a formidable rival with its engravings and fashion plates

[54] There is no need for details about the origin of "namby-pamby" in Ambrose Philips's first name. His "infantile trochaics" led to the derogatory nickname, as Baugh et al., *Literary History of England* (New York, 1948), p. 908, indicates. In this case too a style-designation originally applied to verse came eventually to be derisively used for prose as well.

[55] See Poe's letter to F. W. Thomas, Feb. 3, 1842, in Ostrom, *Letters of ... Poe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), I, 191, 193; also Woodberry, *Life of ... Poe* (Boston, 1909), I, 317.

[56] Quinn, pp. 309–310.

and recipes. The function of the two ladies must have been very clear to Mr. Poe. Consider the sentimental balderdash of their contributions to successive issues of *Graham's*: January, 1842, "Cousin Agatha" by Mrs. Embury; February, 1842, "The Lady's choice" by Mrs. Embury and "The Two Dukes" by Mrs. Stephens, which unfolded its continuing puerilities monthly throughout the year; and March, 1842, "The First Step" by Mrs. Embury.

At this point we take leave of their contributions, just as Mr. Poe did, for his break with Graham and departure from the staff concerned basic policy and probably involved just that new "feminine" touch. In a letter to Frederick W. Thomas, May 25, 1842, explaining why he has "parted company with Graham," Poe says: "My duties ceased with the May number. I shall continue to contribute occasionally. My reason for resigning was disgust with the namby-pamby character of the Mag. – a character which it was impossible to eradicate – I allude to the contemptible pictures, fashion-plates, music and love tales. The salary, moreover, did not pay me for the labor which I was forced to bestow" (Ostrom, I, 198). In a letter of July 6, 1842, to Daniel Bryan he more explicitly says: "My connexion with 'Graham's Magazine' ceased with the May number, which was completed by the Irst of April" (I, 204–205). His failure to manage to establish the *Penn Magazine* for lack of financial backing led him to contemplate a return to Graham. In a letter of September 12, 1842, again to Frederick W. Thomas, he speaks of an offer made by Graham, "who is not especially pleased with Griswold." He asserts: "Should I go back to Graham I will endeavour to bring about some improvements in the general appearance of the Magazine; and above all, to get rid of the quackery which now infects it" (I, 210–212). Of course he did not return to *Graham's Magazine*, but he did continue to publish in it as he had intended.

And this brings us to Matilda again. In the April, 1842 issue of *Graham's* is the first of his two reviews of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*.[57] May I ask the reader to peruse the second paragraph, given below, in the light of the anguish of Poe's leaving the magazine, ousted, one might say, by the ladies Embury and Stephens:

> With rare exception — in the case of Mr. Irving's "Tales of a Traveller" and a few other works of a like cast — we have had no American tales of high

[57] Given by Harrison, *Works*, XI, 102–104 and also in Quinn, *The Complete Poems and Stories of ... Poe* (New York, 1946), II, 946–948.

> merit. We have had no skilful compositions — nothing which bear examination as works of art. Of twattle called tale-writing we have had, herhaps, more than enough. We have had a superabundance of the Rosa-Matilda effusions — gilt-edged paper all *couleur de rose*: a full allowance of cut-and-thrust blue-blazing melodramaticisms; a nauseating surfeit of low miniature copying of low life, much in the manner, and with about half the merit, of the Dutch herrings and decayed cheeses of Van Tuyssel — of all this, *eheu jam satis*!

