

Shadow and Voice: The Vampire's Debt to Secular Modernity

by

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B.A., Huron University College, 2003

M.A., University of Western Ontario, 2004

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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Dr. Robert Miles, Supervisor  
(Department of English)

Dr. Eric Miller, Department Member  
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Dr. G. Kim Blank, Department Member  
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Dr. Hélène Cazes, Outside Member  
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## Abstract

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### Abstract

The past few years have seen a renewed critical interest in the vampires and vampirism of English literature, owing both to their growing influence in popular culture and a more inclusive reordering of the literary canon. Much of this recent work has typically approached vampirism through a psychoanalytic lens inherited from Gothic criticism, characterized by a dependence on Freud, Lacan, and Foucault, and often by a model of crisis in which these supernatural figures of terror are supposed to symbolize cultural anxieties with varying degrees of historicity.

This dissertation builds upon the narrative of secularization set out in Charles Taylor's recent work, *A Secular Age*, to answer the need for a new and alternative narrative of what function the vampire serves within English literature, and how it came to prominence there. The literary history of vampirism is reconsidered in light of the new sociological observations made by Taylor, hinging upon two key methodological principles: first, that Taylor's new secularization narrative has the potential to reshape the way we think of literature in general and our literary relationship to the supernatural in particular; and second, that the fiction generated during this period of upheaval has much more to tell us about secularization, broadening our understanding of the ideological shifts and changing relationships to the supernatural that brought forth this uniquely modern monster in literature.

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I am grateful to Charles Taylor, whose decades of study have provided the theoretical background for much of what I do here; a mention in the Bibliography is not enough to recognize the size and scope of his contribution to my work and to criticism at large. I am also grateful to my fellow philologist D.A. Carlton, speculative-fiction guru Paula Johanson, and loremasters Matthew Tooley and Megan Foden for your sage thoughts on vampires, on the nature of belief and the self, religion and the occult, the ancient and modern, and for your varied answers, spoken and lived, as to why we believe, and imagine, and tell stories. This work was informed and inflected by your depth and generosity of knowledge, even in conversations you may not now recall.

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## **Dedication**

*For my father*

## Introduction

This study began as a fairly traditional narrative of the origins of the vampire in English literature, and has transformed, in the course of its genesis, into something else. It remains indebted to a long and varied tradition of vampiric origin-stories, from pop-culture undead encyclopædias<sup>1</sup> to fastidiously researched literary histories such as Nina Auerbach's *Our Vampires, Ourselves*. But such work has been done, and seems to be continuously renewed, sometimes by excellent works of scholarship,<sup>2</sup> but most often by the same recycled blend of folkloric cataloguing, Freudian psychoanalysis, and ahistoricising comparative mythology. Adding my own voice to this tradition would add little to the conversation: since the early stages of this study, I have aimed to produce something distinctly separate from these vampiric origin-stories, and to offer an alternate way of understanding not where the vampire comes from, but how and why it has taken root in a literature to which it is not native, and what this might tell us about how that literature, and how the minds that produce and consume it, have been shaped in a manner germane to the vampire's unlikely flourishing in the shared social imaginary of Anglo-American secular modernity.

This study, then, is a story in itself (a true one, I hope) detailing the beginnings and development of vampire literature in English. This frees me from a lengthy discussion on the level of folklore, of which there are already several good examples, but

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<sup>1</sup> The market is saturated with popular encyclopædias of the undead, especially in the wake of the *Twilight* saga's runaway commercial success. Most are unreliable and of varying quality. Rosemary Ellen Guiley's *Vampires* is probably one of the better examples in recent years of pop writing on the vampire phenomenon.

<sup>2</sup> See especially Mary Hallab's *Vampire God: The Allure of the Undead in Western Culture*, a fine and recent example.

gives me leave to consider several factors normally beyond the reach of such studies—to focus, in effect, not on the earliest stages of the vampire’s germination, but on the important last stages of its arrival, during a time of critical upheaval that is too seldom addressed by studies of the vampire which are rooted in the context of either primordial myth (Moloch, Lilith, Lamia) or of twentieth-century counterculture (Béla Lugosi, Vampirella, Hammer Horror, Buffy).

These cultural studies take *Dracula* (or sometimes, but rarely, Polidori’s *The Vampyre*) as the flashpoint of the vampire’s cultural presence, and have done a thorough job with the material that has come since. The timeline I consider important and neglected thus ends, rather than begins, with Stoker’s novel. While I will necessarily consider texts on both sides of my operating window, as the cultural trope of vampirism does not observe the hard lines of periodization, I am chiefly interested in the time frame bounded by the years 1732, in which the word “vampire” first appears in the English language, and 1897, in which *Dracula* is published. Within this time, social and cultural cross-currents between England and France necessitate the inclusion of a few French texts; I hope I have done them justice here within their complicated historical context.

It is the changing shape of the historical context against which the vampire has “risen,” so to speak, that both necessitates and facilitates a new kind of look at the vampires and development. The overarching sociohistorical narrative that has made this study possible is contained in Charles Taylor’s landmark work, *A Secular Age*. Published in 2007, Taylor’s book leans toward the tablets of Moses both in its sheer mass and in its momentousness: it is the product of more than two decades of work, collecting and refining Taylor’s earlier arguments in *Sources of the Self* (1989) and *Modern Social*

*Imaginaries* (2004), and producing from them a fully formed and duly rich narrative of secularization in the North Atlantic world—that is, English-speaking North America and most of Western Europe, a flexible but definite geographic boundary<sup>3</sup> which forms a similar border of my study. In the moment of its publication, *A Secular Age* constituted a *sui generis* renewal of the story of secularization; now, six years later, it remains at the forefront of the wave of reconsideration it has inspired, at least within the fields of sociology, theology, history. In the field of literary criticism, it has so far had little to say, a discipline-wide oversight I hope to correct here.

By examining the rise of vampires and vampire literature in relation to and against the backdrop of Taylor's new narrative of secularization, I hope to offer an alternative to the kind of work that has been done on vampires, and to place that work in a larger historical context, framed by shifts in thought and belief whose connections to the vampire are not immediately apparent. My work here should suggest a larger reordering in the way we think not only about vampires, but about fantasy and supernatural on a wider scale: much of what I delve into here is culturally specific to the vampire, but much is related to an overarching narrative of our literary relationship to the marvellous and the fantastic that remains to be fully told. Similarly, the narrative I hope to build about these stories is necessarily intertwined with the histories of other and broader literatures, from the medieval romance and the Gothic novel to contemporary *film noir*, detective novels, and other modern stories of secular heroes. The nature of secularization and the ubiquity of its literary impact ensure that even wildly divergent

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<sup>3</sup> Taylor defines these boundaries elsewhere by the term "Latin Christendom" (*A Secular Age* 774)--a term belying his focus on borderlines that are really ideological rather than geographical, though the two frequently overlap.

forms and genres of English texts share a collective heritage of upheaval and ideological invention, especially within the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century window that forms the crucible of this shift, such that even a tightly focused history of vampire literature spanning these two centuries must necessarily, within the model and methodology of Taylor, be a history (at least peripherally) of these other literatures as well.

As this study is centrally informed by *A Secular Age*, and as I am heavily dependent on Taylor's definitions of key terms (secular, disenchantment, *kairos/chronos*, porous/buffered, nova, common, self), I begin with a chapter introducing Taylor's model of secularization, and by highlighting from it which of its aspects are most important in the context of this study in particular. To summarize this monumental text unavoidably renders it a casualty of abridgement, but such abridgment may be helpful or even necessary: my goal is not to critique or analyze *A Secular Age*, nor to echo the work in its entirety, but to isolate what is most important to literary criticism and move ahead with it. There are many divergent branches of inquiry in the work, and by following only the most applicable branches, we can avoid having to contend with the whole tree, a task which would quickly commandeer the bulk of this study.

My aim in this abridgement is to isolate the most important effects of secularization on the development of Western literature; of particular interest in this broad field is the smaller body of English supernatural fiction, particularly as it "rises" in opposition and in complement to realist fiction as a result of a shift in genre and aesthetics I am referring to as the "Gothic Schism." My second aim, then, is to summarize the shape of literature at the end of the formal Gothic period, when the tensions between realism and fantasy force prose fiction in opposite directions and

provide a fertile ground for the vampire's somewhat late entry into Gothic fiction, some time after the twilight of "formal Gothic" novelists such as Walpole and Radcliffe.

The muddying of generic waters that occurs in this period is what enables, in part, the entry of the vampire into the poetry and prose of English narrative. Already known to the English public through fanciful but not entirely fictional genres (the "true historie," the Enlightenment travelogue, and a famous theological treatise by Calmet), the vampire's movement into Romantic poetry and finally into prose narrative is my next object of study. In a series of subsequent chapters, I treat the vampires of English history, Romantic poetry, and finally prose fiction as symbols and effects of a larger changing relationship with the supernatural, and especially a changing relationship with the self and notions of identity that accompany these. Throughout these chapters, which form the functional centre of my discussion, I explore the vampire not in its traditional Gothic role, as a supposed symbol of the menacing past, but as a figure of modernity dressed up in trappings of the past—coded trappings which the increasingly sophisticated reading public is well-equipped to read as markers of anxiety. Arriving at last at the well-trod *Dracula*, a text that has been exhaustively explored in terms of this crisis and anxiety, I consider the Count's considerable adjustment to the threats of modernity, and the heroes' secular resistance to this fully modern supernatural force, as the signs of an implied counter-narrative to these anxiety models, a counter-narrative which demonstrates a secularity in full bloom, with a relationship to the supernatural which, if not unresolved, has softened from one of genuine sublime terror to the paradoxical "eerie comfort" of the uncanny.

My final chapter gives a very brief consideration to the rich world of literary vampirism that has unfolded since this modern relationship with the vampire was solidified. The presence of laughable childish vampire-figures (Count von Count, Count Chocula, Duckula) and undead teen heartthrobs (Lestat, Edward Cullen, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s Angel) suggest a seemingly paradoxical “comfortable uncanny” which signifies an archetype that is thoroughly known and seemingly tamed—one to which the pleasurable terrors of the Gothic past that cannot now be reapplied without radical and perhaps unexpected revision.

Central to this whole project is Taylor's idea of the “subtraction story,” which informs not only my model of secularization, but also my relationship to the considerable body of criticism that precedes me. For Taylor, a subtraction story is a way of thinking about discursive changes which he finds, at least in the case of secularization, to be a flawed and dismissive way of representing them. The story of secularization, he argues, is a story of expansion (of novic or even supernovic expansion) rather than subtraction, a story of plurality, in which multiple understandings of transcendence<sup>4</sup> are possible and governed by an element of choice unprecedented in matters of belief. Transcendent value, in Taylor's model of a pluralistic secularity, may still be found in a personal God or gods; in the realm of nature, whether as a facet of the sublime, a kind of animism, or some other road; in the quotidian world itself, through a reverence of what Taylor calls “human

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<sup>4</sup> The word “transcendence” carries a great deal of semantic baggage, and also has specific locative connotations I'm trying to avoid. I think throughout this section, when I speak of “transcendent” things or concepts, what I am really speaking of specifically is “exalted” things, more in line with Taylor's “fullness.” That we in a secular age have come to call these things “transcendent” is an effect of how and whence we retrieve them: when contrasted by “immanence,” as in Aquinas or later theologians, transcendence reflects an exalted fullness located somewhere remote or beyond, rather than all around us in the everyday world. The movement of the exalted from immanence to transcendence, and thence to some combination of the two, is an important part of Taylor's story; and while the movement itself may be less important here, I must acknowledge that I'm using the word “transcendent” in a colloquial modern way here, to express something closer to an uninflected “exalted.”

flourishing”; or in the utterly atheistic “oceanic” feeling of fullness Sigmund Freud describes when he looks out over the boundless sea. There is, in addition to these, the nihilistic lack of transcendence, the mark of an unbelief of an altogether different order—the sort found in the grimmest of Philip Larkin’s poems, for instance. The readiness to hand of such pronounced and unspiritual unbelief—that it not only exists, but is easily attainable—is characteristic of a secular age; but for Taylor it remains only one possibility among many.

The possibilities beyond counting, across an unfathomably wide matrix of belief and unbelief, represent for Taylor the essence of secular modernity. At the same time, none of them entirely supplant or do away with the religious fullness of pre-modern Latin Christendom, and stories of secularization in which new forms of belief drive out the old are inconsistent with the cacophony of choices of belief in which we now find ourselves. These choices are further multiplied by our own capacity for invention: Diane Long Hoeveler’s explanation of Taylor suggests also the development of personal (and personalized) “cosmologies” (3) combining any number of these possibilities—a reading which suggests as many forms of belief, as many forms of constructing the self, as there are selves in the world.

This has not always been the case; Taylor’s primary concern is the narrative of how, in matters of belief and especially of religion, we came from there to here. But there is a useful similarity between the available ways of understanding the transcendent (or God, if you prefer) and ways of understanding literature. Schools of theory and criticism have long been imagined as linear, particularly throughout the twentieth century, where the word “New” and the problematic prefix “Post-” have adorned some of the most

valuable and central schools of thought. These markers have come to mean something different, or ought to, than their etymology suggests: New Criticism and New Historicism, aspects of both of which have shaped this study, are no longer really “new.” The “Post-isms,” of which postmodernism and poststructuralism are the usual flagships, define themselves, or at least started out by defining themselves, in a linear and chronological tradition, replacing their predecessors either as oppositional counter-theories or as “updated” revisionary approaches to theories whose obsolescence in unmodified form was heavily implied. This, too, is a subtraction story, and one which persists and repeats every time a new invention in criticism is put forward with the hope that it will be revolutionary, that it will replace an old system with such sweeping totality that antique theory need never be dredged up again.

I hope with this study to resist the subtraction-stories of such criticism, as well as those of the old histories of secularization. There is an established mainstream of academic work on literary vampires, a mainstream whose central concerns are to historicize the archetype and to explain its origins and development by various methods of cultural psychoanalysis. In some cases, the vampire is not historicized at all: comparative mythologists, who have an important role to play in understanding the vampire, often seek to make the most ancient vampiric analogue mutually intelligible to the fully formed Hollywood film archetype by collapsing historical difference, or at least by creatively circumscribing it. The historical studies which push back against this trend are frequently indebted to Lacan and especially to Foucault, whose *Madness and Civilization* has been the key to analyzing the vampire as a politically or culturally uncanny construct in addition to a psychologically uncanny one. But in all these cases a

sort of cultural psychoanalysis, whether as a tool for establishing a “transhistorical” sameness or for establishing historically specific difference, is the common tool of such studies and provides a common language and methodology on which the tradition is based.

These models of scholarship will see some reference here, but little use. For that reason I must make clear that they are still bearing fruit, still far from exhausted. Erik Butler’s *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film*, published in March of 2010, is an important new work in this tradition,<sup>5</sup> and its value should not be discounted, nor rendered as “old,” by the suggestion that my approach here is “new.” Even the Freudian psychoanalysis of the vampire, and the whole business of reading the vampiric act as a repressed Victorian depiction of sexuality, has not been utterly exhausted; emerging studies involved in queering the vampire in increasingly rich and complex ways suggest that even this time-worn path may have new places to take us. But neither is it necessary to exhaust thoroughly one approach before beginning another: the field of literary study is richer for its plurality, and I intend this work to supplement rather than displace the work already being done on the vampire.

Nevertheless, the small story of this study is being told for the first time, and I hope its findings may alter the way we choose to think about vampires and the supernatural in literature, whatever critical lens we may choose to view them through. On the subject of vampires, in literature or out of it, *A Secular Age* is silent; conversely, secularization, and especially Taylor’s rethinking of it, has thus far been of little interest to scholars of supernatural literature. Diane Long Hoeveler’s *Gothic Riffs*, which

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<sup>5</sup> Butler’s study is especially important to English-speaking scholarship, as it bridges gaps between French and German vampires who are too seldom given a holistic integration with their English-language counterparts.

emerged during the production of this dissertation, is perhaps the first text that fully explores the literary implications of Taylor's work; but a single study in this vein does not in itself constitute a movement in literary scholarship, though perhaps it ought, at least, to constitute the manifesto of one. It has occurred to me that a greater and more sustained cross-talk between these fields is warranted, and that both Taylor's narrative and literary scholarship have a great deal to offer in support of each other. It is my small ambition with this study to stage a meeting of sorts between them, and my great hope that this meeting will be of benefit to both.

## Chapter 1: *A Secular Age* and Supernatural Fiction

### 1.1 Talking Points from Charles Taylor

Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* is in some ways a self-contained work; it presents a complete narrative, or as complete a narrative as can be expected from any one book. He unabashedly describes it as a "master narrative of secularity" ("Afterword" 301), and in so doing recognizes and indicates the pitfalls of such a narrative. At the same time, the related texts that have sprung up in the shadow of *A Secular Age* only serve to thicken this narrative, to cement it in place and secure its reputation at the root of a new model of thinking about secularization.

In the wake of all this monumental importance, it seems petty and paradoxical to suggest that the work is somehow incomplete, that it offers anything less than an entire picture of its subject from beginning to end. But Taylor himself has self-effacingly drawn attention to its incompleteness, in part as a defensive maneuver, but chiefly as a call to others for the work that remains to be done. Some three years after *A Secular Age*, Taylor was given the opportunity to look back on the work, writing an afterword to one of the many critical anthologies<sup>6</sup> transparently prompted by his work. Here he candidly observes that

I've tried to give a master narrative of secularity... [b]ut the book could have been—in a sense, should have been—longer. A master narrative convinces if it offers a better alternative reading of what happened than the one it is

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<sup>6</sup> *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (ed. Michael Warner et al.). Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2010.

trying to displace. But to see how the reading is better, you need to look again at the detail. So ideally, a book like this would look at a great many facets of our history, a great many more circumscribed stories that are part of the big narrative. There should have been lots more chapters, describing regions and times that I have left relatively neglected. (“Afterword” 301)

There is no shortage of “regions and times” visited in *A Secular Age*. The book takes as its subject the whole of Latin Christendom, consisting especially of Western Europe and the English-speaking countries of North America. It takes as its time frame the five centuries between the years 1500 and 2000—though I would further specify that he charts the centuries between 1500 *anno domini* and 2000 *common era*, tracking the history of secularization not only across time, but across whole “orders” of time. This is certainly a large enough project—but, as he indicates, sufficient coverage should not indicate exhaustive coverage. There are “lots more...regions and times” left untouched, and more still observed only at distance, their details a necessary casualty of the sheer sweep of the book.

I should begin here, then, with a clear statement that I am treating the world of English literature as one of those regions and times given short shrift. Taylor is not specific, here or anywhere, on what “circumscribed stories” he would include; but his tacit acknowledgement that the field of literature can, and should, be added to the “big narrative” should serve as a welcoming invitation to the future research of others. In spite of what I would call an internal richness, *A Secular Age* illuminates more roads than it actively travels; as a pioneering text, its value lies not only in the work it sets out to accomplish, but in the work it looks toward.

It is in this spirit that the chapters to follow count themselves, in essence, among the “lots more chapters” Taylor’s afterword yearns for. They constitute not merely an adaptation of his model, but a continuation of it. The Gothic castles of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Bram Stoker may be fictional, in spite of their historical referents; but as “regions and times” hailed by Taylor’s study they have every bit as much to tell us about secularization as the Bourbon Court of France or Martin Luther’s Wittenberg. It should go without saying that secularization has resulted in a changing relationship to the supernatural, and that a changing relationship to the supernatural has affected the way we treat it, construct it, and relate to it in literature.

Excepting a few isolated commentaries, such as Clive Leatherdale’s on *Dracula* as Christian parody,<sup>7</sup> the English literary vampire has never to my knowledge been explored in the context of secularization. The cross-talk between literary criticism and secularization has never been a particularly bustling business, and where Taylor’s new model is concerned, it remains especially scant. Taylor’s impact on literary studies remains nascent, even though it has long been predicted. As early 1995, Mette Hjort, an erstwhile student<sup>8</sup> of Taylor, observed that

Taylor’s philosophical anthropology has much to offer literary critics, and his most recent major study, *Sources of the self: the making of the modern identity*, is quite rightly receiving a good deal of attention in literary contexts. The curiosity of literary audiences is clearly piqued by the social and political philosopher’s claim that literary discourse somehow helps articulate the moral sources that are constitutive of the modern identity. Taylor thus joins a select group of Anglo-American philosophers[...]whose distinctive voices are gradually changing the terms and direction of on-going literary debates. (121)

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<sup>7</sup> In Leatherdale’s *Dracula: The Novel and the Legend* (London: Leisure Circle, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Hjort received her MA at McGill University in 1985, where Taylor supervised her thesis.

Indeed, *Sources of the Self* has long been mined by literary critics, though this has frequently been in relation to ideas of identity and especially of “self-fashioning,” in a sense and context not too unlike those of Stephen Greenblatt’s earlier *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, a work that has much to say when read in complement to *Sources of the Self*. The fuller sweep of *A Secular Age*, on the other hand, has not received the same kind of attention from literary circles. Diane Long Hoeveler’s *Gothic Riffs: Secularizing the Uncanny in the European Imaginary, 1780-1820*, is one of a very small handful of new literary studies informed by this new model of secularization, and is perhaps the first study of English literature to answer the call for new stories and new facets of history which are framed, but not detailed, by Taylor’s writing.

