

GOTHIC BOURNES

**ALBERT OF WERDENDORFF,
OR
THE MIDNIGHT EMBRACE
(1801)**

**TRANSCRIPTION BY
Lucía Soledad Piñeiro Pías**

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TALES
of
TERROR AND WONDER

COLLECTED BY
MATTHEW GREGORY LEWIS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HENRY MORLEY

H. D. PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AT
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

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ALBERT OF WERDENDORFF, OR THE MIDNIGHT EMBRACE.

A GERMAN ROMANCE.

Nocturnus occurram Furor. –HORAT.

LORD ALBERT had titles, Lord Albert had power,
Lord Albert in gold and in jewels was clad;
Fair Josephine bloomed like an opening flower,
But beauty and virtue were all that she had.

To rifle her treasure, with each wily art
Of studied seduction, Lord Albert essayed;
Too well he succeeded! her innocent heart,
By virtue protected, by love was betrayed.

Full oft in her cot, at her casement, she'd sigh,
And gaze sad and silent on Werdendorff's walls;
[34]Full oft gushed the tear-drops in streams from her eyes,
When mirth reigned triumphant in Werdendorff's halls.

When all in the castle were wrapt¹ in repose,
Lord Albert would ponder on Josephine's charms;
Would leap the wide moat, and the portal unclose,
To hie² him in haste to his Josephine's arms.

¹ Archaic spelling of "wrapped" (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/wrapt>)

² Archaic, to go quickly (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/hie>)

When the moon, hid in clouds, gave no tremulous ray,
O'er the moor dark and fenny³ to point out the road,
At her casement the maid would a taper display,
To guide her true love to her humble abode.

From the castle could Albert discern the loved spot,
When the bickering lustre gleamed dim from afar,
Would speed him in safety to Josephine's cot,
And bless the kind beams of love's tutelary star.

Ah! maiden ill-fated! too soon wilt thou find,
That vows can be broken, that lovers betray;
That men, fickle men, are less true than the wind,
That love, if illicit, too soon will decay!

The night waned apace, and her taper shone bright,
"He comes not!" –she murmured, all pale and forlorn;
Another night passed, but in vain gleamed the light,
He came not, for Albert was false and forsworn!

[35]Why stream the gay banners from Werdendorff's walls?
Why hastes to yon chapel the trimly decked crowd?
A mistress to-day shall preside in our halls!
For Albert shall wed with Gumilda the proud!

To the winds the poor Josephine murmured her tale,
Each vision of fancy was faded and gone!
Each shout of loud revelry borne on the gale,
Said Albert was faithless, and she was undone!

³ This word does not appear in modern dictionaries, but presumably it is an adjective derived from the noun "fen".

With a tempest of maddening passions distressed,
On the wings of despair to the castle she flew,
While love stilled the whirlwind that raged in her breast,
And whispered delusive, that Albert was true.

The portal she entered, the feasters among,
And mingled, unseen, in the revelling crowd;
But who were the gayest amid the gay throng?
Lord Albert the false, and Gumilda the proud!

Home sped the poor maid, from her proud rival's door,
Her bosom with anguish unceasing was torn;
The wind shook the rushes that waved on the moor,
And all, like her fortune, was dark and forlorn!

"Fall on, chilling mists! thou art cruel," she said,
"But crueller far is Lord Albert to me!
Blow on, thou bleak wind! o'er my woe-stricken head,
Thou'rt cold, but Lord Albert is colder than thee!" —

[36]"Twas midnight—alone at her casement she sighed,
When the low sound of footsteps struck faint on her ear,
And a voice in the accent of love softly cried,
"My Josephine, haste thee, thy true love is here!" —

"Away to Gumilda!" indignant she cried,
"To revel in pleasures at Werdendorff go!
Why leave you, false traitor, my proud rival's bed,
To add, by new insults, to Josephine's woe?" —

“Oh, hush thee, my true love, revoke that command,
For why should Lord Albert and Josephine part?
Gumilda the proud can claim nought but my hand,
But Josephine lords it supreme o’er my heart.

“My father commanded, his frowns awed my soul,
Forgive then the fault, nor impute it to me;
As the mariner’s needle still turns to the pole,
My heart turns with fond adoration to thee.”—

With blandishments soft the deceiver essayed,
With tones of affection, her bosom to move;
She smiled—but ye damsels forbear to upbraid,
Nor wonder that anger was vanquished by love.

Full soon on the board now the viands were spread,
The wine’s luscious nectar in goblets shone bright;
The flower-footed Hours, winged by Ecstasy, fled,
And Josephine’s eye beamed with tender delight.