There is little doubt here that Poe subtends in one category "Rosa-Matilda effusions – gilt-edged paper all *couleur de rose.*" But there are several things wrong here. First of all, Rosa Matilda did not write tales in the sense used in the entire paragraph, which is addressed to the short stories of Hawthorne and begins and ends with the short sketches of Irving. The first two sentences of his review make this clear: "We have always regarded the *Tale* (using this word in its popular acceptation) as affording the best prose opportunity for display of the highest talent. It has peculiar advantages which the novel does not admit." Except for her poems, attemptedly lyrical, Rosa Matilda wrote only novels. (I make an exception of *George the Fourth*, mentioned earlier.) Moreover, it was unlikely that Rosa Matilda was sufficiently alive as a literary figure in 1842 for Poe to allude to her with the belief that it would mean anything to any reader. I doubt that Poe himself knew her novels, which had passed into blissful oblivion by 1820. Never had there been an American edition of her works, if we may trust the lists of Allibone, Sabin, Roorbach, and others. No major library catalogue indicates reprints here or abroad, beyond the dates previously indicated. While Poe certainly knew Gothic terror novels, such as *The Monk*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and *Frankenstein*,[58] he never mentions Rosa Matilda or her works throughout the rest of his criticism. Finally, the association of these "effusions" or novels with "gilt-edged paper all couleur de rose" is strangely inappropriate.

There is a slight chance that he is echoing Byron's note about Rosa's Della Cruscanism in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. His veneration of Byron needs no documentation. We know his familiarity with Byron's satire, for in the *Messenger* of September,

[58] For Poe's reading of *Frankenstein* in Philadelphia, see Edwin Wolf II, *Library Chronicle: Friends of the Library of University of Pennsylvania*, XVII (Spring, 1951), 90–103, "Horace Wemyss Smith's Recollections of Poe." I must thank Professor Mabbott for this item.

1835, in reviewing *Mephistoles in England,* he objects to the "coarse and malignant satire. It resembles the English Bards and Scotch Reviewers."[59] At the time that he wrote the Hawthorne review, he may have been rereading his Byron, which could have supplied him also with the phrase "couleur de rose."[60] Frankly, however, this is hypothetical, for I believe that he really had Laura Matilda in mind in Latrobe's sense. As an artist, conscious of the world of difference between himself and the lady editors, whose works managed to enter into the magazines and the gilt-edged rose-papered (or at least rose-end-papered) annuals, for compensation superior to his, Poe had a legitimate source for complaint. This motivation takes us to a different area of examination.

In his review of May, 1842, published after he had left *Graham's* and was no longer present to supervise proof-reading in his sedulous fashion, there is, I believe, an error of punctuation which affects our understanding of the passage in question. Poe first speaks "of twattle called tale-writing" of which "we have had, perhaps, more than enough." The next long sentences gives a series of those superfluities, "the superabundance of the Rosa-Matilda effusions" being the first. Logically the next one of the series is "a full allowance of cut-and-thrust ... melodramaticisms," with the third being the "nauseating surfeit of low miniature copying of low life." There would then be three types of faulty tale-writing: the sentimental, the melodramatic, and the rustic. However, the use of the colon after *couleur de rose* destroys this pattern and makes little sense in the first part of the sentence, since "Rosa-Matilda effusions" on "gilt-edged" rose paper could not consist of "cut-and-thrust ... melodramaticisms." Moreover Poe's strict sense of style would demand that if there were only the two objects to the verb "have had," a conjunction would be needed before "a nauseating surfeit."

I find support for this assumption of three distinct types also in the different character of the writings of the two lady editors whose new role on the magazine must have hastened the departure of Poe, disgusted with the "twattle" and "quackery" now rife. Please remember the list of stories that Mrs. Embury had contributed to *Graham's* from January through May. The same type of prose "effusion" was to continue, with "Love and Pique; or, Scenes

[59] *Messenger,* I, 776; Harrison, VII, 42.