The scarcity of such studies is, perhaps, to be expected; the few scattered references to literature throughout *A Secular Age*—to Shakespeare, to Goethe, to T. S. Eliot—do not amount to a literary focus, and Taylor’s use of such literature is always secondary and subordinate to his “master narrative,” which remains for him what might be termed a historical narrative of secular cultural epistemology. But the work’s relevant and translatable relationship to literature should still be obvious: rewriting the narrative of secularization in Taylor’s North Atlantic world of Latin Christendom has huge ramifications on how literature (and shifts in the literary landscape) might be read. That he must leave it to literary critics to establish the specifics of these ramifications is neither a surprise nor a shortcoming: *A Secular Age* serves in many ways as an inevitably incomplete interdisciplinary road map of secularization, detailing the most major roads and landmarks while inviting specialists in numerous areas—literature, history, sociology, and so on—to fill in the byways and boulevards of their own specific

academic communities. My first intention with the work to follow, then, is to answer the need Taylor's study engenders for a radical reconsideration of where our traditions of supernatural fiction come from and why; and this, naturally, should begin with a summary of the new information and narrative *A Secular Age* has given us.

Taylor's intent with this tome is first to establish that we are living in an age defined by secularity, and then to determine precisely what that means, and how it came to be the case: "the change I want to define and trace," he writes, "is one which takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others" (3). Taylor's version of secularization is one in which old models of "faith" are buried or lost in a multitudinous crowd of new possibilities, but never done away with altogether. A secular society, for Taylor, is defined by unprecedented choice on matters of belief, but never by the total absence or lack of belief, or by the excision of religion from the state, the self, and so on.

Those older models which define secularity as a simple "absence of religion" (Paden 13) are described by Taylor as "subtraction stories," and the movement away from such stories is at the centre of Taylor's "correction" of our ideas about secularization. Old ideas may be less frequently heard, or drowned out amidst a cacophony of new ideas, but they never really die—nor can a landslide of newness bury them so deeply that they cannot be unearthed. Already there are significant thematic ties to the vampiric here.

Even Taylor's idea of "unbelief" is one which constitutes a new form of belief (a counter-belief, in essence), which takes its place among the new and nuanced styles and

forms of belief introduced by secularization. This introduction does not subtract old systems, he suggests, in part because the old systems existed in what he calls a “naïve” space of belief, in which it was possible to “default” to a standardized belief (in the case of Western Europe, he means pre-Reformation Christian orthodoxy). “Our modern civilization,” Taylor suggests,

is made up of a host of societies, sub-societies and milieux, all rather different from each other. But the presumption of unbelief has become dominant in more and more of these milieux; and has achieved hegemony in certain crucial ones, in the academic and intellectual life, for instance; whence it can more easily extend itself to others. (13)

An important point to clarify is that for Taylor, dominance and default are not quite the same thing, and while the dominance of secular “unbelief” sometimes approaches the level of hegemony (as in his example of academic life), it can never effectively replace a state of belief as a default because it cannot rebuild a “naïve” framework in which it exists without alternatives. Old systems of belief can be preserved, or new ones can be adopted; but what cannot be recovered, he suggests, is the naïve relationship to a default system. Atheism presupposes theism, both linguistically and conceptually, and when the fullness of transcendence is no longer part the exclusive province of a supernal beyond, questions arise regarding where it might have gone—in Taylor’s terms, where this fullness might now be located—and why.

There are, in secular modernity, multiple answers to these questions, and a major part of Taylor’s project is to identify and study these many variations on transcendence. The word “transcendence” itself is an unabashedly modern descriptor for Taylor’s “fullness” because of the connotations with which it *relocates* that fullness. To transcend, literally to climb across, suggests a movement elsewhere, a reaching beyond, which is

inconsistent with the pre-modern idea that the world around us is actually filled with magic or the divine, that it is “enchanted” in a literal sort of way. This need to *transcend*, to climb across a liminal space to reach an enchanted sort of fullness, is for Taylor a key characteristic of modernity: prior to this, he writes,

people lived in an “enchanted” world. This is perhaps not the best expression; it seems to evoke light and fairies. But I am invoking here its negation, Weber’s expression “disenchantment” as a description of our modern condition. This term has achieved such wide currency in our discussion of these matters, that I’m going to use its antonym to describe a crucial feature of the pre-modern condition. The enchanted world in this sense is the world of spirits, demons, and moral forces which our ancestors lived in. (25-6)

For critics of supernatural literature—some of which is peopled with spirits, demons and moral forces, and some of which indeed evokes or literally contains both light and fairies—the enchanted world is of paramount importance. An understanding of supernatural literature—whether ancient, medieval, modern—depends heavily on where we situate its authors and audiences along the spectrum of disenchantment, and on the version of disenchantment that we choose to adopt.

As Taylor points out, the history of “disenchantment” as a descriptive term for this shift begins with Max Weber, who casts it as a product of the Reformation, coupled with the scientific revolution following the Renaissance. In some ways, sociological concerns such as the emergence of capitalism give further shape to it; conversely, disenchantment as Weber sees it has a hand, particularly through the development of a new ethical system, in the development of capitalist economy, and contributes to the status of capitalism as a foundational building block of Western modernity. Weber’s

influential study on the subject, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, is a cornerstone of the socioeconomic tradition to which Taylor alludes with the term.

This allusion, however, does not constitute an undoctored adoption of Weber's system: Taylor's use of the term explores new aspects of this disenchantment, reflecting something broader in sweep and more complex in its treatment of the changing Western relationship to God and the mystical. Where Weber sees in disenchantment a severing of the relationship between Western modernity and the transcendent, Taylor sees only a transformation, catalyzed by the introduction of scientific rationality and the new values of human flourishing. Taylor frequently uses the words "belief" and "unbelief" respectively to characterize the pre-modern and modern relationships with the supernatural in the world; but the bulk of *A Secular Age*, I think, is not so much a narrative about the transition from belief to unbelief as it is a narrative about the transformation or transposition of belief from a naïve pre-modern to a reflective modern framework.

As his use of Weber's terminology suggests, though, Taylor is most concerned with the transposition of belief as a social rather than a personal phenomenon. For the most part, disenchantment for Taylor is one rooted in his concept of the "self," a holdover term from his earlier *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. It is a potentially misleading term because it connotes the personal, the individual, while Taylor is concerned with a larger sphere. For Taylor, the "self" is not just an abstraction but a synecdoche: it is telling that the plural "selves" sees little use in *A Secular Age*, which is seldom concerned with the relationships of specific, individual selves to a personal divinity. Nevertheless, when he speaks of the self, Taylor is speaking in a way of many

selves—just as “the press” refers to many presses, for instance, from which the abstract concept of “the collective news media” can be further extrapolated.

Taylor’s metonymic use of “the self” is perhaps better understood when armed with *Modern Social Imaginaries*, a smaller work from 2004 which prefaces *A Secular Age* with the idea of the social imaginary—a term which, like disenchantment, has its roots in sociology but comes to move beyond social theory: “I adopt the term imaginary,” Taylor writes,

(i) because my focus is on the way ordinary people “imagine” their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories, and legends. It is also the case that (ii) theory is often the possession of a small minority, whereas what is interesting in the social imaginary is that it is shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society. Which leads to a third difference: (iii) the social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy. (*Modern Social Imaginaries* 23)

This passage, which appears nearly verbatim in *A Secular Age* (171-2), clarifies the manner in which the self is abstracted, not merely as “many” selves, but as a preponderance of selves. The vicissitude of the abstracted self, from a “porous” to a “buffered” state (terms we will examine shortly), is really the vicissitude of a Western social imaginary—a sufficient number or “critical mass” of changing subjects to register as a broad cultural and epistemological shift.

Taylor’s example of electoral government underscores the idea of the social imaginary as preponderance:

Take our practice of choosing governments through general elections. Part of the background understanding which makes sense of our act of voting for each one of us is our awareness of the whole action, involving all citizens[...]and

the compounding of these micro-choices into one binding, collective decision. (*A Secular Age* 172)

This clever analogy works on a few levels: “the vote” (like the self) can refer at once to both an individual and a collective thing, speaking metonymically of the collective result (a candidate who wins “the vote”), or literally of a single citizen’s act of voting, which contributes to the larger picture of the vote even if it is not perfectly in accord with the collective. On another level, the whole electoral process is itself an example of a modern social imaginary: “the vote” is a conceptual system that only functions because those who participate in it (and in its administration) imagine a common, shared social model of what an election should be, even including a shared model of “what would constitute a foul: certain kinds of influence, buying votes, threats, and the like” (142).

The self, in turn, refers by the same method to both to (i) individual selves (from which, Taylor admits, the ideas that come to shape social imaginaries often originate) and (ii) to the collective, abstract preponderance of selves. Further, the self in the context of *A Secular Age* may also refer to (iii) an outside kind of social imaginary: a shared model of what “selfhood” means to people, whether we mean “people” in the sense of (i), (ii), or both.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of the self and the social imaginary here, and my reasons for spending so much time hashing out a working definition of each, are tied to several obstacles that must be confronted when approaching literary study through the window of Taylor’s work. Chief among these obstacles are problems of readership and textual reception, which are resistant to the generalization encouraged by Taylor’s monolithic

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<sup>9</sup> This “shared model” of selfhood(iii), shared among selves(i) and widespread within the self(ii), is the very definition of “self-reflexive” thought. But to overuse the term “self” here is to tangle it: in my judgment the self-reflexivity of various dimensions of “the self” is worth study, but that study is best pushed, for now, into the footnotes—and perhaps, ideally, into another study entirely.

use of the “self.” On matters of readership, for instance, it is ungainly to replace the Self with an equally monolithic, abstracted idea of the Reader, and yet certain arguments which come of out Taylor demand that we do this. The reader, and sometimes the “reading public,” have lately been unfashionable as analytical terms, usually on the grounds that such terms obfuscate the finer details of a complex and heterogeneous audience or series of audiences. Of no period is this truer than in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, in which readership of all texts in the West, generally speaking, is expanding rapidly across class and gender lines, and across other borders that are made faint by the reductive application of “the reader” upon so many diverse groups. The pluralism inherent in identities and in reading practice itself starts to problematize the term, such that its use today conjures an almost unthinkable reductive generality.

In many ways, this problem is exactly Taylor’s point. The key characteristic of secular modernity, for Taylor, is the sudden explosive pluralism of equally unprivileged modes of belief and/or unbelief, and associated with these is a corresponding pluralism of constructions of the self—both as a human being and, I would argue, as a reader. Taylor’s central metaphor for this explosive pluralism is that of the *nova*, a term drawn from its usual place within astrophysics, where it describes a catalyzed ignition that induces a runaway explosive reaction. By its Latinate etymology, the term also carries the connotation of newness or novelty; in its most literal sense, then, a nova is a “new explosion,” and it is the cleverly layered term Taylor uses to describe the multitude of religious and spiritual possibilities by which the disenchanted world is suddenly saturated,

as though the original duality, the positing of a viable humanist alternative, set in train a dynamic, something like

a nova effect, spawning an ever-widening variety of moral/spiritual options, across the span of the thinkable and perhaps even beyond[...]the connection between pursuing a moral or spiritual path and belonging to larger ensembles—state, church, even denomination—has been further loosened; and as a result the nova effect has been intensified. We are now living in a spiritual super-nova, a kind of galloping pluralism on the spiritual plane. (Taylor, *A Secular Age* 299-300)

The seeming difficulties with talking about “the reader,” then, stem from this novic expansion of possibilities as to what, exactly, it now means to be someone who reads. Coleridge had no trouble, at the beginning of the Romantic period, thinking of “the reading public” (not always flatteringly) as a like-minded mass. For Taylor, the discrepancy between the appropriateness of the word in Coleridge’s century and its perceived inadequacy in ours would be characteristic of a nova effect, a pluralism not only in what it means to be a reader, but in how readers construct themselves. It is, for my purposes, part of the untold story of Taylor’s narrative: the “novic” pluralism of the modern self is borne out across all its discourses—not exclusively, as a hasty reading of Taylor might imply, in the discourse of religion or belief. This will be a very important idea as we go on.

One imperfect but functional solution to the over-generalizing terms of “reader/readership,” also arrived at *via* Taylor, is to consider the reader as a social imaginary in the full richness of Taylor’s sense, as—like “the self”—a term describing the net momentum of a preponderance of differing individuals and groups, rather than as a simplified, homogenizing shorthand. Even so, we are always conscious now of the pluralism in which we must live and write. John and Anna Laetitia Aikin’s seminal essay “On the Pleasures Derived from Objects of Terror,” published in 1773, is deeply

concerned with understanding the mysteries of the the “thrill,” the “pleasurable frisson” (“Afterword” 303), in Taylor’s words, that springs from fright. The persistent mystery of this phenomenon is still unsolved, still evidently worth grappling with, when David Punter publishes *The Literature of Terror* more than two centuries later. Both texts are deeply concerned with “the thrill,” and both see it as the feature of a pragmatic emotional relationship—that is, the visceral relationship between text and reader. But Punter is far more careful—he has to be—in his use of such generalizing terms as reader, readership, audience, reading public. These things have taken on a new character, a disparate character, for him. That, Taylor would tell us, is a product of modernity; it is the product of a nova effect in how we as individual readers, individual selves, relate to the supernatural.

Writing at a time closer to Punter than to the Aikins, a time in which we have acquired (and cannot escape) a more complicated understanding of readership, I consider my use of such broad terms justifiable in part because the “reading public” I am most concerned with is that diverse group of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers who collectively self-identified this way and using this language: their self-fashioning<sup>10</sup> as a monolithic readership constitutes a social imaginary in Taylor’s terms—a body united by common belief and common practice, defining themselves by the collective understanding and performed expectations of what a “reading public” is, and of what it means to be a part of one. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was particularly fond of both the term “reading public” and the idea it represented, even when he was at odds with the

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<sup>10</sup> The term rose to prominence in Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), and I think its implied ownership and control of the self is especially useful here.

reading public itself.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, the *idea* of the reading public has had a central role in literature's development, and particularly in the development of supernatural fiction, and it is for this reason that the social imaginary of the reading public, of the abstracted reader, has such a central role to play in the pages to come.

Implicit in the relationship of this particular social imaginary to *A Secular Age* is that all readers are selves (though all selves may not be readers), and that in many ways, the changes between self and world are reflected and paralleled by changes within readership, or changes between reader and text. Disenchantment, then, is not a purely social transformation: it becomes, at least in one dimension, a transformation of textual reception, of how literature is read. What I want to suggest by this is that one reason why this pleasurable frisson is still worth writing about—indeed, one reason why the best eighteenth-century analyses have failed to “solve” the mystery of pleasurable terror—is that there has been a continual and dynamic change in our relationships, and more generally in all the relationships we are capable of having, to literature of supernatural terror. It has long been the habit of studies of terror-fiction to turn to the psyche—that is, to advance a solution predicated on a model of the human mind that is historically consistent, and does not change over time. This, in part, is why I think such studies of terror must continually be renewed: our relationship to supernatural terror is not now what it was in the Aikins' day, nor was that relationship the same one that thrilled the contemporaries of Shakespeare, or Chaucer, or the Beowulf poet before them. Our changing relationships to the supernatural—to supernatural terror, to the pleasurable frisson of the thrill, and ultimately to the literature that exploits these qualities—have all

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<sup>11</sup> See especially Coleridge's comments on the reading public in *The Statesman's Manual*. A useful summary of them appears in Patrick Brantlinger's *The Reading Lesson: the Threat of Mass Literacy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, pp.57-8.

changed radically, in accordance with our changing relationship to what Taylor calls “bulwarks of belief” (*A Secular Age* 25) or the “buffers” of the modern self.

This idea of the buffered self, in opposition to a “porous” pre-modern self, is probably one of Taylor’s most significant potential contributions to literary criticism where the supernatural is concerned. When we talk about a buffered self in relation to literature, we are really talking about a buffered reader, one who has been somehow armoured against, or removed from, an older relationship to the supernatural. “The ‘porous’ self of the earlier enchanted world,” Taylor writes,

is vulnerable, to spirits, demons, cosmic forces. And along with those go certain fears which can grip it in certain circumstances. The buffered self has been taken out of the world of this kind of fear. (38)

This is not to say, of course, that a medieval audience would be legitimately frightened by the experience of reading *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, or that Grendel would inspire any more nightmares in an Anglo-Saxon audience than Freddy Krueger would to a moviegoer today. Medieval readers, in general, were not fooled into believing the text in hand was “more real” or more present any more than early cinemagoers were tricked into believing that real locomotives were bearing down on them.<sup>12</sup> But on the other hand, medieval readers lived in a world which was by some standard “enchanted”—that is, a world in which the forces these supernatural creatures represented formed a tangible

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<sup>12</sup> The anecdotal story of one audience or another screaming and leaping out of the way of a train filmed racing toward the camera is a well-known fable in film studies, but certainly not an uncommon occurrence. If it did happen at all, it was likely a single or few isolated incidents which then passed into legend. A balanced analysis of the “train-effect” phenomenon is Stephen Bottomore’s “The Panicking Audience?: Early Cinema and the ‘Train Effect’” from the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*. Bottomore’s conclusion is that “it did on occasions happen” (177), but that the effect, while pronounced, was likely exaggerated; further, he finds that some audiences were more susceptible to it than others, suggesting that—just as Taylor’s early modern selves existed in various places on a spectrum between being vulnerable to the supernatural and being buffered against it—there was a corresponding spectrum of vulnerability to the spectacular effects of film.

reality. A tongue-in-cheek approach to supernatural concerns, of the sort that Jane Austen takes with “horrid novels” in *Northanger Abbey*, is not something the medieval self, on the whole, was disposed to; we can reasonably identify this specific kind of satire as a product of secularization, and a sign that the ways people relate to the supernatural—both within and outside of art and literature—have undergone significant change.

The association of a “world of[...]fear” here with porosity—of a vulnerability to the supernatural that is both physical and spiritual—is something that will take on a different importance in the literature of the supernatural. The state of porosity, of being surrounded and separated from otherness by a boundary that is easy to sense, but also to cross, is for Taylor an earlier state of supernatural vulnerability (36), and one which goes hand-in-hand with the vampiric imagery of penetration. The porous self is vulnerable to such penetration; the conceptual barriers between the mundane and supernatural world are weak, full of figurative holes. It is in a porous world alone that Arthur’s ship finds its way across to Avalon: in a modern world, a buffered, disenchanted world, it simply runs aground on the mundane hill of Glastonbury.<sup>13</sup>

The porous self and the enchanted world go hand in hand for Taylor: an enchanted world is one in which barriers between the mundane and the supernatural are readily crossed, and a porous self is one which can erect no barrier or buffer against such a crossing. Conversely, when the supernatural has lost its ability to pierce that barrier of otherness (when its fang has been blunted, so to speak), we are said to be “buffered” against it. We can seek to reclaim an element of that porosity, and often succeed through

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<sup>13</sup> The “Straight Road” in Tolkien’s legendarium is a similar phenomenon, underscored here specifically by the rounding of the world. After the Akallabêth and the Downfall of Númenor, only the Elves and their enchanted ships—that is, inhabitants of a porous, enchanted world—could reach the supernatural by sailing. Human sailors of Tolkien’s Fourth Age found only the curvature of the Earth—in a sense, the buffered world, cut off from the supernatural realms that were of old immanent in Middle-Earth.

various means—ritual, myth, imagination, religion, to name a few—but the state of bufferedness, of approaching only a remote supernatural from behind the defensive bulwark of modernity, is in Taylor’s view the dominant state of being for the modern, secular self in the West.

The existence of such a metaphysical barrier provides us with the luxury of choice when approaching the supernatural: it provides us with a measure of control over our own belief, and allows us to experience the transcendental when we choose to admit it, yet empowers us to keep the threatening aspects of the supernatural at arm’s length:

the enchanted world was one in which these forces could cross a porous boundary and shape our lives, psychic and physical. One of the big differences between us and them is that we live with a much firmer sense of the boundary between self and other. We are “buffered” selves. We have changed. We sometimes find it hard to be frightened the way they were, and indeed, we tend to invoke the uncanny things they feared with a pleasurable frisson, sitting through films about witches and sorcerers. They would have found this incomprehensible. (“Afterword” 302-3)

Taylor’s idea of a “pleasurable frisson” is, as mentioned, one which was already being explored in the Aikins’ “On the Pleasures Derived from Objects of Terror,” which seemed in 1773 to predict Taylor’s remarks not only regarding terror in general, but specifically addressing the scenes of “the terrible joined with the marvellous” (Clery & Miles 129) that were the hallmark of early Gothic fiction. The essay appears at nearly the exact midpoint of Taylor’s somewhat arbitrary five-century timeline; it certainly reads as the product of a buffered modernity, and is most remarkable as the indication of a readership which suddenly found itself in a new relationship to supernatural terror, and a little baffled by the pleasures it was now able to take in them.

The Aikins' short essay is well-known as "the first serious attempt to theorise and build on [Horace] Walpole's innovation" (Clery & Miles 127) in terror-writing, of which *The Castle of Otranto* is the prime example. Together with its accompanying experimental fragment,<sup>14</sup> "Sir Bertrand," the essay served as a style guide, an iconographic palette, and a theoretical manifesto for both the high Gothic genre and the extended Gothic mode that followed it. Gothic literature, and in a more general way all literature of terror, has since been written under the Aikins' theoretical assumption that the reading public can be entertained by experiences of terror which are not "too near common nature" (126)—in short, by dangers rendered somehow too remote to threaten the reader directly.

There is an element of Edmund Burke's sublime in this model: for Burke, perhaps, what the Aikins describe as scenes of terror, rendered suitably remote from the reader, would instead be "productive of a passion similar to terror" (Burke 120), rather than productive of terror itself. Burke is careful to draw a distinction between terror and what James Sambrook calls "a feeling *akin* to terror" (628, my emphasis):

if the sublime is built on terror, or some passion like it, which has pain for its object; it is previously proper to enquire how any species of delight can be derived from a cause so apparently contrary to it. (Burke 120)

In Burke's physiological model of the sublime, some passion *like* terror, which produces the same physiological responses as terror, is responsible for sublime experience.