“Adieu!” cried Lord Albert, “the first blush of morn
Empurples the east, and the setting stars wane.”—
[37]“To Josephine when will Lord Albert return?”—
“At *midnight’s dark hour* will he clasp her again.”—

Lord Albert sped onwards, his bosom beat high,
“Hurra! from a mistress detested I’m freed!
Gumilda, thy vengeance proclaimed she should die!
Gumilda, my soul has not shrunk from the deed!

“Alas! hapless victim! thy fluttering breath,
Full soon will expire amid agonized pains;
The cup that I gave thee was pregnant with death,
And poison shall riot and boil in thy veins!

“At midnight’s dark hour shall I clasp thee again?
Fond maiden! that midnight thou never shalt see!
Oblivion ere then shall thy senses enchain!
Fond maiden, ere then a pale corse⁴ shalt thou be!”

The dawn-light’s first blush had illumined the dell,
Lord Albert sped on, nor was cheered by the scene;
He sighed at each note of the iron-tongued bell,
That told the sad fate of the fair Josephine.

The smile of gay beauty, the blaze of the ball,
No peace to his bosom, no charm could impart;
He sighed ‘mid the splendour of Werdendorff’s hall,
For Conscience had wound her strong folds round his heart.

“Arouse thee! my Lord,” cried Gumilda the proud,
“What fiend has possessed thee, and maddens thy brain?”
[38]Anon⁵ would he shudder, and mutter aloud,
“At midnight’s dark hour wilt thou clasp me again?”

His limbs, so athletic, were palsied by fear,
As midnight’s dark hour was proclaimed by the bell;
“Full well,” he exclaimed, “the dread summons I hear,
Gumilda! it calls me, for ever farewell!”

⁴ Archaic spelling of “corpse” (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/corse>)

⁵ Archaic: soon; shortly (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/anon>)

The battlements shook with the echoing storm,
The thunder's loud peals burst on Wordendorff's⁶ wall;
The tapers burnt dimly, as Josephine's form
Glided forth from the portal, and traversed the hall!

All shrouded she was in the garb of the tomb!
Her lips they were livid, her face it was wan!
A death the most horrid had rifled her bloom,
And each charm of beauty was faded and gone!

"Thy hand snapt⁷ my thread of existence," she said,
"And shalt thou unpunished, thou false one, remain?
'Tis *midnight's dark hour*, I am come from the dead,
Delay'st thou, my bridegroom, to clasp me again?"

Thus saying, she dragged him perforce to her breast,
Imprinting a cold clammy kiss on his face!
Her lips, all so pale, to his forehead she pressed,
And clasped him full close in her noisome embrace:

[39]Back started Lord Albert, entranced in surprise!
And, breathless with agony, sank on the floor;
Then raised to the spectre his frenzy-struck eyes,
Then closed them in darkness, to ope⁸ them no more!

⁶ The spelling of "Werdendorff" is changed here.

⁷ Archaic spelling of the word "snapped".

⁸ Archaic or literary form of "open" (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/ope>).

Since then o'er the castle drear solitude reigns,
Its ramparts, dismantled, are skirted with thorn;
The proud towers of Wenderdorff⁹ scatter the plains,
The hall, once so festive, is drear and forlorn!

The traveller full often the tale will inquire,
And wanders the time-stricken ruins between;
The peasants full oft will encircle the fire,
And talk of Lord Albert and fair Josephine:

Will tell what grim spectres the wanderer appal,
Whose feet so unhallowed o'er Werdendorff rove!
How lights, more than mortal, illumine the hall,
While Albert is clasped by his skeleton love!

Full oft will the damsel, 'mid eve's sober gloom,
Review each sad spot of the desolate scene;
Will shuddering pass by the libertine's tomb,
And weep o'er the lovely, but frail Josephine!

⁹ Another spelling of "Werdendorff".

A note on the date of publication

This text is included in *Tales of Terror and Wonder*, supposedly collected by Matthew Gregory Lewis. In the preface of this book, it is affirmed that he compiled both *Tales of Terror* and *Tales of Wonder*, in 1799 and 1800 respectively. However, there is no evidence of the publication of *Tales of Terror* by Lewis in that year. After some research on the subject, I found Elizabeth Church's essay "A Bibliographical Myth", in which she explains that, actually, *Tales of Terror* was an anonymous book: "Lewis did not publish *Tales of Terror* at Kelso in 1799. So far as is known, he never published any Tales of Terror at all, in either prose or verse, and the only work that can be found with that title is the anonymous *Tales of Terror*, already mentioned. Nor did he in the "next year," 1800, publish *Tales of Wonder*." (309)

She claims that two editions of *Tales of Wonder* were published in 1801, and between these publications, *Tales of Terror* was published anonymously. Therefore, we will consider the publishing date of "Albert of Werdendorff" 1801.

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