[60] *Don Juan,* Canto XII, lxii, p. 724 in *Works of Lord Byron* (London, 1859).

at a Watering Place" in June, "Brother and Sister" in July, "Envy" in August, and "Silent love" in October. Mrs. Ann Stephens had been marching along for the first part of the year with the serialized "The Two Dukes." Poe's comments elsewhere on the writings of the two point out a sharp difference. Both ladies were sufficiently well known to be included by Poe in his 1841 Autography series in *Graham's*. Before her advent on the staff, Poe says of Mrs. Embury, in November, 1841: "She is one of the most nervous of our female writers, and is not destitute of originality – that rarest of all qualities in a woman, and especially in an American woman. Her manuscript evinces a strong disposition to fly off at a tangent from the old formulae of the Boarding Academies. Both in it, and in her literary style, it would be well that she should no longer hesitate to discard the absurdities of mere fashion."[61] In this I find a correspondence with the first "superfluity" of the "Rosa-Matilda," i.e., Laura Matilda type of tale-writing in Poe's opinion. The same Autography series article which includes Ann S. Stephens is absolutely noncommittal since it was prepared for the December, 1841 issue, in which Graham also announced her becoming an editor. Poe gives the facts about her previously editing two other journals, to which she contributed "many articles of merit and popularity." She "will, hereafter, enrich this magazine with her compositions and as one of its editors." Her manuscript, he notes, has more "force and freedom" than is usual with women. This strain I find continued in the Literati series that Poe wrote for *Godey's Lady's Book* four years later. In July, 1846 he writes: "She is fond of the bold, striking, trenchant – in a word, of the melo-dramatic, has a quick appreciation of the picturesque, and is not unskilful in delineations of character." Her style has "verboseness and floridity." It is "turgid – even bombastic – involved, needlessly parenthetical, and superabundant in epithets, although these latter are frequently well chosen" (Harrison, XV, 56–57). The specific terms used and the general impression given in Poe's opinion of Mrs. Stephens sharply differentiate one lady from the other and in the same fashion as in the first two of the faulty types of superabundant tales in the Hawthorne review.

By the time he wrote the Literati series in 1846, however, time, removal to New York City, and his natural gallantry had tempered

[61] *Graham's Magazine* article, given in Harrison, XV, 197–198.

his impatience and exasperation with these two lady members of Graham's staff, so that Mrs. Embury's portrait in the Literati, although brief, is "all sweetness" (Harrison, XV, 90–91). In May, 1842, Poe had an additional reason for his irritation, which crept into the Matilda passage. Look at Rufus W. Griswold's extremely popular and highly reputed work, *The Poets and Poetry of America.* It was published in April, 1842, although known to Poe earlier, and reviewed by him in the June, 1842 issue of *Graham's* (XI, 124–126). Edgar Allan Poe is given space for three poems exactly, a prefatory note compact of mere facts and some errors that speaks of Poe's "very dissipated life" at the University of Virginia, and vouchsafes not one word of praise from the editor. By comparison, Mrs. Emma C. Embury is accorded three pages, containing seven poems, and is called "a woman of genius," of "rich fancy and much skill in the use of language," with "subjects well chosen."[62] What restraint Poe showed in his first review in *Graham's* (June, 1842) when he said of Griswold: "The editor has scarcely done justice to some of our younger poets, either in his estimate of their genius, or in his selections from their poems."[63] Surely it would be galling to editor Poe, responsible for the phenomenal success of *Graham's*, to find himself overbalanced or even counterbalanced by these two lady editors, in determining the policy of the magazine or even in allocating space and making selections.

It is my assumption, therefore, that Rosa Matilda, in Poe's Hawthorne critique, really represented Laura Matilda, epitome of these and other popular and superficial writers. It is with a sigh of pity that I end the tale of Poe and Miss Matilda, which signifies the sad indifference of magazine proprietors and book editors to the only tale writer worthy of being matched with Hawthorne, a tale writer and poet who has helped to relegate the Annas and Rosas to dusty library shelves and to footnotes.

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[62] Griswold, *The Poets ... of America* (Philadelphia, 1842, 1st and 2nd editions), pp. 318–320 for Mrs. Embury, pp. 387–388 for Poe. For the popularity of Griswold's book and other examples of his poor judgment see Quinn, pp. 350–351.

[63] Given in Harrison, XI, 124–126. Quinn, *ibid.*, n. 11 on p. 351 considers it doubtful that Poe wrote the review of June, 1842.