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<sup>14</sup> The textual history of "Sir Bertrand," particularly as "A Fragment," may have been complicated recently by some of the research I have done peripheral to this study. The discovery of a complete B-text, in my judgment, does little to alter the history of the fragment's reception and influence, but we should no longer speak of "Sir Bertrand" as a fragment without recognizing that it does survive in another form. For the details surrounding the B-text and one speculative textual history for it, see "A Forgotten Enchantment: The Silenced Princess, the Andalusian Warlord, and the Rescued Conclusion of 'Sir Bertrand'" (*Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 23.1 (Oct. 2010): 141-62).

Sambrook, describing Burke's *Enquiry* as "perhaps the eighteenth century's boldest attempt to bring aesthetics into line with the physical sciences" (628), observes that for Burke, aesthetic responses themselves are physiological in nature: "we feel the sublime and beautiful," he claims, "in the same way as we feel heat and cold" (628).

In the strictest Burkean terms, then, the reader derives no pleasure at all from "objects of terror"—only from objects of "some passion like it." In different language, the Aikins assert correctly that as this passion becomes more indistinguishable from terror itself, the scene of terror loses its power to pleurably entertain.

Hence, the more wild, fanciful, and extraordinary are the circumstances of a scene of horror, the more pleasure we receive from it; and where they are too near common nature, though violently borne by curiosity through the adventure, we cannot repeat it or reflect on it, without an over-balance of pain. (129)

The Aikins' model of pleasurable terror has endured since its publication with little loss of relevance, in spite of a changing relationship to the supernatural and especially to what of it we would deem "common nature." Writers of today's thriller novels and horror films thrive on the same principles of terror and suspense; Diane Long Hoeveler finds that "the gothic continues to prosper today because many of the same anxieties continue to exist" (236).

The influence of the Aikins' essay may mean, in part, that the consistency with which its principles have been repeated and its arguments re-proven is a self-fulfilling prophecy, as literature of terror continues to tread the same ground, albeit in new ways, as it did during the golden age of Gothic fiction. The unbroken line of the Aikins' relevance to terror writing, coupled with their essay's relative innovation at the time of its publication, has long suggested that they were the first to codify something universal

about the way the reader experiences supernatural terror—“the terrible joined with the marvellous.” But what I hope to illustrate through Taylor’s model of disenchantment is that this derived pleasure—this “pleasurable frisson,” to use his words—is “universal” only within the limited sphere of the buffered readership of Western modernity. The formal history of “terror writing,” as such, is today a slightly shorter one than the formal history of the novel, and it seems to me that the relative vacuum of literary criticism from which the Aikins’ essay emerges underscores the newness of the genre—a newness that, I hope, will help to build the case that the kind of literature we are talking about when we use the terms “supernatural fiction” or “literature of terror” can only have been incubated by a process of disenchantment, made possible by the shift toward secular modernity.

## 1.2 “Sir Bertrand”: A Curious Case Study

At the time of its writing, the Aikins’ “On the Pleasures Derived from Objects of Terror” was printed with “Sir Bertrand: A Fragment,” which illustrated the principles of the essay in practice. The fragment, in its own right, was an influential piece of early Gothic writing, which prefigured in some important ways the Gothic bluebook-writers of the 1790s along with the more substantial and better-known works of Clara Reeve and Ann Radcliffe. Somewhat fortuitously, the fragment also comprises the majority of a complete “B-Text,” published under the title “Sir Bertrand’s Adventures in a Ruinous Castle,” which I recently rediscovered and published on elsewhere<sup>15</sup> during my foundational research for this project. In relation to Taylor, the completed “Sir Bertrand”

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<sup>15</sup> “A Forgotten Enchantment: The Silenced Princess, the Andalusian Warlord, and the Rescued Conclusion of ‘Sir Bertrand’.” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 23.1 (Fall 2010): 141-62.

is an ideal explanatory text—again revisiting its parent fragment’s original purpose as an example of theory in practice—and one which invites more of Taylor’s model into the discussion, while at the same time bridging a gap of sorts between *A Secular Age* and the literature I mean to critique.

I ought not to retread in too much detail the complicated origins and authorship<sup>16</sup> of the lost B-Text. To summarize briefly my observations in “A Forgotten Enchantment,” the B-Text appears only in *Gothic Stories*, a mysterious anthology printed a handful of times between 1797 and 1804 with a tangled bibliographical history.<sup>17</sup> In spite of an uncanny coherence of style and form with the original fragment, the conclusion (and thus the B-Text itself) must be treated as effectively anonymous, in spite of its attribution to “Mrs. Barbauld” (Anna Laetitia Aikin’s married name, by which she was better known by 1797). The conclusion was most likely penned by the 1797 editor or by a writer on his

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<sup>16</sup> The authorship of this and other pieces has remained questionable since the Aikins’ 1773 volume, *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose*, was a collection of their individual writings, published under both their names without regard to the individual authorship of its individual contents. Rather like the Lennon/McCartney musical catalogue, some pieces may have been written by John, some by Anna, and some jointly, without clear credit given. Anna’s niece, Lucy Aikin, deliberately omitted “Sir Bertrand” when she compiled and published *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld* in 1825, stating that “several of the pieces have in consequence been generally misappropriated. The fragment of Sir Bertrand in particular[...]has been repeatedly ascribed to Mrs. Barbauld, even in print” (xiii). This denial has been convincing enough evidence (though it by no means *proof*) to satisfy most modern scholars: Rictor Norton anthologizes “Sir Bertrand” under John Aikin’s name in *Gothic Readings*, and E.J. Clery and Robert Miles both attribute the story to John Aikin in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook* (127). Norton also identifies an authoritative attempt, as early as the December 1798 issue of *Analytical Review*, to attribute the story to John Aikin (*Gothic Readings* 7).

<sup>17</sup> In her anthology *Nineteenth-Century Short Stories by Women* (London: Routledge, 1998), the only modern reprinting of the completed “B-Text” of “Sir Bertrand,” Harriet Devine Jump dates the story from 1804, strongly suggesting that the version she discovered came from an 1804 reprint of *Gothic Stories*. The bibliographical tangle is further muddled by a completely different anthology published around the same time, also called *Gothic Stories*, which also contained “Sir Bertrand” (but only in its abridged form), which was published during the same window as the *Gothic Stories* containing the conclusion. To iron out this confusion, the *Gothic Stories* I am concerned with—the one containing the rare B-Text—was printed and sold by S. Fisher of St. John’s Lane, Clerkenwell, from 1797 onwards (printings survive from at least the years 1797, 1798, 1799, 1801, and evidently 1804). The Sadleir-Black Collection of Gothic Fiction, at the University of Virginia, holds a copy of the original 1797 S. Fisher *Gothic Stories*. The “red herring” edition of *Gothic Stories*, which contains (like most texts) only the fragment, was printed in Ludlow, just west of Birmingham, in 1799. Its printer, George Nicholson, was originally from Yorkshire but moved to Manchester and later to Ludlow, finally settling in Stourport-on-Seven, Worcestershire, in 1808. His considerable output, and the itinerant nature of his business, make him a bibliographic puzzle unto himself.

behalf—perhaps to capitalize on Barbauld’s later fame, perhaps in answer to what Vijay Mishra has called an “invitation” (88) to complete the text, and perhaps even for the simple logistical reason of exactly “rounding out” the number of pages in the original volume, an especially important concern given the book’s unusual sextavo (12-page signature) format.<sup>18</sup> Where the original fragment offers the beginning of a denouement, but no explanation for the supernatural sights and sounds encountered in the haunted castle, the complete text effectively rewrites “Sir Bertrand” into a commonplace fairy-tale reminiscent of *Sleeping Beauty* or the Grimms’ *Der gläserne Sarg*, in which the knight enters a haunted castle, conquers his terrors there, and in so doing frees a princess from an eternal curse laid by a blood-drinking, caricatured Moorish tyrant.

The complete tale is useful for a few reasons. The 1797 ending is certainly a populist one, designed to satisfy the voracious readership of a period described by Robert Miles as “the effulgence of Gothic” (“Effulgence” 41) or less generously by Terry Castle as the “Gothic craze” (673); by its populism, the tale reflects the common literary demands and expectations of the shared social imaginary of Gothic readership, while demonstrating how far afield from the Gothic novel some of the Radcliffean conventions of the Gothic could now travel. The fortunate survival of several medieval Spanish analogues to the completed tale provides some tantalizing speculative sources for the story; together these texts paint a starkly contrasting picture of how secularization is beginning to affect how these stories are told.

The original fragment ends after Sir Bertrand, beset by the castle’s apparitions, has fallen unconscious and awakened to beautiful rather than terrible sights. A lady who

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<sup>18</sup> The volume’s inclusion of “Mary: A Fragment,” a frequently reprinted Gothic story in the 1790s that spans only two pages (occupying the book’s final leaf, numbered 51-2 but presented by surviving page signatures as E6r and E6v), lends credence to the printer’s intent to fill as much space in the 6<sup>o</sup> volume as possible.

falls to her knees in gratitude “and thank[s] him as her deliverer” (6) prepares to address him, but the original fragment silences the woman, ending just before her speech. In the completed text, the lady’s “restored” speech makes clear the sort of story that was taking place:

“Sir Knight, The grateful remembrance of my delivery from the iron hand of the Moorish tyrant, who in dying bequeathed his soul to the prince of the air for the horrid purpose of confining me in this my patrimonial castle, shall never be erased from my memory[...]. My father approved of my union with him, but, alas! I never beheld him without the utmost horror[...]. In an unlucky moment I was induced to sign, in obedience to my father’s will, a covenant with Almanzor, which he pretended would place me next heir to the Moorish throne[...]. and because I peremptorily refused to drink his blood, this monster swore he would invoke every power to confine me until some more valorous Knight should arrive to release me from his hands. How long I have been enchanted, I do not know; but this I can declare, that from that time to the present I have not been free from horrid dreams like those which are said to infest the wicked in their grave.” (7)

This passage sits at a crossroads of many analogues and seems to agree, in a sense, with all of them. First, the completed story now falls into the same category of folktale<sup>19</sup> as *Sleeping Beauty*, which as we know it today is also a modern story, one whose medieval trappings are largely cosmetic. Quite remarkably for an obscure piece published anonymously in a cheap anthology, the fairy-tale reflects a historical context with unusual fidelity. The context in question is that of Moorish Spain, from which the

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<sup>19</sup> In folkloric studies, *Sleeping Beauty* and its variants are catalogued in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther classification system of folktales under the number ATU-410. The story is grouped under “Supernatural or Enchanted Relatives (Wife); and the system reduces the story to a very basic motif which can be found in many cultures and times. For more information on the ATU system, see Hans-Jörg Uther’s *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia/Academia scientiarum fennica, 2004).

survival of a medieval Christian tradition of anti-Moorish Iberian ballads provides “Sir Bertrand” with the context of legend as well as of history.

The Almanzor of this Spanish tradition originates with a historical figure who seized a reluctant Christian bride by the decree of her father, and imprisoned her when she refused to convert to Islam or honour their marriage. This Almanzor was a late tenth-century Moorish warlord with the difficult full name of Abu Aamir Muhammad ibn Abdulla ibn Abi Aamir, al-Hajib al-Mansur (نب دبع هللا نب يبأ رماع بجاحل ا روصنملا) (وبأ رماع دمحم); the “seized bride” in question was Teresa of León (c.992-1039), the daughter of Leonese king Bermudo II<sup>20</sup> and his second wife, Elvira García of Castile. Historically, Almanzor is credited with an unbroken string of military victories against Spanish Christians, including the sacking of Santiago de Compostela in 997 in which the original cathedral was destroyed, its great bells were taken and only St. James’s tomb itself was left undisturbed. His legacy in Christian Spain, naturally, became that of a Moorish bogeyman: the *Chronicon Burguense*, one of the few Spanish Christian annals from the period, gleefully offers this single-line entry for the year of Almanzor’s death: “Era MXL. Mortuus est Almozor, & sepultus est in inferno” (Florez 23:308).<sup>21</sup>

Shortly before his death, Almanzor was given Teresa as a child bride as part of a desperate diplomatic effort with the warlord to appease him from sacking León. Of their marriage we have few historical facts, but we know<sup>22</sup> that another of Almanzor’s

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<sup>20</sup> Often, particularly in previous centuries, spelled Vermudo, though the Castilian Spanish V is pronounced as B.

<sup>21</sup> [Hispanic] Era 1040 [1002 AD]. Almanzor is dead, and is buried in Hell (my translation).

<sup>22</sup> The original authoritative source for the most detailed account of Almanzor’s marital life is Dutch historian Reinhardt Dozy’s somewhat obscure *Investigationes Acerca de la Historia y de la Literatura de España Durante la Edad Media*. I am working here from Antonio Machado y Álvarez’s Spanish translation of the work (Madrid: Libreria de D. Victoriano Suárez, 1859), largely because I am not sure an English translation exists. Much (but not all) of the information surrounding Almanzor’s private life can now be had in John

Christian Brides, Urraca the Basque, converted to Islam, taking the name Abda, and took her new life with a zeal that pleased the warlord and his court. We know, conversely, that Teresa outlived her husband, ultimately returned to León, and spent most of the remainder of her life in a Christian convent.

Here, we step out of history and into literary analogues: where confirmed historical fact ends, tradition holds that Teresa refused the advances of Almanzor, was widowed a virgin, and lived a life of extreme Christian piety. The story seems to have taken hold with Christian Spaniards in the later years of the Moorish occupation, who kept it alive in a tradition of almost hagiographic ballads detailing Teresa's resistance to Almanzor and the supernatural forces (that is, the Christian forces) she evokes in her own defense. In "La princesa doña Teresa," a typical example of the tradition, she warns him,

si pones manos en mí, —y de ti soy deshonrada,  
 el angel de Jesucristo, —a quien él me ha dado en guarda,  
 herirá ese to cuerpo, —con su muy tajante espada. (Le Strange 65)

[if you put your hands on me, and I am dishonoured by you,  
 The angel of Jesus Christ, to whom He has given me in safekeeping,  
 shall wound your body with his very sharp sword.] (my translation)

Naturally, as befits the political and religious intent of the ballad, the wicked Moor refuses to heed the warning and is wounded (in some versions fatally) by the divine power of Christ. The princess returns safely to León, in many cases (including this one) with an unexplained payment of lavish gifts—in parallel, perhaps to the bride who returned after the historical Almanzor's death to take up the veil, divesting herself of her queenly wealth to do so.

On a basic level, the tale's metamorphosis in the period between "La princesa doña Teresa" and "Sir Bertrand" bears some of the effects of secularization on its surface. The valorous protector of the princess, formerly a divine spirit, has been transfigured into not just a mortal knight, but an especially secular one. Bertrand behaves like a typical English Gothic hero, like Theodore in *The Castle of Otranto* or Sir Philip Harclay from *The Old English Baron*. His quest reads as if it is accidental rather than ordained; the nature of what he is overcoming and why—or even that he is being tested—is not otherwise known to him (and is detailed nowhere in the original fragment). This "falsely medieval" knight is far from a divine champion in the tradition of Sir Gawain—a genuinely medieval knight in whom the occasional meeting of sacred and secular values cannot allow us to forget that he is "not simply a knight defending the court's honour, but a Christian hero engaged in a monumental battle against evil" (Gustafson 627).

Similarly, Bertrand's adversary undergoes a slackening of religious importance: the historical spectre of the medieval Almanzor, to those Spanish Christians with a native understanding of who he is and what he represents, is not just an antagonist within the sphere of the ballad, but an adversary to all of Christendom as well. Conversely, Although the Almanzor of the later "Sir Bertrand" may have "bequeathed his soul to the prince of the air" (7)—that is, entered into a demonic pact—he is still much reduced in power, and the apparitions he conjures against the knight are of little substance. The bloody spectre that appears to threaten Bertrand provides no obstacle or test of his prowess: before he has a chance to strike it with his sword, it "vanishe[s]...letting fall [the] massy iron key" (5) he needs to continue his adventure. Even the "dead hand," a classic symbol of Gothic terror, is "left powerless in his" (5). At no point in the story

does the knight's conquest of these apparitions seem a function of extraordinary courage: the story opens with Bertrand lost in a marsh, so afraid of the dark that, "alighting from his horse in despair, he threw himself on the ground" (3). He nearly flees from the castle at the sound of a bell, and only remains there because the doors shut behind him and his "trembling hands" (4) lack the strength to open them.

In the face of Bertrand's timidity, "valour" seems a curious virtue to underscore in the conclusion, and at odds with the events of the original fragment. The only time it is mentioned here, it is when Bertrand recoils from the dead hand and "rushe[s] forward with a desperate valour" (5): the story seems ambiguous, and almost tongue-in-cheek, on the matter of whether Bertrand is rushing on to the next challenge, or rushing away from the severed hand in fright. He has more in common with the Gothic heroine, in essence, than with the divine champion of medieval romance. One nearly expects him to faint with fright; indeed, the climactic blackout before he awakes some time later on the lady's couch can be read precisely this way.

At his most valorous, this Bertrand is a hapless opportunist with no understanding of his quest until it is complete; at his worst, he is a figure of almost satirical cowardice, whose fear of the dark is all that drives him toward his adventure and its reward. This may be intentional on the part of the original author(s)—most of the fragment, after all, was written by one or both of the Aikins to prove a point on the fear of the supernatural. But in the new, complete text, within the framework of an enchanted-prisoner story, Sir Bertrand's ungainly, terror-stricken stumble through the haunted castle is enough to defeat Almanzor's curse. If the tyrant bartered his soul for the curse, as the rescued princess claims, he has sold it very cheaply indeed for necromancy so easily conquered.

The politics of magic in place here is of great importance to Taylor's narrative, and it is very much a politics of enervation. The older ballad, taken as a sort of miracle play with perseverance and faith as its lesson, is an exercise in magical oneupmanship: the black magic of the Moorish blood sorcery<sup>23</sup> is no match for the white magic of the Church. In the 1797 retelling, the triumph of the hero comes not because his white magic is strong (indeed, we have no reliable indication it even exists), but rather because black magic is weak. Whatever virtues Sir Bertrand possesses to make him worthy as "some more valorous knight," they are not presented as sacred virtues, such as those embodied by Sir Gawain and symbolized by the pentangle on his shield. They are virtues which exist in a quotidian space rather than a transcendent one, and they suffice to lead their secular hero onward to his secular reward—the lady's hand in marriage, of course. And as we will later see in Polidori's *The Vampyre*, the pre-modern sacrament of marriage has itself transformed into a gesture of predominantly civil import.

So in the first, most obvious dimension, the narrative has itself been "secularized," from one in which an inherent sacredness defines both the goal of the protagonist(s) and the means of achieving that goal, to one in which goal, method, and reward are all dealt with in terms removed from sacredness, even though magic and the supernatural, *per se*, still inhabit the text. We can even choose to read the later "Sir Bertrand" as a very simplified allegory of the old subtraction-story of secularization, in which progressive secular forces contend against ancient magic, and defeat the old ways of the past with their modern virtues. This reading is in line, after all, with typical

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<sup>23</sup> Almanzor's magic is figured, naturally, as both figuratively and ethnically "black" here: the racist rhetoric of the ballad is immediately obvious today, and the sanguinary elements of Almanzor's sorcery may owe something to the anti-Semitic traditions of "blood libel," which regularly accused both the Jewish and Islamic other in Western Europe (and especially in Spain).

interpretations of the Gothic tradition in which the completed “Sir Bertrand” is meant to participate. Even the well-established Protestant bias of the Gothic genre<sup>24</sup> against Catholic ritual could be at work here, furthering the tale’s momentum toward disenchantment.

At the same time, there is another, more detailed aspect of the secularization story to be illustrated by “Sir Bertrand,” enshrined in the way the text deals (and correspondingly, in the way the medieval analogues do not deal) with notions of time and eternity. The competing orders of time on display in “Sir Bertrand” form the last key aspect of Taylor’s apparatus I have yet to address: it is within the parallel concepts of *chronos* and *kairos*, of high and quotidian time, that the landmarks of Taylor’s secularization narrative are most keenly felt here. In the context of “Sir Bertrand,” but also in the context of a much larger set of medieval and early modern supernatural fiction, I should lay out the basic shape of these concepts before we turn to the vampire in particular.

### **1.3 Orders of Time in Early Modern Supernatural Fiction**

Much of Taylor’s narrative has to do with ways of understanding time, and specifically, with a framework in which different orders of time separate the enchanted world from the quotidian. In part, the difficulty with the word “transcendence” arises because of this situation: when enchantment is enshrined in and interwoven with quotidian time and the quotidian world, we can call it “immanent,” and reserve

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<sup>24</sup> See especially Chris Baldick & Robert Mighall’s chapter in the *New Companion to the Gothic* (London: Blackwell, 2012. 267-87).

“transcendent” for those occasions when the enchanted is exalted to another order, removed from the quotidian realm by time, space, or another mechanism of understanding.

When aspects of enchantment are remote from quotidian time, as they are in myths of Creation or Armageddon, for example, they occur for Taylor within the exalted order of *kairos* or “high time,” as contrasted with the ordinary time of everyday life. In *A Secular Age*, we first encounter this idea in a discussion of Carnival, which Taylor describes as “kairotic” (54). His terminology stems from the Greek *καιρός*, a term which has a long history and complex definition within both Sophist philosophy and Christian theology. In Classical Greek thought, the word is contrasted with *χρόνος* (*chronos*), the sequential time whose root has more readily spread throughout the English language.

The word *chronos* handily represents that order of time we usually mean when we speak of time using its etymological descendants (chronology, anachronism, synchronized, and so on). The Sophists and many Classical schools of rhetoric sometimes translate *kairos*, on the other hand, in terms of an opportune time, a perfect moment. In this we have the first connotation of transcendence, of what I have been calling “the exalted,” which Taylor describes as “fullness” in the context of sacred or divine supernature. The early Christians additionally define *kairos* as the “high” time in which divine interaction and sacred events occur. The Crucifixion is a good example of this: it has a definitive place in *chronos* or chronological time (that is, somewhere between 26 and 36 AD, the factually verifiable start and end dates of Pontius Pilate’s historical prefecture of Judæa). But it also occurs for Christian believers within kairotic or “high time,” as Taylor goes on to outline:

Events which were far apart in profane time could nevertheless be closely linked[...]for instance the sacrifice of Isaac and the Crucifixion of Christ. These two events were linked through their immediate contiguous places in the divine plan. They are drawn close to identity in eternity, even though they are centuries (that is, “aeons” or “saecula”) apart[...]Good Friday 1998 is closer in a way to the original day of the Crucifixion than mid-summer’s day 1997. Once events are situated in relation to more than one kind of time, the issue of time-placing becomes quite transformed. (55)

Taylor’s contrasting reference here to “profane time,” a term he uses interchangeably with “ordinary time” or the more loaded “secular time,” is a reference to *chronos*, the opposing notion to *kairos*.

In *A Secular Age*, then, we see events of great religious import rendered in kairotic time. The Crucifixion and the sacrifice of Isaac happen within this sphere, and are symbolically linked: kairotically, they occur of a piece for Christians who believe one sacrifice signifies the other, even if Isaac’s sacrifice must be chronologically earlier. The expulsion from Eden (indeed, Adam and Eve’s whole existence there) must take place in *kairos*. But in a literary sense, it is important for us to note that not only events of sacred or religious import happen in *kairos*. The exploits of Robin Hood in English folklore exist in a quasi-historical sphere of the kairotic as surely as the Crucifixion. The legends require them to occur within the ten-year reign of Richard the Lionheart, just as the action of the Gospels must have occurred during Pilate’s prefecture. But in another sense, they are perennial events, refigured again and again within a mythic and only vaguely medieval time-outside-time.

To offer an even more secularized example: when, chronologically speaking, is Uncle Ben fatally shot in the *Spider-Man* comic books? The first iteration of this event is in August of 1962—the year it happened in Stan Lee’s *Amazing Fantasy* comic series—

and yet the event is refigured to the present day by a television series in 1967, films in 2002 and 2012, even a 2011 Broadway musical. Like the saints immortalized in medieval stained glass, the ill-fated Parker patriarch is regularly and eternally fixed in a state of martyrdom; the “present day” in which this occurs is every bit as kairotic as the “days of yore” in which the oldest saints met, and continue to meet, their unfortunate ends.

This leads us, somewhat peripherally, to the important idea that *kairos* is not an exclusively medieval or exclusively religious concept—that it continues to be an aspect of secular modernity, inherent in our modern social imaginaries even if we retreat from or develop alternatives to the cosmologies of early orthodox Christianity from which it springs. But the dual construction of a high, exalted, extra-worldly time and a mundane, measurable, quotidian clock-time is still of special note in relation to the religious concerns of *A Secular Age*: for Taylor, the shift from a social imaginary profoundly penetrated by spiritual belief to the “disenchanted” social imaginary of secular modernity is characterized by a two-step process rooted in this binary order.

First, the kairotic order begins to disengage from the quotidian order of everyday life, and takes with it the “home space” of supernatural forces great and small. The God who once physically inhabited the quotidian world, for example (as He did the elaborately prepared tent of the Tabernacle in Exodus 40), remains in a remote Heaven, and that Heaven is no longer synonymous with the quotidian sky. Ghosts which were likewise manifest in everyday places, as the Cock Lane ghost was manifest in the home of Richard Parsons,<sup>25</sup> become increasingly relegated to places which are geographically and/or conceptually uncanny—forest groves and ancient ruins, but also dreams and

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<sup>25</sup> The Cock Lane ghost and its literary importance are perhaps best detailed in the opening chapter of E.J. Clery’s *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*.

madmen's visions. A borderland or liminal space begins to form between the kairotic and the quotidian, and the whole extended metaphor of crossing over this border becomes an enduring characteristic of the supernatural. When Christopher Craft describes Dracula's threatening sexuality as a form of "transgression" (116), he is invoking taboo, but with a word which signals this new remoteness, this new crossing.<sup>26</sup> Even that prevailing Gothic image, the "dead hand of the past,"<sup>27</sup> reaches *from* somewhere, whether from literal shadows or the shadows of a past made remote by this disengagement of the kairotic from the quotidian—this movement of the supernatural from what Taylor calls an "immanent" to a "transcendent" position.

Second, within the quotidian world, which has through this movement been disinhabited by gods and ghosts alike, new kinds of fullness begin to emerge which have little or nothing to do with transcendence or "reaching across" to the now-remote supernatural, but are rooted purely in the quotidian sphere. Here we find the humanist concerns of what Taylor calls "human flourishing" (9 et passim), for instance, or systems of supreme moral value which are divorced from Deism, such as the moral sentimentalism of Hume and Adam Smith. These new systems do not force a subtraction story; they do not eliminate the supernatural or deny the enchanted world. But there

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<sup>26</sup> The *trans-* prefix, as an indicator of this kind of movement, is ubiquitous in *Dracula*: the novel is marked by repeated transgression, but also by instances of transformation, transfusion, transubstantiation, and of course Transylvania itself, "the land beyond the forest," a land both geographically and mythically remote from which the supernatural powers much reach across. The supernatural attends many events in *Dracula*, but it is at its most powerful where these "moments of crossing" occur.

<sup>27</sup> The image and device of the "dead hand of the past," whose prevalence in Gothic literature as a foreboding symbol of the "sins of the fathers" owes much to the literal dead hand in Walpole's inspirational dream for *The Castle of Otranto*, may have its real origins in later readings of *mortmain*, a medieval legal term for real estate held in perpetuity (such as Church land), which therefore did not pass by inheritance. Ownership of real estate, after all, is a curiously frequent theme in Gothic writing, from *Otranto* itself through *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, even unto Dracula's purchase of Carfax Abbey. Readings of "mortmain" as "dead hand," however, owe to a false etymology: the term is probably derived from the Roman legal expression *manus mortua*, ("inalienable power"), and misread as the more colourful *manus mortis* ("hand of death"). See, for instance, Sandra Raban's *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church 1279-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982).

arrival does further shunt the supernatural aside into remoteness, and these systems no longer reach out toward it.

Taylor's monumental task, in part, is to chart the development and inter-migration patterns of all these interwoven systems, from Aquinas to Hume and beyond,<sup>28</sup> and to determine precisely what forces and trends in the history of ideas—or more exactly, in the history of “ways of experiencing the world” (qtd. in Butler 198)—contribute to the story, and precisely where and how they fit into the mosaic. Thankfully, the rich detail necessary to support Taylor's framework is there in his own pages, and the time he spends charting this difficult and sometimes inchoate sea of ideas allows us to plot a concise course through it. For our purposes, it is enough to acknowledge that the early modern relationship to kairotic and secular time emerges as a result of a variety of catalysts, and that Taylor has done the minute work of exploring for us what these catalysts are and how they operate—work we need not retread to proceed with his model intact.

In Taylor's view, the move toward secularity has not done away with notions of kairotic time any more than it has done away with the supernatural. But it has changed the way we relate to both, and in many cases the supernatural has been relocated, out of the quotidian realm and out of secular time, into the kairotic. In the eighteenth century—perhaps earlier, and certainly later—literature reflects and sometimes quietly meditates

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<sup>28</sup> Jon Butler's long catalogue of the most important ancient and early modern thinkers to Taylor's early chapters (to say nothing of the later ones) also includes “Lucretius and Epicurianism, Erasmus, Augustine, *Hamlet* [which is, to say, Shakespeare], Origin [sic, probably Origen Adamantius], Nicholas of Cusa, Montaigne, Thomas à Kempis, Luther, the Brethren of the Common Life, Saint Francis, Anselm, Gregory of Nyssa, New England Puritans, Arminianism, Charles Borromeo, William Perkins, Philip Stubbes, Justus Lipsius, William Stoughton, Grotius, and Descartes” (200-201). With each of these names standing in for an entire cosmology, a complex paradigm of belief with a role to play in the story of secularization, it is no wonder that Taylor has indicated a sense of incompleteness when it comes to telling this story, however much of that story he may have been able to provide.

on the relationship between these two orders. When Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* begins, set clearly in "the minority of Henry the Sixth, King of England, when the renowned Duke of Bedford was Regent of France" (5), we have clear markers set in chronological time and a textual world that, we expect, is rooted in *chronos* and functions accordingly. When a story is set "once upon a time," as most of Perrault's fairy tales,<sup>29</sup> we are not merely dealing with a *lack* of information (in this case, chronological specificity); we are instead dealing with a powerful sign that the story to follow holds its meaning irrespective of a chronological context.

Usually, setting a story in this way connects it to kairoic time: to use Taylor's religious example, although the sacrifice of Christ takes place at a chronological date in the AD 30s, neither Scripture nor Catholic doctrine has an interest in fixing the date in secular time; more important to the Church and its traditions surrounding the Crucifixion (Good Friday, the Eucharist, and so on) is the idea that, in a sense, the sacrifice of Christ is eternal and continual; this event happens in a sphere outside of quotidian time, and events which are linked to it (the much-older Psalm 22, or modern Easter celebrations) likewise share its space in the kairoic order (Taylor, *A Secular Age* 55). Outside of religious texts, the legends of King Arthur—*rex quondam rexque futurus*<sup>30</sup>—similarly take place in a higher order of time. *Beowulf*, set firmly "*in geardagum*," in days of yore, is likewise divorced from secular time, taking place in a mythic past that is remote not only to us, but to its original Anglo-Saxon listeners as well. The aspects of medieval romance which pass into genres such as the early modern fairy tale suggest that kairoic

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<sup>29</sup> The phrase, now a stock beginning for English fairy-tales, was the most popular translation of Perrault's "*il était une fois...*" or literally, "*one time, there was...*"

<sup>30</sup> "King once, and king [to be] in the future," from Malory—or, as usually translated (including by T.H. White), "the once and future king."

time becomes more important, not less, to supernatural literature as the immanence of the supernatural in the everyday world retreats.

In the complete “Sir Bertrand,” and in the early modern tradition of Sleeping Beauty stories to which it belongs, enchantment and *kairos* are almost synonymous. And it is important to remember that these *are* early modern rather than pre-modern narrative traditions; the relationship of Perraultian fairy-tales to kairotic time and enchantment, unlike that of the medieval romances they imitate, is at least a partially modernized one.

There are, of course, pre-modern analogues to Sleeping Beauty in folklore, and the device of enchanted sleep is an old one. But the manner in which such an enchantment carries its target out of *chronos* entirely, only to return to *chronos* when the enchantment is broken, is a modern addition to the narrative. The separation from and return to secular time, especially as congruent with themes of abduction and rescue, are not a theme of the medieval analogues: for instance, the *Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* highlights the 14th-century Arthurian romance *Perceforest*, first printed in 1528 but certainly in scribal circulation well before this time. In this text, which contains one of the earliest identifiable versions of a Sleeping Beauty, we have no sense of a finite cycle of sleep and waking, with its sojourn in dream cognate with a sojourn in the kairotic, is missing. The Beauty, Zellandine, is raped rather than rescued, carries a child to term, and delivers it all without waking—a deeper sleep, certainly, than the later princesses whose captivity is a cycle of descent and return. When her baby suckles the splinter out of her finger is less a hero’s rescue and more a moment of serendipity, or of what Tolkien called “eucatastrophe”—the sort of inevitable providence common to medieval romance, in which bans are placed to be broken (make a knight vulnerable to only one weapon, and

he is sure to meet it; banish all spinning wheels from the kingdom, and the princess must certainly encounter one).

The enchantment of sleep in *Perceforest* is thus something different from the kairotic suspension of later Sleeping Beauty stories, in which the princess (and sometimes her whole castle and all its inhabitants) are shunted out of secular time by the enchantment, only to return when the spell is broken. It is for this reason that “Sir Bertrand,” which shares the later theme of kairotic suspension but has nothing to do with sleep, has little in common with *Perceforest*, which has little to say in reference to it. This is not the case, however, with Charles Perrault’s “La Belle au Bois Dormant,” which is perhaps the best known version of the Sleeping Beauty narrative, and the one which survives in the popular imagination today. First published in 1697 in his *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé: les Contes de ma Mère l’Oye*,<sup>31</sup> Perrault’s version first reached the English language in Robert Samber’s translation of 1729 and is a much more thematic cousin to “Sir Bertrand.” Two variations of the tale, “Dörnroschen” and “Der gläserne Sarg,”<sup>32</sup> were produced by the Brothers Grimm as late as 1812, well into the Romantic period, and written for a much more modern audience than analogues such as *Perceforest* would suggest.

In the later Sleeping Beauty stories, as in “Sir Bertrand,” the narrative takes a common form: a malevolent being with supernatural powers (a wicked fairy in the usual tradition, and here Almanzor, transformed from a historical warlord into a blood-drinking Satanic necromancer) places a curse on both the princess and her place of residence. Both princess and castle are shunted out of *chronos* into the higher time of supernatural

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<sup>31</sup> Literally, “Stories or Tales of Times Past: the Tales of my Mother Goose.”

<sup>32</sup> “Little Briar-Rose” and “The Glass Coffin.”

enchantment. Kairotic time ceases to be presented as a dimension of friendly ritual, as in the Eucharist or Taylor's notion of festivals such as Carnival as a necessary social "safety valve" (Taylor *A Secular Age* 46). Instead, the kairotic is rewritten as a supernatural prison: it now functions as a dimension of menace in which malevolent supernatural forces have survived, in spite of all the mechanisms of modernity by which they are purged from the quotidian world. The kairotic remains still an hospitable environment to the supernatural, and in this sort of story that means it is home to forces of terror as well as those of wonder. Finally, after an irrelevant period of time—frequently "one hundred years," in the same way that the Biblical use of "forty" or the classical Chinese use of "ten thousand"<sup>33</sup> is a stand-in for "many")—a hero arrives who breaks the enchantment, safely returning the heroine (and her domicile) to secular time. His reward for this deed—usually in the form of marriage—is here, as in the Gothic novel, not only the seed of a happy ending, but a reward which reaffirms quotidian life and reinforces the safe return of both hero and heroine to secular time.

To describe Sir Bertrand as a "secular hero," then, is appropriate in two ways: first, as we have already discussed, he is a mortal champion with mortal virtues, and no special empowerment from good magic. His sword, we presume, is forged by the usual mundane methods—not bestowed upon him by supernatural forces of providence (as Arthur's Excalibur), nor an "heirloom" handed down from a period of even greater immanence (Beowulf's unnamed ancient sword, recovered from the yore-days of the giants, which easily outperforms Hrunting, the very best sword that the quotidian world of the Danes can offer him). The glory Bertrand wins is likewise his own: his triumph is

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<sup>33</sup> In Chinese poetry, 萬 or "wàn," denoting 10,000, is the common number for a vast but indiscriminate "many." "The ten thousand things" is a term used in the Tao Te Ching (道德經) signifying all of existence.

not, metonymically, a triumph of God or even of cosmic righteousness: like a brawnier, more heavily armed fairy-tale “boy named Jack,” it is his inherent humanistic qualities that ensure his victory. In many ways such figures are paragons of the “buffered self,” heroes to whom victory comes not because they are armed with the supernatural power of good, but rather because the supernatural forces of evil have no power over them.

Second, and in a more complex way, Sir Bertrand is a champion of secular time itself. By breaking Almanzor’s eternal curse and returning both princess and castle to the normal order of time, Sir Bertrand’s role as an hero of secularity is made literal in Taylor’s sense of the saeculum, of the “profane, ordinary time” (*A Secular Age* 54) in which Sir Bertrand is firmly rooted and to which he returns the enchanted castle: “[p]eople who are in the saeculum,” writes Taylor, “are embedded in ordinary time, they are living the life of ordinary time; as against those who have turned away from this in order to live closer to eternity” (55). By this definition, the victory of Sir Bertrand is to throw out the malevolent eternity of Almanzor and bring his princess back into the saeculum. The secular reward of marriage is the final defeat of a figure in whose hands the kairotic becomes monstrous. This is echoed in the modern tradition of Sleeping Beauty stories: here the handsome prince’s triumphant act, the kiss, is usually an act of love (or even lust) rather than valour, but again the triumph is a cathartic release from high time, a purging of malevolent kairotic suspension. The princess rises from her hundred-year sleep (and in some versions of the tale, the castle’s other inhabitants likewise awaken) and the social order, suspended outside of *chronos*, resumes its mundane paces.

In “Sir Bertrand,” then, the lady’s abduction follows a predictable pattern of abduction to *kairos*, where aspects of the supernatural have survived the disenchantment

of the world, followed by the rescue back to *chronos*. This should not suggest, however, that the modern fairy-tale's relationship to time is simplistic, or that it is somehow hostile to the kairotic. Even "happily ever after," after all, is a concept that resonates with a sense of kairotic eternity. But that phrase, "ever after," is itself a curious juxtaposition of the temporal and the eternal. "Ever," to many, is a kairotic term: even more strongly than "forever," with its connotations of "from now forward," the word "ever" suggests a continuity extending in all temporal directions. "After," on the other hand, is a marker of sequence, which makes sense only in relation to secular time:

"[s]ecular time is what to us is ordinary time, indeed, to *us* it's just time, period. One thing happens after another, and when something is past, it's past. Time placings are consistently transitive. If A is before B and B before C, than A is before C. (Taylor, *A Secular Age* 55)

To parse the phrase "ever after," then, is to recognize that in these stories, we are dealing with narratives which situate themselves at an intersection between *kairos* and *chronos*. While we intuitively treat the phrase and its counterpart "once upon a time" as the stock bookends of an English-language fairy-tale, I would venture that the purely kairotic beginning phrase is, as a tradition, much older than the ending, at least in these familiar forms. The tension between *kairos* and *chronos* inhabits the latter in a way that comes to inflect a great deal of early modern supernatural fiction. I have mentioned how the opening of Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* makes clear its fastidious allegiance to secular time; the "Gothic story" it hopes to correct, Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, is vaguely set by its first-edition Preface "in the darkest ages of Christianity" (5). When Walpole pretends at sniffing out a history for his imagined manuscript, recalling its first fictional printing "at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529" (5), his play at textual

scholarship situates an imagined *text* in chronological time, but provides no such situation, even a fictionalized one, to the story that text represents. About the closest Walpole comes to an acknowledgment of historical setting is his admission that Frederic “had taken the cross and gone to the Holy Land” (62), situating the narrative somewhere within the span of the Crusades. Even here, the Crusades work as a semi-mythical backdrop much as they do in the Robin Hood stories (only more vaguely here, as we can nail down Robin Hood’s adventures to the absentee period of a single specific king).

As writers become more familiar with all these temporal conventions, they come to play with them in interesting ways. The opening to Keats’s *Lamia* places the tale “upon a time,” but does so in a way which plays with notions of disenchantment and suggests only that a new, Celtic order of enchantment has driven out the old Greek order:

UPON a time, before the faery broods  
Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods,  
Before King Oberon’s bright diadem,  
Sceptre, and mantle, clasp’d with dewy gem,  
Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns  
From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslip’d lawns (ll. 1-6)

There is a common story in criticism about the great imperative of Romanticism being the re-enchantment of the world—not usually in a sense informed by Taylor, but in a sense informed by Max Weber’s original vision of disenchantment.<sup>34</sup> Here Keats seems to serve this imperative by suggesting a supernatural order driven out by another, rather than by secular concerns; we are, from the perspective of Keats’s *Lamia*, in the “fallen age” of the British supernatural rather than the Greek—but in any case an age which plays with the tension between *chronos* and *kairos*. Even William Goldman’s *The*

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<sup>34</sup> Sayre & Löwy’s “Romanticism and Capitalism” in Blackwell’s *A Companion to European Romanticism* touches on this well-known reading of Romanticism and the “re-enchantment imperative” in the context of Weber.

*Princess Bride*, both a twentieth-century homage to the early modern fairy tale and a satire of it, takes place in the impossible time “before Europe but after Paris” (46), intuitively understanding, perhaps, that an unstable relationship between quotidian and higher orders of time is an important aspect of the early modern fairy tale.

Before moving on, it is important to recognize and perhaps to reinforce the modernity of these tales and tropes, and to consider, for a moment, our tendency to misread these tales as “ancient.” There might be several excuses for this tendency: the *mise-en-scène* of antiquity decorating the most well-known fairy tales, the sense of long tradition now surrounding them, and the practice of telling and retelling them to our descendants in a mutable and sometimes oral form all carry with them the connotations of oldness. In this kind of literary climate, it may be deceptively easy to mistake both the tales themselves and the forms they inhabit for medieval or even ancient inventions. The anachronistic signals in these texts—swords, feudal systems, archaic language and architecture, even magic itself to an extent—may serve as a nod or reference to a period. But they cannot constitute a return to that period, nor to its porous cosmology—nor even to a real participation in its literature. Where criticism of other schools of medieval imitation—the Gothic novel, Pre-Raphaelite poetry, even this century’s sword-and-sorcery fantasy tradition—seems to have an easy enough time recognizing this, there remains in the case of fairy tales a persistent impulse to treat the genre, the specific stories, or both as relics of antiquity even when a little bibliographic sleuthing proves otherwise.

In his celebrated essay “On Fairy-Stories,” J.R.R. Tolkien reminds us that

When we have explained many of the elements commonly found embedded in fairy-stories (such as step-mothers,

enchanted bears and bulls, cannibal witches, taboos on names, and the like) as relics of ancient customs[...]there remains still a point too often forgotten: that is the effect produced *now* by these old things in the stories as they are.

For one thing, they are now *old*, and antiquity has an appeal in itself. (31).

For Tolkien the “appeal” of antiquity, even false antiquity, is unmistakable; but even he in all his Anglo-Saxon nostalgia does not make the mistake of conflating modern tales with the ancient.<sup>35</sup> Like Catherine Morland in Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, who likens the diminutive Blaise Castle<sup>36</sup> to the ancient edifice of Udolpho (which is itself, through Radcliffe, another layer of the modern reinventing the medieval), when it comes to fairy-tales, we can remain too susceptible to their own suggestion of antiquity. This suggestion, deeply embedded in the fairy-tale form, is a romantic one (and perhaps even a large-R Romantic one as well); but like the road to Blaise Castle, this leads to an unfortunate folly if blindly followed. The history of secularization, even as Taylor charts it, is a sequential story charted in ordinary time, and making sense of this literature requires an accurate picture of where it fits in the larger story. The repurposing of the kairotic as the home to supernatural malevolence and the secular-heroic theme of purging kairotic malevolence can both be considered “modern” tropes: they may even serve, perhaps counter-intuitively, to mark the whole genre of the fairy-tale as a product either of secular modernity or of the accelerating movement towards it.

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<sup>35</sup> I wonder whether Tolkien would find it ironic, flattering, or deeply troubling, in the wake of “On Fairy-Stories,” that the majority (and the best) of the criticism of his *Lord of the Rings*—a work of mid twentieth-century fiction published the same year as Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim* or Ian Fleming’s *Live and Let Die*—is conducted by his fellow Anglo-Saxonists, specialists in early medieval language and literature rather than the century in which he lived and wrote.

<sup>36</sup> Austen writes, “the delight of exploring an edifice like Udolpho, as her fancy represented Blaize [sic] Castle to be, was such a counterpoise of good, as might console her for almost any thing” (61).

So we have in all this discussion, and exemplified in the completed “Sir Bertrand,” a few aspects of Taylor’s secularization story enshrined in early modern supernatural literature. We have the tensions of conflicting orders of time overlaying conflicting imperatives of enchantment, disenchantment, re-enchantment. And at the centre of it all, we have an emerging and expanding tradition of literature which turns a surprisingly sophisticated eye to these concerns, and provides in its complex relationship to the supernatural a window into the crucible of secularization in Western thought. But we also have in “Sir Bertrand’s” Almanzor a sort of proto-vampire—he is, after all, a blood-drinking sorcerer who wields the kairotic power of eternity. The prolonged life of the vampire is itself a kairotic construct; sometimes it is even treated as a kairotic imprisonment—as in the case of Byron’s Giaour, for instance, who is cursed to suffer the prolonged afterlife of a vampire, rather than a speedy trip onward to his reward after death like his rival Hassan.

It is worth noting the frequency with which the vampires of English literature are depicted as ancient—not just as old figures, but figures from yore, from that kairotic space of “once upon a time.” It is in this way that the vampire symbolizes an ancient past; yet we must recognize that even to construct the vampire in this way requires a modern understanding of these orders of time. In spite of their descent from pre-modern sources, then, the English literary vampire’s archaic affectations and pretensions begin to show their limitations as cosmetic markers of a past which do not amount to a real immersion in it. In spite of their folkloric connections to primordial vampire-traditions, and to the ancient myths which certainly inspired them, the vampires of English literature are no

more direct and uninflected descendants of ancient myth than Gothic novels are of the Goths.

This pretension to a reconstructed past is perhaps better charted, now, in the field of the Gothic than it has been in the case of the vampire. This makes the existing body of Gothic studies a valuable place to turn next, notwithstanding its troubled and often misunderstood relationship to the vampire. Like the fanged, caped monster which has entered its traditions only in a complicated and peripheral way (and what way, exactly, I am about to explore), the Gothic itself is, in spite of its ancient resonances, a thoroughly modern invention with much to tell us about the rise of that modernity.

## Chapter 2: Vampirism, the Gothics, and the Gothic Schism

### 2.1 The Vampire, “That Genus of Gothic Monster”

Unlike the modern vampire, which continues to be incorrectly or incompletely identified as an ancient or even primordial construct (a sibling, rather than a descendant, of the Babylonian blood-drinkers and medieval revenants of Slavic folklore), the Gothic has been widely recognized already as a pastiche of antiquity, capable of brashly announcing its own modernity through a sometimes gleefully counterfeit past. In “The Ghost of the Counterfeit in the Genesis of the Gothic,” Jerrold E. Hogle describes the mechanisms of counterfeiting in *The Castle of Otranto* as an acceleration and rapid multiplication of the counterfeits offered in *Hamlet*. We should keep this acceleration in mind when we return to Taylor’s persistent metaphor of the nova—a metaphor of acceleration that I think bears wider use in the context of modernity than he intends it in *A Secular Age*. But for now, let us concentrate on the matter of counterfeiting.

Hogle’s definition of counterfeit is wrapped in signification, indicating not mere falseness but “any accurate, albeit graven, image of something” (29). So representation, as much as forgery, is at the heart of the matter here. First in the ghost of *Hamlet*, then in the representations, portraits, metonymic armour, and mistaken identities of *Otranto*, and finally in the whole Gothic pageant of the past on display in the literature of the 1790s, there are many counterfeits; but the graven image here can be treated as an “authentic representation,” even if it inauthentically represents an imagined original. That the Gothic

mode is variably “inauthentic,” and sometimes markedly so, is ultimately secondary to the idea that its process of representation creates a remediation, a new image through a modern lens. For Hogle, by the time Walpole has made a “saleable commodity” (31) out of the Gothic label, the business of counterfeiting has undergone, like the term “Gothic” itself, a rapid expansion into what Taylor might call a common practice founded on common understanding. “At the very genesis of neo-Gothic fiction,” Hogle writes,

The assumption of counterfeit signification, extending potentials already within it, has accelerated towards the ‘mechanical reproducibility’ of forms and the ‘coded play of simulacra-fragments with each other’ that Baudrillard sees as the more recent transformations of post-medieval symbolic exchange. (31)

Three key ideas come to light in this passage. First, there is the idea, intersecting somewhat with the thesis of Diane Long Hoeveler’s *Gothic Riffs*, that the emergence of the Gothic is marked by an acceleration toward reproducibility and repetition of these counterfeit riffs, these recurring simulacra. Second, the description of Gothic counterfeiting as a “coded play” suggests, in a sense, that it is meant in some way to be *decoded*; where the early Gothic psychoanalysts imagined themselves the first true decoders of repressed Gothic signifieds,<sup>37</sup> I will side instead with the increasingly popular opinion that decoding the Gothic is not the exclusive province of modern-day scholarly analysis, but was something in which the contemporary audiences of Gothic fiction freely participated.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the coding (and decoding) of counterfeits we see throughout the Gothic mode is not only a post-medieval development, but a particularly

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<sup>37</sup> See also my comments in 8.2 on Ernest Jones and Maurice Richardson, and on the notion that “the novel’s contemporary readership did not already have a sense of what (we are told) is invisible to the casual reader, but clear to the psychoanalyst.”

<sup>38</sup> In Chapter 4 we will explore in a little more detail the unfortunate case of Coleridge’s *Christabel*, whose inability to decode the “coded play” of Geraldine’s counterfeit Gothic abduction-story is what leads her into trouble.

recent one, and one which accelerates and fragments as it continues to develop. The spread of Hogle's "Gothic counterfeit," then, shares both its shape and its chronology with the spread of Taylor's varieties of secularism; in both cases, we have a kind of retrospection toward the remediated porous past, some looking back out to sea<sup>39</sup> from the safety of modernity's buffered shores.

This relationship between the porous past and its counterfeit representation is now well-known in Gothic scholarship, though perhaps not by those terms specifically; as Hogle's reference to Baudrillard's notion of coded play suggests, it was known even to most contemporary readers of Walpole, few of whom really believed they were reading a translation of a genuine 16<sup>th</sup>-century Neapolitan manuscript. Early readers of Gothic fiction approached the counterfeit Gothic past with a sly understanding that enabled it to serve for them, and not nearly for the posterity in which we find ourselves now, as a vehicle of coded discourse on matters of class and capital, sex and the family, and the emerging cultural concerns of a modern English social imaginary. The ideal work of Gothic psychoanalysis, then, is not to determine what coded messages were left buried for us, as if Gothic fiction were a sort of time capsule, but to determine what coded messages were delivered through Gothic fiction to its contemporary readership, who already possessed, in many cases, the necessary tools to decode them.

In light of this widespread understanding, I am surprised that the modern vampire is still treated as a true relic of antiquity: when Rosemary Guiley writes, in her *Encyclopedia of Vampires, Werewolves, and Other Monsters*, that "our intimate contact with vampires is as ancient as humanity" (xiii), she offers no tongue-in-cheek

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<sup>39</sup> I have in mind here Freud's "oceanic" feeling, a fully secularized, even atheistic rendering of what Taylor calls "fullness."

understanding of the Gothic counterfeit. Stoker's *Dracula* and the Babylonian goddess Lamashtu, both blood-drinkers, are imagined cut from the same cloth by folkloric readings, which minimize the differences (and they are not subtle differences) between the eighteenth and nineteenth-century vampires and their five-thousand-year-old ancestors.

We have already heard Taylor remark that from outside the relative safety of buffered modernity, our "films about witches and sorcerers" would have been "incomprehensible" to a pre-modern audience ("Afterword" 303). I would likewise venture that the ancient Akkadians would have been equally baffled by Stoker's *Dracula*. Even the great novelists of the Gothic period, I think, would be somewhat perplexed by what passes for twenty-first century Gothic entertainment, in a manner that doesn't seem to faze this century's Gothic critics. Fred Botting braves these cultural frontiers perhaps more nimbly than most when he opens his *Limits of Horror* with Goth-rock bands Bauhaus and The Birthday Party, the *Rocky Horror Show*, the phenomenon he calls "Disneygothic" (3), and all the other usual suspects of 1990 Goth camp, from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to "cartoon characters and cereal icons, Gothic figures for children in a period full of little monsters and friendly ghosts" (9). This is not, this cannot be, the portfolio of scholarly specialists in Radcliffe, in the rise of the novel, in the long eighteenth century; and yet to be a scholar of the Gothic somehow encompasses all of these things. Critics rooted in fairly traditional literary studies now find themselves performing double-duty, engaged with "Gothic forms tied to modern metanarratives[...]transformed in a viral play that generates and assimilates all categories" (Botting 11). The boundless field of twenty-first century pop culture, when

appended to the traditional literary criticism of the Enlightenment and the Romantics, constitutes (in more ways than one) an unusual and challenging “graveyard shift” for critics of the Gothic.

Ann Radcliffe, I venture, would have little enough sense of what, exactly, the vampire has to do with her, or with the carefully measured formal genre in which she writes. No vampires appear in her work, nor anywhere in the whole fabric of prose fiction that constitutes the literary movement whose cresting wave she occupied for most of the 1790s. If Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* books are the inheritors of an eighteenth-century tradition, it is not Radcliffe’s tradition;<sup>40</sup> similarly, the novelists most heavily influenced by Radcliffe—Jane Austen and Charles Dickens among them—are not known for their bloodsuckers.

Nevertheless, the persistent vampire craze of this current decade mirrors in many ways the Gothic craze of the 1790s; in many ways, the corrupt monk and usurping patriarch of Gothic tradition have been replaced by vampires which, after *Dracula*, have had increasingly less to do with the old form of the reclusive, ultra-conservative aristocrat, and more to do with a counterculture that is itself iconoclastic, irreverent, and at times regrettably sparkly. If the classic villains of Gothic terror, the patriarch and the corrupt monk, are not “extinct,” they are certainly dormant, while the vampire has reached the same level of hackneyed and caricatured ubiquity that, at the close of the eighteenth century, earned Matthew Lewis the nickname “Monk Lewis” and spawned

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<sup>40</sup> Meyer perhaps owes a greater debt to Samuel Richardson, whose moralizing conduct novels for young women of virtue bear an uncanny resemblance to the *Twilight* saga, not only in their purpose and primary audience, but in their demobilization and confinement of feminine agency to the domestic *oubliette* of a male-ordered society.

copycats such as Boaden's plays *The Italian Monk*<sup>41</sup> and *Aurelio and Miranda* or the vicious anti-Methodist lampoon *The New Monk*.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout this explosion of literary and cultural vampirism—a “nova effect” in Taylor's sense if ever there was one—the word “Gothic” has remained a knee-jerk descriptor of the vampire, thrown about with an attitude of easy self-evidence that should be called into question. In 2009, cartoonist Christopher Hart released his latest volume in a long series of how-to-draw books for children, under the title *Drawing Vampires: Gothic Creatures of the Night*. In a more scholarly example, Markman Ellis's *History of Gothic Fiction* devotes an entire chapter to vampires, which he describes as “the most notorious of the ‘grim and grisly ranks of the Un-Dead’, that genus of gothic monster” (161). William Hughes's article “Fictional Vampires in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries” appears in David Punter's *A Companion to the Gothic*; and in *Contemporary Gothic*, Catherine Spooner describes the heroine of television's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as “a contemporary Gothic teenager” (89), a label more accurate for the meekly sentimental heroines of 1790s terror-fiction than for a sardonically assertive neo-feminist warrior—and a label that would have been unlikely, I think, had Buffy been conceived as a slayer of dragons, giants, or other supernatural creatures common to monster-slaying folklore.

Vampires are Gothic; the momentum and repetition of this assertion across our whole social imaginary make other conclusions untenable. But what does this really

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<sup>41</sup> Boaden's *The Italian Monk* (1797) in fact takes its plot directly from Radcliffe's *The Italian*, but there can be little doubt that its hastily “monked” title is meant to capitalize on Lewis's sensation. *Aurelio and Miranda* (1798), on the other hand, is transparently a reimagining (complete with happy ending) of the forbidden relationship between Ambrosio and Matilda in *The Monk*.

<sup>42</sup> After being out of print almost since its first publication, the parody attributed only to “R.S. Esq.” has finally resurfaced in a recent edition edited by Elizabeth Andrews (Kansas City, MO: Valancourt, 2007).

mean? In what way is the vampire Gothic? In what way does the vampire occupy a Gothic space, and how did it come to inhabit such a space after an existence that was peripheral—even immaterial—to early English Gothic fiction? The narrative that answers these questions is the key to understanding what we mean when we talk about the Gothic vampire, and also, perhaps, to charting on a larger scale one of the major shifts in our changing relationship toward supernatural fiction.

The story I want to tell about this shift is the story of a split or schism which occurs during the height of the Gothic period and comes to inflect nearly all of the prose fiction which follows it—a schism whose effects still govern in large part (though this is now changing) the way we write, read, and conceptually classify our prose fiction. This schism, based on eighteenth-century notions of “probability” and on the relationship of fiction to the increasingly quotidian world, has much to do with Taylor’s secularization narrative as well as with the development of vampire literature and other literature of the fantastic.

To begin with, talking about vampires in fiction of Walpole’s classic Gothic period is very difficult, because there are no vampires to be found: the absence of vampires in Radcliffe’s novels extends to Lewis, to Walpole, to Clara Reeve and Sophia Lee, and so on. We might make certain allowances for William Beckford’s *Vathek*, on the grounds that child-eating vaguely constitutes a sort of blood-drinking, or because the shared thematic ties to Moloch, Lilith, and other child-eaters of ancient folklore might eventually carry us back, by a very long road, to modern vampirism. But the kind of creature found in Polidori’s *The Vampyre* or even in Coleridge’s “Christabel” is nowhere represented in the main body of Gothic literature, save a few tenuous threads we might

unearth through folkloric gymnastics—treating, for instance, Almanzor as a vampire simply because there is mention of blood-drinking in “Sir Bertrand.” This does not put him into the same tradition as *Dracula*, any more than it would the other Jewish and Muslim figures depicted in the medieval tradition of blood libel. The relationship between *Dracula*, *Geraldine*, *Carmilla*, and *Ruthven* runs deeper than their sanguine diet.

In *Dracula*, at least, a few elements of the old Gothic resurface: in heavy-handed terms, the Count lives in a ruined castle and interferes with the lives of young people who are chaste and well-behaved, yet technologically and philosophically progressive. But this is long, long after the formal genre of Walpole and Radcliffe has come to an end; by this time, we are already speaking of a very different kind of Gothic than the one whose roots can, in Maurice Lévy’s cosmology, be tracked back to the mere naves and lancets of Early English architecture.

The divide grows wider, and the terrain more unclear, when we read the word “Gothic” into new media—trends in fashion, music, cinema, and graphic art—for which the tools needed to theorize and confront any possible relationship between “the Gothics” are as yet undeveloped. The long and complex connections between goth-rock music and Burkean theories of the sublime are not imaginary, but they remain relatively uncharted in criticism: this is the work Fred Botting is only arriving at now, for instance, in *The Limits of Horror*. All along the frontier of Botting’s cultural exploration, there exists a definite but nebulous relationship between all the things we describe as Gothic, but the mediation of that relationship has been (and continues to be) only variably fruitful. Scholars exploring the link between thirteenth-century architecture and eighteenth-century fiction, for example, have had a great deal of success; but the ongoing explosion

of aesthetic and cultural discourses described as Gothic (whether with deliberate intent or an ignorant arbitrariness) continues to muddy the waters surrounding the word, and to negate the gains made by critics trying to mediate the word and manage the ambiguity which surrounds it. As Botting writes, “Gothic proliferations in culture and criticism are typically hybrid, thoroughly monstrous and co-dependently vampiric” (12). For him, Gothic proliferations mutually Gothicise each other, in a sense, until monstrosity itself is a homogeneous norm, “without limit, otherness, or difference” (11). These are muddy waters indeed.

The title of Bauhaus’s breakout single, “Bela Lugosi’s Dead,” no doubt spins another thread between the vampire mythos and the cultural grab bag of things called “Gothic.” This should not be, by now, a surprising juxtaposition: in many ways the search for connections between vampires and the Gothic is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Ultimately, though, the dizzying intermarriage of the twentieth-century “neo-Gothic craze” and vampirism across all media can shed little light on the historical relationship between the literary vampire, which emerges from imported texts in the “true historie” genre in the late eighteenth century, and the Gothic fiction which flourishes, quite independently from it, in the same period. Whether by a shared set of social conditions which contribute to the flourishing of both vampirism and Gothicism in literature, or by a specific set of thematic ties which make the Gothic and the vampire mutually intelligible to each other, we are trapped in the conclusion (especially if *everything* is now Gothic) that the vampire of English literature *is* a Gothic construct, in one sense or another; but I also mean to suggest that the self-evidence of this claim is something we superimpose backwards from the vantage point of a time in which modern depictions of the Gothic

and of vampires have effectively conflated the two. The well-established connections between late twentieth-century vampires and twentieth-century “Goth culture” must not be retroactively read onto early vampires or onto Gothic fiction of the eighteenth century. Making full sense of these vampires’ long and changing relationship to the historical Gothic requires a tighter and clearer definition than that provided by critics in the wake of Montague Summers, who was himself a great conflater: his own “double duty” as both an occultist/vampirologist and a Gothic literary scholar has gone far toward disestablishing the important distinctions between these two now-intermingled phenomena. Gothic criticism, under whose eye vampires old and new have most frequently been analyzed, is itself not as exact as it could be, at least while it continues to report that vampires are a “genus of gothic monster” (Ellis 161) without first inquiring to which phylum, order, and family of Gothic definition this genus belongs.

Positing an answer to this inquiry, even as metaphor, requires a new understanding of Gothicism as something other than a fragmented discourse. The image of the Gothic itself as a ruined castle, one monolithic construct which is frangible into several “specific outcropping[s]” (19), to borrow a term from David Punter, is less useful for this work than imagining a multifarious collection of related constructs, such that the operating question is not *whether* the vampire is inherently linked to the Gothic, but rather, “to *which* of the Gothics is the vampire inherently linked?”

It is fitting that Punter’s seminal study, *The Literature of Terror*, offers some of the opportunities for such a question to be asked: it is not as an authority on the Gothic, but rather on the Gothics in plural, that I consult him here. The place to begin, then, is where Punter begins: with the ambiguity inherent in the word Gothic itself.

## 2.2 The Gothics and Their Borders

To speak of “The Gothic,” as has been my habit here and the habit of others elsewhere, is at once to speak ambiguously; perhaps that is part of the problem. If we unpack the term, what we are left with, in the specialized jargon of linguistic morphology, is a “nominalized, zero derivational<sup>43</sup> adjective,” *Gothic*, which stands as the substantive head of a noun phrase whose other part is implied but absent. In less precise but hopefully clearer layman’s terms, those two words, “the Gothic,” look forward to a subject (the Gothic *what?*) the way a transitive verb looks forward to an object, reaching for a “phantom noun” for *Gothic* to modify.

Scholars of the Gothic—that is, of a thing or things which are Gothic—have at their disposal a considerable list of words to choose from: we can speak of the Gothic movement, period, genre, style, tradition, mood, mode, aesthetic, and so on. Frequent and interesting are the spaces where these constructs and their meanings overlap in Gothic criticism. Some writers limit their treatment of the Gothic to imply a single word repeatedly: the Gothic “aesthetic” is a popular example, especially since the advent of film criticism, as it avoids the rigid historical boundaries delineated by terms set in time such as “era” or “period.” Others find this limiting, and have a personal collection of recurring nouns to define their Gothics, switching between them as demanded by the context of their arguments. Still others find less direct ways to define their Gothic of choice, leaving the monumental word to be understood as a substantive for something uncertain, hidden.

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<sup>43</sup> In simplest terms, a zero derivational word is one whose function changes without its form changing to reflect this. Examples of zero derivational noun/verbs include *brush*, *butter*, and *address*. *Gothic* is thus a zero derivational adjective which can also be made to function linguistically as a noun.

Out of its most basic definition, then, two parallel ambiguities spring up, one within Gothic literature and one within the criticism that interrogates it. In the indefinite relationship of pleasure and terror associated with the sublime, in the similarly paradoxical “unknowable familiar” of the Freudian uncanny, and even in the “ineffable horror” of Gothic inheritors such as H.P. Lovecraft, an element of ambiguity is an unavoidable feature (though not necessarily an obstacle) of the Gothic critical landscape. In his powerful introductory chapter to *The Literature of Terror*, David Punter confronts the ambiguity of “Gothic” by considering and surveying its use (and the long history of its use) as a literary term. Even after limiting this exploration to the use of “Gothic” as a literary descriptor (his favourite words to follow the expectant adjective here are “novels,” “fiction,” and “narrative”), Punter must conclude that “in studying Gothic fiction almost nothing can be assumed, not even the limits of the field” (20).

Contained in his introduction are useful summaries of several literary Gothics: here the influential constructions of Gothic fiction set down by Michael Sadleir, Eino Railo, J.M.S. Tompkins, and Robert Kiely are briefly addressed in more or less chronological order. While all of this work is conducted with finesse and foresight—Punter addresses these voices not in terms of their respective nearness or distance to his “new” literary Gothic, but rather in terms of their contributions to it—Punter’s strongest move here is the reconsideration of the history of “Gothic” outside of its notoriety as, at the time, a chiefly literary term. While Punter’s interest with the Gothic is rooted in literature alone (the singular focus of his title indicates that codifying an *interdisciplinary* Gothic is not his real aim), his literary analysis certainly draws strength from its acknowledgment that even a definition of Gothic that is limited to fiction, literature,

narrative, or genre is inseparable from a larger, holistic origin, or at least by discursive shifts in outside spheres that have changed its meaning as a literary descriptor. If this claim seems too obvious today, it is a testament to the success of a generation of academics who have worked for decades to establish the foundations of what is now popularly known under the blanket term of “interdisciplinary” study. Writing in 1980, at a substantially earlier stage of this movement,<sup>44</sup> Punter’s acknowledgement that even a “pure” literary study of the Gothic is affected by the political, philosophical and socioeconomic traits of the “Gothic revival” lays a certain amount of groundwork for interdisciplinary studies whose “home” discipline is English literature even as it reaches outward.

Punter’s method of organizing Gothic ambiguity, then, is to recognize “the Gothic” as a descriptor of many things that are not merely branches of a common discourse, but self-sufficient fragments which may survive disconnected from one another. Consider the large-scale cultural shift in the late eighteenth century that Punter calls “the general Gothic revival” (8), and defines as

a recognisable movement in the history of culture, with recognisable sociopsychological causes, according to which Gothic fiction is a specific outcropping of a general flow of ideas and attitudes. (19)

The idea of Gothic fiction as a “specific outcropping” of a larger, extraliterary movement owes much, as Punter makes clear, to Maurice Lévy’s *Le Roman Gothique Anglais, 1764-1824*. Here Lévy influentially “takes architecture as the essential model for Gothic and lays stress on the symbolic meaning of the Gothic building” (Punter 19). The result is

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<sup>44</sup> David Hamilton’s article “Interdisciplinary Writing,” which first identified “Interdisciplinary” as “a buzzword all its own” (780), was published in March of 1980, at which time *The Literature of Terror* was probably completed, if not yet in print.

the situation of Gothic fiction somewhat downstream from the Gothic revival's perceived architectural source-waters: in Lévy's model, Horace Walpole's "little Gothic castle" at Strawberry Hill is a necessary precursor to *The Castle of Otranto*, not because Walpole's inspirational dream occurred there, but because the cultural shift that brought Gothic architecture into vogue was a necessary step toward the cultivation of a reading public with a taste for Gothic romance.

Punter's take on the Gothic revival focuses less on the establishment of a linear genealogical relationship between these two "outcroppings" (architecture and prose fiction): his focus on Gothic fiction, though, does isolate it from the "general flow of ideas and attitudes" into which the rest of the Gothic revival falls. This "general flow" becomes for Punter a collective shorthand for the myriad other Gothics, which he has no real need to define before moving on to the fiction that forms the core of his study. His result is the extraction of a few (at most) intertwined models of the Gothic (and thereby, of "Gothicness"), which have proven influential on later perceptions of the Gothic as genre, literary period, narrative style, and symbolic vocabulary. The literature of terror that Punter goes on to discuss is defined by these discursive borders—and they are largely "exclusive" borders, forcing out things which might still be called "Gothic", but which nevertheless fall outside the boundaries of his study—the Goth-rock bands interrogated in *Limits of Horror*, for example.

What is frequently forgotten about Punter's text, despite its popularity as a critical foundation for the study of Walpole and Radcliffe, is that its borders are set by different terms than those which speak of a periodized, eighteenth-century Gothic: his timeline extends, as his subtitle informs us, "to the present day," and he explores late writers

ranging from standard latecomers such as Bram Stoker to unexpected and recent additions such as J. G. Ballard and Angela Carter, alongside the usual suspects of the golden age often spoken of as “the Gothic period.” Even by admitting Stoker into his canon of “Gothic fictions” (to say nothing of his less conventional choices), Punter is taking a stand on an issue that has divided critics into two main camps: those who work with Gothic fiction as a periodized literature with finite chronological boundaries, and those who transcend period when dealing with some (or all) of the Gothics they recognize.

This is a debate perhaps more clearly articulated in the field of film criticism, where it surrounds one of the chief inheritors of Gothic themes and aesthetics: *film noir* is traditionally framed as a periodized subgenre with a fixed lifespan, usually beginning with the film *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) or the lesser-known *Stranger on the Third Floor* (1940) and ending in 1959 with Orson Welles’s *Touch of Evil* (Holt 23). The tradition of holding to these dates rigidly has largely faded; and films that were once painstakingly labeled “proto-noir” or “neo-noir” are now canonized alongside the “classic noir” films. Nevertheless, the theorized period, the “effulgence” of film noir, remains concrete in the minds of film critics; so too does the period between 1765 and 1800<sup>45</sup> among Gothic scholars, similarly bookended by definitive works. It is significant, then, that Punter’s position in *The Literature of Terror* plays with the periodization debate in a curious way: his pursuit of the Gothics well into the twentieth century subverts the notion of a concrete chronological end for Gothic fiction; but by beginning his study, again as noted in his subtitle, “from 1765,” Punter is transparently referencing the most popular “seminal

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<sup>45</sup> Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, by most accounts completed before 1800 but unpublished until the end of 1817, complicates quite radically the end date of the classic “Gothic period.”

moment” of the Gothic period. The second-edition release<sup>46</sup> of Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* is taken here as the moment of Gothic fiction’s literary genesis: like *The Maltese Falcon* in *film noir* studies, Walpole’s romance is commonly constructed by scholarship as a sort of subgeneric “Big Bang” from which the periodized Gothic is measured.

On one hand, theorizing an “origin point” of 1765 makes good sense: it is in the second edition of *Otranto*, after all, that Walpole labels the work as a “Gothic Story” specifically. Walpole’s influence on the Gothic writers to follow is similarly clear: Sophia Lee, Clara Reeve, and Ann Radcliffe all make known their debt to Walpole, and comparison against Walpole’s work has long been a popular weapon among opponents of the Gothic craze to follow. At the same time, theories which rely on this point of genesis not only problematize the many antecedents of Gothic fiction, but efface the links between them. The aesthetic links between Gothic fiction and the Graveyard School of poetry have been well-preserved, but for every such case another has been obscured. William Dunbar’s “Lament for the Makaris,” for instance, is a typical casualty of periodization: the work of Dunbar’s age is frequently dismissed as too early to be a direct influence on Gothic fiction and poetry, even when the medieval past is a subject of profound interest to Gothic writers. Nevertheless, the late medieval “Lament” is at least as resonant with the haunting sepulchral images of Radcliffe and Lewis as those from the Graveyard School. On the universality of death in particular, Dunbar’s chilling *memento mori* anticipates more directly than Gray’s famous “Elegy Written In A Country Church-

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<sup>46</sup> A few Gothic scholars choose 1764 instead of 1765 as their “starting year,” based on the first edition of Walpole’s *Otranto*. I think Punter is right to choose the date of the second edition, particularly when talking in terms of literary inheritance. The very limited print run of the first edition, circulated largely among Walpole’s friends, could not have had the same impact; and his powerful second-edition Preface both identifies the tale for the first time as a “Gothic” story and lays out the principles of the Gothic boom to follow.

Yard” the Gothic crisis. For Gray, the unavoidable end unites all men, regardless of social or economic differences—but while the same theme is present in Dunbar, it is the inevitability of death, rather than the kinship it might foster, that is his focus:

On to the ded gois all estatis,  
 Princis, prelotis and potestatis,  
 Baith riche and pur of al degree;  
*Timor mortis conturbat me.*

He takis the knychtis in to the field,  
 Enarmit undir helme and scheid;  
 Victour he is at all mellie;  
*Timor mortis conturbat me.*

That strang unmercifull tyrand  
 Takes on the moderis breist sowkand  
 The bab full of benignite;  
*Timor mortis conturbat me.* (Dunbar ll. 17-28)

The Gothic circumstances in Gray’s “Elegy” are already well-documented. The same cannot be said for Dunbar, even though the connection between death and terror is far stronger: fully personified in Dunbar’s lines, Death is indiscriminate, undefeatable, and without mercy: he comes for both royalty and clergy, for both rich and poor, and even for the infant suckling at its mother’s breast, an image anticipating Goethe’s *Faust*, in which Gretchen famously drowns her child and requests to be buried with it: “Ich will dir die Gräber beschreiben...das Kleine mir an de rechte Brust” (ll.4521-8).<sup>47</sup> Goethe’s extensive private education and the company he kept in the Weimar Circle<sup>48</sup> make a direct connection feasible; and in any case, the poem’s thematic and aesthetic resemblance to the works of Gothic canon undercut any argument for its exclusion as a

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<sup>47</sup> “I will describe to you the graves...the little one on my right breast” (my translation).

<sup>48</sup> Of particular note is Goethe’s friendship with Johann Gottfried von Herder, who was an extensive scholar of myth and folklore. In 1777, shortly after Goethe’s influence secured him a position in the Weimar court (Evrigenis & Perrin xvi), Herder published *On the Resemblance of Medieval English and German Poetry*, a work of which Goethe would certainly been aware, and by which he may have been influenced.

Gothic analogue. Dunbar's medieval Latin refrain, "the fear of death confounds me," is delivered in what was in his day the language of prayer—a language that would become especially menacing in the post-Reformation world of eighteenth-century England, conjuring for a largely Protestant and increasingly Calvinist audience the spectres of both continental "Popishness" and the oppressive medieval Church.

Shakespeare's tragedies, especially *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, are better-known texts which have likewise confounded the periodization of Gothic literature. Complicated by changing attitudes toward the performativity of Shakespeare's works,<sup>49</sup> both plays are thoroughly populated with what would become known as Gothic tropes: Jerrold E. Hogle has taken stock of the many Gothic counterfeits in *Hamlet* alone,<sup>50</sup> especially its ghostly apparition, to which we might add a ruined castle, a two-headed concern with legitimacy and succession, and a fractured ruling family—all the thematic furnishings of *The Castle of Otranto*. While the exact dimensions of his indebtedness to Shakespeare remain a matter of some debate, Hogle's exploration of "Walpole's extension of the Gothic-Shakespeare connection" (31) does much to silence Jess Stein's claim from 1934 that "though he thought highly of Shakespeare, Walpole was not centrally influenced by him" (68). In general, Shakespeare's influence on Gothic literature in general should be starkly obvious even if his influence on Walpole is not: recent collections such as *Gothic*

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<sup>49</sup> As Dobson and Wells note, "[b]y the early 19<sup>th</sup> century a gap was perceived between (adapted) Shakespeare as theatre and ('genuine') Shakespeare as literature, famously articulated by Goethe who came to believe *Hamlet* stageable only in adaptations...and that Shakespeare was a dramatist only for the inner eye of the reader" (482).

<sup>50</sup> See again Hogle's "The Ghost of the Counterfeit in the Genesis of the Gothic." The notion here of "counterfeit," a word used by Hamlet himself in "several revealing ways" (Hogle 28), suggests a relationship to the numinous more than the numismatic: the illusionistic world of Gothic semiotics is already in play in the performances and metaperformances of Hamlet's madness, the ghost, the players, and even Yorick's skull, an illusionistic Gothic counterfeit of an absent character if ever there was one.

*Shakespeares*<sup>51</sup> have made the Bard's relationship to each or all of "the Gothics" a matter of serious study with promising results.

To use a vampiric analogy, the problem with recognizing Shakespeare as a sometime<sup>52</sup> Gothic writer is that opening the door of the Gothic house to him invites in by proxy an innumerable host of his well-known antecedents and analogues: if *Hamlet* is a Gothic tale, why not also the early analogue of this story from the *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo Grammaticus, or Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*? And if there is something Gothic about Kyd's play, what is to be said of its chief influences, the tragedies of Seneca (who himself predates the original tribes after which Gothic literature is indirectly named)? The inclusion of early influences as "proto-Gothic," especially for reasons that are primarily thematic or aesthetic, risks reconfiguring to the point of uselessness any understanding of "Gothic" that is founded in the eighteenth-century texts that the word was reinvented to describe. On the other hand, the exclusion of such antecedents, whether or not for the sake of maintaining the integrity of Gothicism as a historically specific subgenre, runs the risk of robbing that subgenre of its own formative history.

It is due to complicated issues such as these that Punter and others find that "not even the limits of the field" (20) are clearly delineated in Gothic scholarship. Many scholars are content with this, observing that the uncertainty of the field resonates nicely with the theme of blurred, numinous boundaries in Gothic writing itself. The boundaries of the Gothic field are now frequently understood as intrinsically irresolvable ambiguities, and the corresponding question that arises is whether the resolution of these

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<sup>51</sup> Ed. John Drakakis and Dale Townshend. New York: Routledge, 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Shakespeare's sheer *range* as a dramatist is another significant obstacle to such a move: while *Hamlet* functions in many ways as the prototypical Gothic hero, describing Shakespeare himself as a Gothic writer requires some strategically placed blinders, especially where comic farces such as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Much Ado About Nothing* are concerned.

ambiguities is even the interest or goal of Gothic criticism. Interestingly, the 1765 arrival of Walpole's second edition of *The Castle of Otranto* remains the seminal moment for Gothic literature, even within a context of uncertainty that makes such moments almost impossible to define.

What precisely gives *The Castle of Otranto* its “*Maltese Falcon* moment” in the Gothic tradition? Why, in a field of relatively murky divisions, does *Otranto* continue to be studied, in the words of E.J. Clery, “as the founding text of a genre that has flourished, through various permutations, up to the present” (“Introduction” ix)? One possible answer, and the one which interests me most in the context of this chapter, can be found in a close reading of Clery's language: very little of Walpole's gloomy aesthetic or dramatic narrative is genuinely “foundational” in the shadow of *Hamlet*, or of the numerous romances and revenge-plays that doubtlessly fed and fired his imagination. It is as *genre*, and more specifically, as the harbinger of a form of prose fiction that is not quite romance and not quite novel, that Clery justifiably finds Walpole's work to be groundbreaking.

C.S. Lewis's review of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, a work which similarly spearheaded a new genre of the fantastic, described its arrival “like lightning from a clear sky...the conquest of new territory” (qtd. in Duriez 142). So must *The Castle of Otranto* have seemed to its eighteenth-century audience on the occasion of its second-edition release. The edition's new, bold self-identification as “A Gothic Story” (3), and the corresponding preface (which has long stood as a manifesto of sorts for Gothic writers), make clear its agenda, if not to inspire a new genre to flourish and multiply, at least to be comfortable in a genre of its own, set apart from the inherent problems of “old romance”

even as it maintains a connection to romance's virtues. "I might have pleaded," Walpole remarks, "that having created a new species of romance, I was at liberty to lay down what rules I thought fit for the conduct of it" (14). In effect, he has done precisely this, whether through the direct explanation of the work *via* its new preface or through the exemplary story itself, which was much copied, adapted, and imitated even before Sophia Lee and Clara Reeve made clear the genre's fruitfulness some years later.

It has fallen out of fashion to talk of "the Gothic genre," or even as Gothic fiction as a genre of its own. This is a movement perhaps related to the discovery (especially in Punter's wake) of multiple Gothics: In *Romanticism and Gothic*, Michael Gamer observes that

[w]e no longer...describe gothic exclusively as a genre; recent studies have represented it variously as an aesthetic (Miles), as a great repressed of romanticism (Bruhm and William Patrick Day), as a poetics (Williams), as a narrative technique (Halberstam and Punter), or as an expression of changing or "extreme" psychological or socio-political consciousness (Bruhm, Cox, Halberstam, Monleón, Paulson, Richter, Williams). While these accounts have differed with one another often and on key issues, they nevertheless have put forward accounts of gothic that pay homage to the complexity of its materials and to its responsiveness to economic, historical, and technological change. (28)

What Gamer's survey of "[r]ecent monographs on the gothic" (27) reveals, perhaps quite unconsciously, leads us back to an idea expressed at the beginning of this chapter: what has been collected under the banner of "the Gothic" is in fact a proliferation of Gothic *things*, and the "differing accounts" of which Gamer speaks here might instead be taken as accounts of differing aspects or traits of what collectively become the Gothics. At the same time, the growing concern with these new and complex Gothic dimensions has

drawn attention away from the Gothic as a genre of fiction all its own. The “responsiveness to economic, historical, and technological change” of these new Gothics, I would argue, is what makes “the Gothic” both inclusive and continuously relevant: speaking of the Gothic in terms of an aesthetic, a narrative technique, or a protean and infinitely adaptable literary mode is what opens its doors to *film noir*, to H.P. Lovecraft’s “weird tales,” and perhaps even to cyberpunk science fiction and other realms of “future gothic” that are now emerging into literary consciousness.

All of these Gothic permutations, in whose company I would place the vampire-story, inherently embody some aspects of some Gothics. As a genre, however—and by “genre” here I mean a distinct prose-fiction counterpart to both the eighteenth-century romance and the novel as we now understand them—these new works never quite fit into the same category as Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic masterpieces. This is not a function of literary merit: popular Gothic pulp such as Lathom’s *The Midnight Bell*, Eliza Parsons’s *The Castle of Wolfenbach*,<sup>53</sup> or the other, weaker “horrid novels” famously named by Austen, nevertheless retain a kinship of genre with the more celebrated novelists of the 1790s. This kinship cannot be accurately extended in either direction—not backward, to Thomas Kyd or to verse antecedents such as Dunbar, and not forward to Lovecraft, to Stoker, or even to John Polidori, who writes well outside of the formal Gothic genre despite his chronological closeness to the last of the true Gothic novels.

When following the roads by which the vampire has become a Gothic trope, then, the Gothic as genre is an important but difficult construction to consider: in spite of thematic and aesthetic similarities between the vampire and the usual trappings of Gothic

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<sup>53</sup> The twenty-first century has seen both of these books back in print after long obscurity, thanks to Valancourt Press (2007). The novels are edited and introduced by David Punter and Diane Long Hoeveler respectively, both of whom have had a significant influence on the shape of this dissertation.

fiction, the genre nevertheless managed to exclude vampires altogether for most of its life. The vampire's points of entry into English writing seem to "bookend" the height of Gothic fiction, but seldom cross into it: the pseudo-vampiric connections of "Sir Bertrand" are as close as the vampire comes to Radcliffean Gothic, and narrative poems such as Southey's *Thalaba*, Coleridge's "Christabel," Byron's *The Giaour*, and perhaps Keats's "Lamia" and "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" belie a debt to Gothic prose fiction, but skirt the genre without actively participating in it. Even the longest of these works, in spite of an increasingly detailed narrative structure, stands well outside the generic criteria of Gothic fiction: the two may frequently share tropes and situations which make them mutually intelligible, but these common threads do not amount to a sharing of form and function in the manner implied by the word "genre."

It is useful in these circumstances to consider John Frow's dichotomy of "kind" and "mode," which articulates two different things frequently conflated under the banner of genre: "modes," he writes, "start their life as genres but over time take on a more general force which is detached from particular structural embodiments" (65). In the case of Gothic fiction, it is perhaps what Frow would call the Gothic "mode" that has endured outside the Gothic period, bleeding seamlessly into its modern derivatives:

[e]xhausted genres such as the Gothic romance may survive in their modal form – quite spectacularly so in the case of the gothic mode, which passes through early-Victorian stage melodrama into the stories of Edgar Allan Poe and the novels of Charles Dickens, and thence into the vampire novel, the detective novel, and a number of other narrative genres, and more directly from melodrama into a range of Hollywood genres including the 'old house' movie, *film noir*, and the contemporary horror movie. (66)

For Frow, conflating mode and kind can lead to a misunderstanding of genre as too flexible a thing, too open to broad adaptation: Gothic fiction in particular has in this way taken on an undead quality itself, offering up (through vampire novels, *film noir*, and contemporary horror) the appearance of a genre that has transcended (or transgressed) its natural lifespan, living on in the innumerable changing shapes of Gothic modality even as the specific generic forms of Radcliffe and Lewis lose momentum and “exhaust” themselves, in Frow’s terminology, by the end of the Romantic era.

The importance of Frow’s mode/kind distinction is visible in his placement of “the vampire novel” in the above passage: chronologically, or at the very least in order of literary descent, Frow situates the vampire novel after both Poe and Dickens, and at arm’s length from “[e]xhausted genres such as the gothic romance” (65). This passing point comes to reinforce a claim that only now reveals its proper significance: when Ellis describes the vampire as a “gothic monster” (161), he is speaking of Gothic modality, in Frow’s terms, rather than the formal genre of “kind.” The corresponding assumptions in pop culture that anachronistically gothicize every twentieth-century vampire, from Lugosi’s *Dracula* to *Sesame Street*’s Count von Count, are similarly discussing what Frow calls Gothic mode. Wherever the vampire is discussed in relation to the Gothic, this expectant adjective must not be read as a descriptor of genre: with only a few uncertain examples to the contrary,<sup>54</sup> the vampire has circumvented the prose fiction of the Gothic period in spite of any perceived kinship between the vampire and the Gothics. It seems to

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<sup>54</sup> Aside from the pseudo-vampiric behaviour of Almanzor in the long “Sir Bertrand,” which we have already discussed, the only example which comes easily to mind is that of the Bleeding Nun in Lewis’s *The Monk*; and her “vampiric” nature is as much the product of retroactive imagination as of her construction within the text. As a spirit or apparition she has as much in common, I think, with the ghost of Hamlet’s father or the spectres and apparitions of *Otranto* as with vampire, with whose increasingly standardized construction the Bleeding Nun doesn’t perfectly match.

me an important question to ask why this has occurred, and also to ask what circumstances finally compelled—or made possible—the vampire’s leap to prose fiction in the years following the Romantic period.

What I will suggest in the pages to come is that the entrance of vampires into prose fiction was made possible by a fracture or schism within the genre formerly called Gothic. This Gothic Schism, this fracture along the lines of “probability,” was responsible for the permutations of Gothic modalities mentioned by Frow (from “Dickensian Gothic” novels to horror movies and *film noir*), and struck a divide within popular fiction that exists to this day.

Finally, while I refer infrequently to Taylor and secularization throughout this section, I have the process of disenchantment, as defined in *A Secular Age*, in mind when I consider the changing relationship of the reader to the supernatural that underscores this generic split: it is my intent that the Gothic Schism, as I describe it here, be considered as a specific (and, thus far, unexamined) facet of Taylor’s secularization model, as well as a literary movement in its own right.

### **2.3 The Gothic Schism: Probability and the Supernatural**

Throughout the late eighteenth century, the critical reception of Gothic fiction was markedly unkind, in spite of its commercial success and boundless proliferation. Owing much to the “traditions of sensibility and sentiment,” these works were treated at best, in

Jerome McGann's words, as "something of an embarrassment" (*Poetics* 1).<sup>55</sup> At worst they were reviled for reasons too numerous to count, from immorality and sacrilege to mere melodramatic excess. Most prominently, they were rejected for what amounted to a lack of realism, and for representing textual "inner worlds" which failed to conform to the rules or reason of Nature. Walpole's second-edition preface to *The Castle of Otranto* sets out "the rules of probability" (9) and refers also to their reverse, describing the ancient romances in contrast to the modern: "[i]n the former," he writes, "all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success" (9). From this language of probability, widely used in the period (even by Walpole's detractors), comes the point on which most early dismissals of Gothic fiction hinged.

The eighteenth-century concern with probability comes from a variety of sources, but none more marked than the Augustan interest in classical aesthetics. In *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook*, E.J. Clery and Robert Miles find that

Horace's *Ars Poetica* was by far the most frequent resort of opponents of Gothic fiction and drama. In particular, the phrase "[*quodcunque ostendis mihi sic,] incredulus odi*" (from line 188), "What I cannot for a moment believe, I cannot for a moment behold with interest or anxiety" in Samuel Johnson's paraphrase,<sup>56</sup> echoes and re-echoes as a motto for the assaults of anti-Gothic criticism; the point being that probability, literary decorum, is the vital condition for the ethical usefulness of literature. (173)

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<sup>55</sup> McGann's comment, from *The Poetics of Sensibility*, primarily concerns the modern relationship between sentimental literature and what he calls "high culture." I would venture to say that the contemporary disdain to which he refers, and the historical disdain to which I have applied his terminology, are facets of the same feature of critical reception, which has passed down to the present day in the same manner in parallel to the descending modes of "genre-fiction" it critiques.

<sup>56</sup> I have always preferred William Boscawen's verse translation, "Such Scenes we ne'er admit as true, /And, disbelieving, hate to view" (503).

In the case of Walpole's preface, it is clear that he is speaking of something quite different (and perhaps more specific) when he hopes that he has "conduct[ed] the moral agents in his drama according to the rules of probability" (9). Walpole's concern with "probability" does not encompass the fundamentally unnatural nature of his tale, but rather the manners and behaviours of characters placed within it: Walpole's reaction against the ancient romance has less to do with what his critics understood by the word "probability," and more to do with simply avoiding unnatural and stylized behaviour from his characters when confronted by distinctly unnatural situations, "in short, to make them think, speak and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions" (9-10). Consider as an example Manfred's subtle, muted reaction to the sudden and unexplainable death of his son, crushed under a giant helmet which appears to have fallen inexplicably out of the sky:

The horror of the spectacle...took away the prince's speech. Yet his silence lasted longer than even grief could occasion. He fixed his eyes on what he wished in vain to be a vision; and seemed less attentive to his loss, than buried in meditation on the stupendous object that had occasioned it. He touched, he examined the fatal casque...[a]ll who had known his partial fondness for young Conrad, were as much surprised at their prince's insensibility, as thunderstruck themselves at the miracle of the helmet. (19)

The "insensibility" mentioned here is a key word for understanding Walpole's goal of probability. While many of the great sentimental novels were yet to be written, Walpole was no stranger to the theoretical discourse of sensibility, nor could he have been unaware of the beginnings of sentimental hyperbole growing in Richardson and Fielding's works, among others.

Despite his best efforts at painting a melodramatic setting and plot which conform to stock romance traditions, Walpole is determined not to take the shortcut of character that the archaic romance form might allow: Manfred does not weep at the death of his son, nor fall at his knees and tear at his hair, nor express any outward signs of grief. For the members of his house to be “as much surprised at their prince’s insensibility” (19) as at the sudden arrival of a gigantic and lethal helmet suggests that he must appear very insensible indeed. It may be that Manfred’s greater concern with the helmet and what it portends reveals his feelings of guilt about usurping the rulership of Otranto—or at the very least, it reveals an immoral and selfish fear that his misdeeds, though unpunished, are about to come back to haunt him in the most literal sense.

While the plot of *Otranto* itself can hardly be called complex or subtle, there is a deeply sophisticated way in which Walpole reveals and foreshadows much of it through Manfred’s nuanced reaction, in a situation where falling back on the stock gestures of shock and terror would not seem out of place. It is this nuance and depth, I think, which exemplifies the kind of “probability” for Walpole is aiming: a crushing death by enormous plumed helmet hardly constitutes “natural causes,” and the whole moment is in no danger of being called a “credible situation” in the Horatian sense. Instead, all that remains “natural” here are Walpole’s portrayals of character, which are more often than not emotionally sophisticated (in the case of aristocrats, at least), even though they need not be so beneath the narrative sledgehammer of *Otranto*’s plot.

Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel* describes the emergence of psychological realism as a both a new invention and a crucial feature of eighteenth-century fiction. When he writes that “the ‘realism’ of the novels of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding is

closely associated with the fact that Moll Flanders is a thief, Pamela a hypocrite, and Tom Jones a fornicator” (11), Watt is not simply commenting on the obvious failings of virtue on the part of eighteenth-century protagonists. What these failings of virtue *do*, in effect, is complicate the reader’s psychological relationship with the otherwise sympathetic protagonists. Even Richardson’s novels, whose characters are too frequently and unfairly dismissed as little more than didactic devices, show advances in this one aspect of realism, behaving “as it might be supposed mere men and women would do” in situations of moral peril which are perhaps no less contrived or artificial than those of *The Castle of Otranto*.

It is this realism of character, rather than true novelistic probability, for which Walpole aims, and on which his own definition of “probability” seems to rest. But this specific aspect of realism, though it was shared with varying success by other Gothic writers, was not enough to satisfy their critics, who largely found not that his characters were too insincere or stylized,<sup>57</sup> but rather that the situations in which their depth exhibited itself remained patently impossible in a world of reduced supernatural immanence. A number of damning reviews survive from the period to present the popular attitude against supernatural “terror writing” in a way that more balanced, and frequently more useful, reviews cannot: an early review of *Otranto*’s anonymous first edition finds that

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<sup>57</sup> The exception to this rule is “the deportment of the domestics” (Walpole 10), not only in *Otranto* itself but in many of its descendants and imitators. The stock depictions of naïve and superstitious servants, especially alongside the sophisticated psychological depictions of the ruling family, were so pronounced even to eighteenth-century readers that Walpole, at least, felt compelled to address the matter in his second-edition preface. His defense here, as elsewhere, is that “[t]hat great master of Nature, Shakespeare, was the model I copied” (10-11), depending on the growing infallibility of the nation’s Bard to justify the almost Aristotelian divide between his characters of “high” and “low” type. Typically, writers who followed Walpole’s example did not consciously address the issue, which has contributed in large part to an understanding of Gothic fiction of the period as a largely bourgeois genre.

The publication of any work, at this time, in England, composed of such rotten materials, is a phænomenon we cannot account for.—We shall not affront our reader’s understanding with a description of the several monstrosities of this story; but, excepting those absurdities, the characters are well marked, and the narrative kept up with surprising spirit and propriety. (*Literary Annals* 18)

The dismissal of the supernatural here as “absurdities” is a trend that continues, eventually making the leap (and preserving the same language) from reviews of single texts to literary criticism on a wider scale. A piece from 1800 “On the Absurdities of the Modern Stage” survives to paint an equally unflattering portrait of the Gothic dramatists:

Happy shall I be[...]if I can but dissolve the spell, and convince my readers, that the fairy tales; the Cock Lane Ghost;<sup>58</sup> *Mother Bunch’s* romances; or even the mighty magician of *Udolpho*, *Aladin* [sic] and the *Wonderful Lamp*, or the *Castle Spectre*, are very well in the nursery, will please children, when the *coral*<sup>59</sup> will not, but are not to be endured by men of sense and judgment, or who have ceased to think or act *like* children. Cannot these inspired writers, ‘these fickle pensioners of Morpheus’ train,’ cannot they let the dead be at peace? [...] I would rather the gods, noisy and vociferous as they are in their mirth, would put to flight the souls of the departed, than that they should make their appearance to the disgrace of the good sense of a British audience. (*Academicus* 204)

The opinion of “Academicus” here was a common one even at the height of Gothic literary production; it continued to attract adherents as the genre waned and became with increasing frequency a target of satire that ranged from nuanced homage (as with *Northanger Abbey*) to outright derision. Popular literature has not since been able to

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<sup>58</sup> The Cock Lane Ghost mentioned here, popularly also called Scratching Fanny, is a major subject of E.J. Clery’s *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, and is a subject I will turn to again in the pages to come.

<sup>59</sup> “Coral” here probably means a teething toy or pacifier: the word was still in use metonymically for infants’ toys well into the 1800s, even after coral began to be replaced by ivory and mother-of-pearl. Interestingly enough, coral itself had a centuries-long history of use in baby soothers because of a belief that it warded off evil spirits and stopped the flow of blood (Lindon 5). I strongly suspect the author had this old geomantic meaning in mind in his ironic aside, particularly given that the banishment of spirits and staunching of blood on the British stage are the main objectives of his argument.

completely “live down” the notion that stories of the supernatural<sup>60</sup> are in some way inherently juvenile: the transition by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century of supernatural (and once genuinely horrific apparitions) into faux-terror icons such as Count von Count or Casper the Friendly Ghost, coupled with the commercial success (especially in North America) of Hallowe’en as a children’s holiday, is in some ways a direct descendant of the attitudes outlined here.

This “de-fanging” of the supernatural is in part an effect and symptom of disenchantment; but the repurposing of the supernatural for exclusively juvenile audiences is a step beyond what is strictly required by the movement toward secular modernity. The attitude of critical derision seems an overreaction to the supernatural; the dismissal of its place in literature is something altogether different from a dismissal of its power. The claim that a work<sup>61</sup> by Matthew “Monk” Lewis is “very well in the nursery” and “will please children” is a surprisingly lax dismissal of a writer who, in Thomas Mathias’s famous words, “has neither scrupled nor blushed to depict...the arts of lewd and systematic seduction, and to thrust upon the nation the most open and unqualified blasphemy against the very code and volume of our religion” (190). The dismissal of the supernatural as juvenile nonsense is hardly unique to this editorial; it appears elsewhere in critiques of the Gothic, and remains a strange bedfellow to dismissals of the supernatural as sacrilegious, dangerous or morally subversive.

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<sup>60</sup> Many writers on the supernatural (most notably Todorov, in his *Introduction à la Littérature Fantastique*, and his inheritors) distinguish between categories such as the supernatural, the fantastic, the marvellous, and the uncanny. Of Todorov’s definitions, I am closest to the “fantastic marvellous” when I am discussing those texts which are genuinely supernatural: here textual events cannot be explained without altering the internal “laws of reality” from those that exist outside the text. However, on occasion throughout the chapter, I use “supernatural” fairly loosely as a blanket term for these things—especially since Gothic writing is full of seemingly unreal situations which do not always fall predictably into Todorov’s categories. Readers familiar with Todorov’s “fantastic marvellous” and working in such terms should be able to determine whether I am speaking of this specifically, or of the supernatural in a looser sense.

<sup>61</sup> That is, *The Castle Spectre*.

Undoubtedly, some Gothic writers had to contend with both of these critiques at once (as Lewis did). However, it is worth noting that Ann Radcliffe in particular, in spite of being perhaps the most prominent figurehead of “terror writing” in the 1790s, managed to avoid the worst anti-Gothic criticism. In spite of persistent rumours that harsh reviews of *The Italian* drove Ann Radcliffe to retire as a writer, Robert Miles has observed that “[t]his is a scarcely credible theory. The worst criticism was mildly hostile. Most of the notices were positive and even when they were critical it was in the context of acknowledging Radcliffe’s fictional pre-eminence” (24). In part, I would like to credit this to her unique approach to the supernatural, especially as it relates to notions of probability—not in terms of character psychology or “manner,” exactly, but in terms of the rational rules of Nature, under whose auspice Radcliffe’s novels are consistently contrived to operate.

Much has been written on Radcliffe’s use of the “explained supernatural”—a misleading term in that the things to which it refers are not really supernatural at all, at least not in the manner of Walpole’s ancestral giant or Lewis’s Bleeding Nun. In *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*, Miles finds that Radcliffe “situated her romances on the ‘Gothic cusp’ ...she tried to effect a compromise through the explained supernatural” (132). The Gothic cusp, in effect, is very close to “the utmost verge of probability” (3) described by Clara Reeve in her preface to *The Old English Baron*: it is a discursive borderland of sorts between one kind of fiction, in which a supernatural reality is factually permissible, and another in which it is not to be entertained at all, except by suggestion in the notions of its superstitious characters.

Radcliffe does indeed establish a narratively powerful space between these two genres, but this space cannot be an absolutely precise fulcrum, a sort of Lagrangian point<sup>62</sup> which favours neither one side nor the other. As a matter of theoretical convenience, Radcliffe is frequently situated on the fulcrum point between powerful Gothic dichotomies, straddling gulfs between the irrational and the enlightened, the uncanny and the familiar, the real and the numinous, between what can be sensed and what can be deduced. These are areas in which points of equilibrium are possible. But for Radcliffe, and for readers of Radcliffe's time, the fundamental question of whether the supernatural is admitted into the internal logic of a story must have an absolute answer—and invariably, with the exception of a single obscure work,<sup>63</sup> Radcliffe has clearly chosen the side of realism. It is the same side on which Jane Austen falls in *Northanger Abbey* (and, in fact, in *any* of Austen's<sup>64</sup> novels, for that matter): when we say that Radcliffe makes greater use of the supernatural than Austen, we are really, more precisely, saying that Radcliffe merely makes more frequent, closer, and more powerfully direct allusion to it.

Radcliffe's masterful allusion to the supernatural effectively blurs the border between novel and romance: a definitive decision on which *kind* of fiction Radcliffe writes (thankfully) need not be made. But if we instead bisect fiction into that which admits the supernatural and that which does not, the "compromise" she effects does not situate her in perfect balance between the two. It is much the same (though reversed) with

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<sup>62</sup> From astrophysics: a Lagrangian point is the point of exactly equal gravity between two bodies (such as a planet and its satellite), where an object could remain in perfect equilibrium, without "falling" toward either body.

<sup>63</sup> Radcliffe's *Gaston de Blondville*, which was not published until after her death and has had neither the initial success nor the sustained impact of her other novels.

<sup>64</sup> I am naturally excluding twenty-first century Austen derivatives such as Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.

Lewis in *The Monk*, which takes a playful attitude toward supernatural possibility: the supernatural is sometimes presented at face value, and sometimes debunked altogether. The effect here is one of uncertainty: in *The Monk*, there can be no guarantee whether a seemingly “improbable” situation will unfold as genuine supernatural horror or be deflated as trickery. However, as with Radcliffe’s novels, concerning at least the possibility (or perhaps the admissibility) of the supernatural, *The Monk* must fall one way or the other, and it falls in the opposite direction: the appearance of the “real” Bleeding Nun guarantees that no matter how many “fake” bleeding nuns are exposed as mechanisms of disguise or elaborate narrative deceptions, the text itself is one in which unexplainable supernatural events can, and do, occur.

In theoretically popular language, both Lewis and Radcliffe still occupy a “liminal space.” They remain the descendants (and in some ways, the syntheses) of two generic traditions, and the manner in which they engage and play with the conventions of supernatural fiction still results in a powerful ambiguity. Establishing a yes-or-no question to classify these works cannot do away with all the grey areas of Gothic fiction. But the relatively simple question—does this story present the supernatural as (internal) fact?—remains an important one for us to ask; and more often than might be expected, a simple yes or no answer will suffice.

Such a question cannot act as a skeleton key to the Gothic, of course: there are (especially in later years) works that seek to complicate it. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* does so simply by cloaking the supernatural in science. But even here, Victor Frankenstein begins his study as an alchemist; he is informed by Paracelsus and Agrippa as much as by the physicians of his day, and the “super-science” by which he animates

his creation is still the stuff of fancy, whether masked in the symbology of medicine or of the occult. In any case, by the end of the Romantic era the question is less useful. It is more fitting, I think, to consider the question (and its resulting divide) as an indicator of a split that occurs earlier, during the golden age of 1790s Gothic fiction. The demand for scientific or natural “probability,” ever in the minds of anti-Gothic critics, is one that is answered and even satisfied by Radcliffe’s concession to explain herself.

It does not even matter, particularly, that the means by which her situations of terror are made mundane are at times too elaborate to be anything but “improbable” by today’s definition of the word (that is, “highly unlikely”). Terry Castle has described the explained supernatural as a “clumsy device,” fairly stating that “Radcliffe’s supposedly ‘rational’ explanations are at times more implausible than the supernatural explanations they are meant to displace” (“Radcliffe’s *Udolpho*” 69). The contrivances, however, are not intended to satisfy modern demands for subtlety of plot: they are an invention or device<sup>65</sup> whose target audience is clearly the anti-Gothic critics and their, not our, definitions and demands of probability.

Support for this idea (or, at least, evidence that Radcliffe’s contrivances had this effect whether it was her intent or not) has existed in criticism for some time. As far back as her dissertation in 1921, J.M.S. Tompkins noted that

Critics were slow to accept the plea for the marvellous, advanced by most of the Gothic romancists, that it expands and elevates the mind; and the *Monthly Review* makes a curious distinction, when it praises the explained supernatural of Mrs. Radcliffe and censures the real supernatural of the *Cavern of Death* (August, 1794) on the ground that it must fill the mind of the youthful reader with

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<sup>65</sup> The image of an ironically reversed *deus ex machina* (perhaps a *machina ex deo*?) comes to mind, in which the heavy-handed resolution of tension comes from the sudden delivery of all-powerful reason rather than from an omnipotent supernatural force.

“horrid ideas of supernatural agency”—an effect which might be imputed, in equal measure, to any one of Mrs. Radcliffe’s books. (142)

Whether the “supernatural agency” in Radcliffe was intended to skirt the line of supernatural propriety as far as the *Monthly Review* was concerned, her adherence to the demands of eighteenth-century probability had the effect of insulating her from much of the venom aimed at lesser writers of the “terror school.” Even Radcliffe’s pre-eminence in the canon of eighteenth-century fiction today owes much to her awareness of the critical perils of Gothic writing and her ability to effectively satisfy two audiences at once. Generally speaking, the terms “romance” and “novel” as generic labels have stabilized since the eighteenth century; yet when discussing Radcliffe’s fiction even into the twenty-first century, the words remain interchangeable. In matters of genre, taste, and execution, Radcliffe stands at an important crossroads of eighteenth-century fiction, centred and delicately balanced but for the single concession she makes to offer mundane explanations for her seemingly supernatural events.

It is a contrivance on my own part to cast Radcliffe’s adoption of the explained supernatural as the explosive sole catalyst of the Gothic Schism. Radcliffe’s works indicate the Schism in a clear and useful way, but do not embody it by themselves: the explained supernatural is a single branch in late Gothic writing of a larger, almost apologetic retreat from a “true” supernatural. Although Radcliffe has established herself as a master of the explained supernatural and the most important figure in its development, it is not unique to her work; in some ways, its popularity among her imitators is a clearer marker of the shift toward Radcliffe’s supernatural incredulity as a growing trend rather than the personal choice of a single author. When popular Gothic

pulp writers appear to ape Radcliffe's technique, their use of the explained supernatural, however heavy-handed and coarse by comparison, indicates a shrewd awareness of the central issue that separates her from her peers. The anticlimax of "Mary, A Fragment," a popularly reprinted work in Gothic chapbooks, is a quintessential example of the explained supernatural applied without so fine a brush as Radcliffe's:

then, grasping his hand with her icy fingers, he swooned; and instantly found himself stretched on the hearth of his master's kitchen; a romance in his hand, and the house-dog by his side, whose cold nose touching his hand, had awakened him. (52)

If "Mary, A Fragment" seems an insipid imitation today, it was hardly held in higher esteem even at the apex of its "popularity" in the early 1800s: a quick review of its print history indicates that the two-page story, first taken "from the *Monthly Cabinet*" (51), was frequently anthologized as a matter of course, to "round out" collections by filling the last leaf of a print gathering that would otherwise be wasted.<sup>66</sup> Even so, this early attempt at "flash-fiction" manages not only to parody Radcliffe's explained supernatural, but to advance the notion that supernatural fiction (the romance in Henry's hand when he awakes) can be dangerously disruptive to reason.

The inclusion of this place-filler in chapbooks such as *Gothic Stories*, and especially as the final piece before the reader "awakes" from the horrid anthology, demonstrates a metafictional awareness that is surprisingly sophisticated for the period, especially given the quality of some of the stories. That the writer (and, by the time of its reprints, even the publishers) understood this suggests that Gothic as a genre had passed

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<sup>66</sup> The story appears for just this purpose, as I have mentioned, in S. Fisher's *Gothic Stories*, the volume containing the long "Sir Bertrand."

what would be called in Michael McKeon's terms the point of "abstraction."<sup>67</sup> The formal and stylistic conventions of the Gothic-as-genre are by this point recognizable and even expected: by the time of *The Monk*, Gothic conventions are not being invented but reinvented, even subverted and parodied.

I have already mentioned that *The Monk* falls, albeit narrowly, on the opposite side of the "supernatural break" from Radcliffe's major works. If the episode of the Bleeding Nun did not confirm this, the physical presence of Lucifer, his shape-shifting servant Matilda, the enchanted myrtle-branch, or perhaps even the Gypsy's transparently oracular prediction at the end of the first chapter (38) would suffice. *The Monk's* relationship to the nascent Gothic Schism is an interesting one, however, because it is in part a product of complex heteroglossic<sup>68</sup> debate between attitudes toward supernatural fiction and credulity. The dangers of taking magic and portent too seriously are present here, as in *The Italian*; but here they are complemented by the even greater dangers of not taking them seriously enough.

By the time Austen's *Northanger Abbey* is published in late December of 1817, the dialogic debate so present in *The Monk* has mostly stabilized into two different schools of thought, driving the neo-Gothic novelists of the early nineteenth century in two separate directions. Key figures of nineteenth-century British fiction, from Jane Austen to Charles Dickens, demonstrate the vast reach of Radcliffe's influence—but her influence brings with it her move back toward formal realism and the denial of the

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<sup>67</sup> For its context, drawn out of Marx, this term looks toward McKeon's *Origins of the English Novel*, especially pp.14-22.

<sup>68</sup> This term references, and should suggest, the ripeness of *The Monk* for a Bakhtinian study based on its conflicting and often directly dialogic attitudes toward the supernatural. A reading of this sort appears, in a more general sense, in Jacqueline Howard's *Reading Gothic Fiction: A Bakhtinian Approach* (Oxford UP, 1994).

authentic supernatural. Conversely, a second class of writers emerges in the period, including a small number of “serious” novelists—Mary Shelley, for one—and a multitude of Grub Street hacks and penny-dreadful serialists such as Thomas Prest and James Malcolm Rymer (both of whom have been credited as the author of the 1845-7 serial *Varney the Vampire*).

The connotations of describing the 19<sup>th</sup>-century writers of supernatural fiction as a “second class” are clear, and perhaps prophetic: whether “supernature” takes the form of the fantastic, of “super-science,” or some other speculative form, 19<sup>th</sup>-century efforts that deliberately set themselves outside “the utmost verge of probability” have given rise to subfields which are seen in contrast to the preferred conventions of the realist novel. Just as Jerome McGann observed sentimental fiction to be “something of an embarrassment” (*Poetics* 1) to the critical vogue of the 1960s and ’70s, so too have science fiction, fantasy, and horror—Gothic descendants pejoratively called “genre fiction”—remained in a field of literature termed “popular” as a means of distinguishing (and dismissing) it from the elevated company of the literary canon. The endurance of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* as a canonical work of nineteenth-century British fiction is the exception rather than the rule; and we must not forget that its success in the canon has been late in coming, later even than its rebirth on film. Even if Stoker’s *Dracula* is now afforded (however grudgingly) the same critical importance as Mary Shelley, no supernatural fiction published in the eight decades between them boasts sufficient prominence to rival the “realist Gothic” of Dickens and the Brontë sisters. Ghost stories and tales of the fantastic continue to proliferate; but the best of these are frequently confined to melodramas and penny dreadfuls—what Hoeverler’s *Gothic Riffs* quite accurately

describes as “collateral” Gothic genres. Even Dickens’s step into supernatural territory, the annual Christmas novellas beginning with *A Christmas Carol*, is a small contribution relative to the size of his oeuvre. In general, supernatural fiction and its later permutations—fantasy, science fiction, other “speculative” genres—tend to favour the same forms they did in the mid-nineteenth century. Single works of novel length are tellingly uncommon in genre-fiction even today, which flourishes in two primary forms: short stories, still delivered primarily for the vehicles of genre-specific anthologies<sup>69</sup> or cheaply printed periodicals;<sup>70</sup> and sweeping “sagas” which span multiple volumes, often without end, a clear descendent of the Victorian pulp serial tradition.

Today, long after the rise of “genre fiction” from a debased family of “improbable” writing, the critical opinion that such works are somehow juvenile—that they “are very well in the nursery...but are not to be endured by men of sense and judgment” (Academicus 204)—has been surprisingly long-lived. The shifting attitudes which link the supernatural to juvenilia have had powerful effects on the reception of texts: few eighteenth-century children’s stories endure in popular memory like the tale of Gulliver and the Lilliputians from the first book of Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. The purpose of this tale, and the reasons for reading it, have undergone a drastic change in the public mindset: Lemuel Gulliver is now remediated as a figure of escapist travel-fantasy as frequently as he is approached within the original context of political satire. It may seem strange to imagine the suggestion, in 1800, that the author of *The Monk* was deemed fit for the nursery; but by the twenty-first century, this attitude toward the

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<sup>69</sup> For example, the *Year’s Best SF* anthology published by HarperCollins, now in its sixteenth year.

<sup>70</sup> The popular pulp magazine *Amazing Stories* is a particularly well-known example.

supernatural has allowed the author of *A Modest Proposal* to join him in the nursery as well.

This reduction of the supernatural into juvenilia becomes both a catalyst and a result, I think, of the ongoing Gothic Schism: a recursive momentum is generated between the emergence of children's ghost stories, for example, and the notion that ghost stories are meant for children. But this reduction, this de-fanging, is not simply a change in literary fashion, an isolated shift in the vogue of popular genres. It is in its own way a facet of the changing relationship to the supernatural outlined in Taylor's secularization narrative. Baldick and Mighall have famously described the Gothic as a Protestant genre and highlighted the importance of the Reformation to the rise of the Gothic, but there is much more to be said for the role of theological change—indeed, the role of shifting social imaginaries of religion and the supernatural—in the transformation of supernatural literature during and after the Gothic effulgence of Radcliffe and Lewis.

When “Mary, A Fragment” pushes its supernatural horrors and wonders out of the immanent world, relegating them to the frame narrative of dreams and unconsciousness,<sup>71</sup> it is driving a further wedge of distance between the supernatural and the quotidian world. The buffer between reality and literature, already a considerable bulwark, is doubled by the buffer between waking and sleep. Taylor admits that even though “[t]he buffered self feels invulnerable before the world of spirits and magic forces,” these forces “can haunt us in our dreams, particularly those of childhood” (*A*

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<sup>71</sup> 150 years later, the best-known film version of *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming's 1939 film for MGM) added the now-famous unconsciousness frame narrative to the story (it does not exist in Baum's original novel). The somewhat Gothic device of the dream or vision is now a common one, in film and literature alike, for exiling encounters with the supernatural to a suitably remote space.

*Secular Age* 548). The claim is especially interesting in the context of those critiques of the Gothic which would push its “absurdities” back into the nursery.

When the vampire arrives in English supernatural fiction, it arrives into this climate of weakening, distancing terror. The vampire, figured in Slavic folktales as a credible real-world threat, already enters the English tradition as something quite different, a half-irreal figure with one foot in reality and one foot in dream. This is, perhaps, why the vampire’s nocturnal nature takes on a new and storied importance: the similarities between the classic set-piece of English vampiric predation (that is, the boudoir feeding-scene) and Henry Fuseli’s *The Nightmare* are more than coincidence.

There can be no real denial of the direct thread of tradition between the genteel, dreamlike vampire of the English boudoir and the revenant monster of Slavic folklore. Montague Summers and most vampire historians since have left this road of thinking extremely well-trodden. Nevertheless, the divide between the vampire of modern fiction and its folkloric antecedents has only grown: in a few very remote parts of countries corresponding to the Silesia and Carniola of early eighteenth-century “historical” accounts of vampirism, belief in the vampire and its malevolent power is so ardently held that corpses of certain unfortunates are still desecrated to prevent their return from the grave. At the other end of the spectrum, Count Chocula adorns the front of cereal boxes; vampires perpetually attend high school in teen fiction and manga, and Dracula himself remains a popular children’s Hallowe’en costume.

To an extent, the gap between these two present-day extremes can be seen as a part and product of secularization. The vampire’s evolution from ancient myth to pop-culture icon is already told and retold with surprising frequency, both within

scholarship<sup>72</sup> and within a sort of pseudo-scholarly subgenre of “encyclopædias of the undead.” It will be of greater use here, I think, to contextualize that evolution within the larger context of secularization than it would be to go over it again.

As to my original question of the vampire’s relationship to the Gothic(s), I have answered it here in only vague terms. But it’s important to come at the vampire by way of the Gothic Schism, because the radical split in Gothic attitudes toward the supernatural is what informs the vampire’s first meeting-point with the Gothics. The Gothic Schism certainly did not destroy any single discourse, aesthetic, or literary framework; it did, however, result in the end of the Gothic as “period” and the emergence of (at least) two new traditions of prose fiction, only one side of which has proven a suitable home for the undead.<sup>73</sup>

Through this process, a few observations come into view about the vampire’s troubled relationship with Gothicism. Coming into supernatural fiction only after the Gothic period, the vampire in fiction is at most an *echo* of high Gothic fiction, a vessel which has taken on certain tropes and iconographic decorations (blood, dead bodies, deserted crypts and castles, hermits, corrupt aristocrats, hypersexual predators) and set out from the sunset of the Gothic effulgence to colonize new literatures with Gothic aesthetics, poetics, discourses, and themes which—like vampires themselves—may have

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<sup>72</sup> A particularly strong example is Heide Crawford’s recent dissertation on *The Origins of the The Literary Vampire in German Horror Ballads From The Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. It is especially useful as a companion to my admittedly Anglocentric study, as it offers a much more detailed study of several key figures (notably Bürger, Goethe, and Ossensfelder) than I am able to include here.

<sup>73</sup> Seth Grahame-Smith’s recent Jane Austen mash-up, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, is an attempt to force the gimmickry of supernatural terror into a literary tradition that, in spite of its ties to the supernatural through Radcliffe, does not natively support it. The degree of contrivance required speaks to how far afield Austen has moved from the supernatural traditions informing her. For a closer look at Radcliffe’s influence on Austen and other key novels in the Regency/Romantic period, see Tompkins’s *Ann Radcliffe and her Influence on Later Writers*, and Harrison Ross Steeves’s *Before Jane Austen: The Shaping of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century*.

by this strange means overcome their natural and otherwise finite lifespan in the Gothic period. It is the survival of these conceits within the vehicle of the vampire that makes “Gothic” an apt word to describe it: even after deeply questioning the knee-jerk association of the two, the label seems an appropriate one, given the complex and even symbiotic relationship between the vampire and the “undead” aspects of Gothic tradition.

By the time the vampire makes its sudden and sensational arrival in prose fiction in Polidori’s *The Vampyre*, it has enjoyed a certain life and notoriety in the poetry of the Romantics. It is in these works that further refinements of the archetype have taken place: these things are not disconnected from the shifts in belief discussed by Taylor, and so it makes sense now to discuss them together, coming as they do at the unstable centre of the movement toward a disenchanting and mundane secular world.

## Chapter 3: Vampires, Genre, and History

### 3.1 Towards Vampiric Definition(s)

The infamous vampires of English literature are easy enough to classify as Romantic and Victorian inventions. Much of the work surrounding Bram Stoker's *Dracula* centers on the idea that Dracula himself is the product of High Victorian anxieties; and while this is a model I will call into question here, it serves to situate him, for now, in the proper context of his period and influences. Whether the anxieties of *Dracula* are psychosexual, historico-political, economic, or of an altogether different sort seems to oscillate somewhat with the present vogue of the critical landscape, yet the atmosphere of crisis itself remains an overwhelming consistency of these studies. Vampires are nearly always addressed using the theoretical language of crisis or anxiety, and the crises of choice are connected thematically to the era of their creation, or to our present popular understanding of those eras. This dynamic relationship to crisis has made the vampire a good and useful symbol of human history in general—but this history has been a secular history, a history of *chronos*, and must continue to share the image of the vampire with its function as an echo of kairotic myth as well.

From these two critical approaches, now framed in Taylor's terminology of time, we can see roughed out two matching trends in vampire criticism—one which approaches the vampire historically at the expense of myth (the studies of Arata and Moretti, for instance), and those which approach the vampire mythically at the expense of historicity

(Brian Frost's *The Monster with a Thousand Faces*, as its Campbellian title suggests, is the purest example of this approach). Of these two critical trends, the first, generally speaking, has resulted in work that is more dynamic, but also bears a shorter "shelf life," as it is itself inflected by history, and frequently finds reflected in vampires only the same anxieties it brings to their analysis—critical anxieties prone to cycles of vogue and obscurity.<sup>74</sup> The latter, on the other hand, has been more constant, but slower to change and advance: the essentialism inherent in mythology, and in theories of the psyche, has ensured a more gradual shift in the critical lens. At worst the former approach is occasional and the latter immediately obsolete; at their best, however, both approaches are fully functional and complement each other, and together form the basis for a more balanced understanding of just what the vampire is *doing* in English literature, as well as a more complete narrative of how it arrived there. By straddling these spheres of *kairos* and *chronos*, the vampire embodies at once a perversion of the sacred supernatural—it is a demonic and deliberately anti-religious figure in many ways—but it also embodies a secularized supernatural, a figure which is areligious rather than anti-religious, existing not only in adversarial opposition to normative religion, but outside the system of normative religion altogether.

However we choose to classify our vampires within this broad model—whether we treat them as the loathsome recipients of curses, or predatory beneficiaries of sacrilegious immortality, or simply ordinary people whose final death is supernaturally deferred—they are semihuman figures, artificially suspended from the common order of

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<sup>74</sup> It is not my intent here to venture too far into the realm of theory and criticism *on* theory and criticism: for a more detailed look at literary theory as a vehicle for crisis, see Jane Hiddleston's "Displacing Barthes: Self, Other and the Anxiety of Theory," *Modern and Contemporary France* 15.2 (May 2007), 169-84. Hiddleston's postcolonial analysis of Barthes reveals the workings and anxieties of theory in ways which resonate beyond Barthes, and beyond postcolonialism.

time by supernatural force. Speaking of the long “Sir Bertrand” in Chapter 1, I described Almanzor as “vampiric” because his blood-fueled magic performs exactly this kind of kairotic suspension on his prisoner. But the vampire, in this model, is both princess and sorcerer: as the subject suspended outside of ordinary time, the vampire is both enchanter and enchanted. As vehicles of historical discussion, as symbols of conflict between the ancient and modern, as embodiments of entropy, as tragic time capsules, literary vampires are inseparable from the discourses of time, humanity, and history in ways which distinguish them from mundane villains, antagonists and antiheroes.

This critical field becomes more complicated when we step back from individual characters to consider vampires collectively as a literary trope that strongly resists periodization. The result has been a tendency to treat vampirism as a stock convention of Gothic writing (which is not, as we have seen in the last chapter, without its own problems). Even the derived term “vampirism” leaves too much room for play and requires a stricter definition: to call vampirism *a* literary trope, in the singular, is to perform a misleading reduction. It’s more accurate and more functional, I think, to define “vampirism” as a *collection* of tropes, and of performative acts, which are associated with vampires.

At first this sounds at first like a tautology of little use (who engages in vampirism? Vampires! Who is a vampire? Someone who is vampiric!). But it also reveals a problem that drives us toward a better methodology. Stoker’s Dracula, for instance, who walks in daylight quite comfortably and can be “staked” by a frontiersman’s Bowie knife as easily as by a stake of consecrated rowan wood, does not embody many of the most common vampiric traits—nor are all his traits inherently vampiric (an interest in

foreign real estate does not a vampire make). If the logical system of necessary and sufficient conditions of “vampirehood” doesn’t work in the case of Dracula, perhaps the most central and celebrated of English literary vampires, it is unlikely to work for the remote or unusual cases (Keats’s *Lamia* or Gautier’s *Clarimonde*, for instance). We are left wondering which tropes should be included, and which left out: there is certainly no unified rule set that universally encompasses Stoker’s vampire, Keats’s *Lamia*, Murnau’s *Nosferatu* variant, sparkly teen heartthrob Edward Cullen, and the bloated revenants of European legend that began the vampire craze in the first place. A better system is needed.

This has not discouraged people, though, from trying to establish idiosyncratic and somewhat arbitrary sets of necessary and sufficient conditions of vampirism, in which these problems are immediately visible. Take Brian J. Frost’s hunger-centric treatment from *The Monster with a Thousand Faces*:

[a] vampire is fundamentally a parasitic force or being, malevolent and self-seeking by nature, whose paramount desire is to absorb the life force or ingest the vital fluids of a living organism in order to sate its perverse hunger and perpetuate its unnatural existence. (27)

In attempting to pin down a set of “fundamentals” in so narrow a space, Frost’s described “malevolence” and the “paramount” nature of the feeding-impulse disqualify certain explicitly literal vampires, such as *Clarimonde* from Gautier’s “*La Morte Amoureuse*,” whose love for Romuald is more than the seductive patter of a succubus: however dubious we find her claims of altruism, her feelings are genuine to the point of hamartia, and her “unnatural existence” is undone by a love that is ultimately more fatal to her than to her nominal “victim.” At the same time, this definition leaves room for the inclusion of

several distantly-related predators and man-eaters, whose horrors seem remote from the spirit of vampiric literature, even as Frost goes on to describe them with gleefully spine-tingling excess. Among the more jarring examples of Frost's inclusions are perfectly mundane serial killers, which he describes as "real-life vampires...sadistic criminals...blood-crazed psychopaths" (15), and carnivorous plants both real and fictional:

with Mother Nature kindly giving the imaginative writer an inch, so to speak, he has craftily taken the proverbial yard and dreamt up all manner of botanical monstrosities, from blood-drinking blooms to man-eating trees...[t]he personification of vegetal malice, they are imbued with a terrible, Satanic vitality, almost as though they were rooted in Hell itself. (25)

We find ourselves confronting a vampirism that, like Botting's twenty-first century pop Gothic, "assimilates all categories[...]without limit, otherness, or difference" (11). If everything is vampiric, then nothing is, and systems of classification start to collapse. If the man-eating plant is vampiric, then why not a flesh-eating disease? If a parasitic force that drains other forces can be a vampire, is scientific entropy itself—forever devouring other energies according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics—a vampire on the same terms as Dracula or Lord Ruthven?

In spite of the sensational extravagance of Frost's tone, the extreme range of vampiric "guises" he offers serves to highlight the problems with defining vampires by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Yet when taken at face value it serves as a misleading critical trap. In a study that opens with Frost's definition and treats it as fact rather than a flawed universal model, Michael J. Dennison follows this precise path, assigning fangs to the impersonal thermodynamic forces that shape Victorian science. His

work *Vampirism: Literary Tropes of Decadence and Entropy* brings vampirism under a lens derived from Jeremy Rifkin and Rudolf Arnheim, whose work<sup>75</sup> in the 1970s and early 1980s reformed the scientific concept of entropy as a tool of literary criticism, aesthetics and general philosophy. Dennison's study is significant in part because it reads vampires and vampirism as a collective, taking a heretofore unusually comparative approach to a series of vampiric characters. But even he stops short of speaking of entropy itself as character: he finds that "the vampire is a natural trope for entropy...because it is subversive, perverse, alienated, even evil" (3), but intuits that the force itself cannot be called "a vampire" until it is invested or represented in a corporeal and usually human form. The vampire, he recognizes, must be embodied. But what, then, of shape-shifting Dracula, who comes and goes as a cloud of mist, frequently acting as a disembodied, even impersonal force?

The difficulties surrounding the elusive definition of vampirism, then may point to reasons why comparative studies of literary vampires are scant, even while studies of *specific* vampires (Dracula, Geraldine, Ruthven) abound. It may explain in part why the majority of such comparative studies must turn their focus to the twentieth century and especially to the vampires of film, where vampiric tropes and attributes have solidified somewhat, obeying a standardized code more consistent with one another than in the vampire-texts predating *Dracula*. Finally, the difficulties of vampiric definition parallel significant problems which have been famously posed in other spheres of thought, whose answers may be helpful in moving forward with a collective study of "the vampire," in

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<sup>75</sup> For exemplary texts, see Arnheim's *Art and Entropy: An Essay on Disorder and Order* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971) and Rifkin's *Entropy: A New World View* (New York: Bantam, 1981).

spite of its obstacles, and in spite of the tenacity with which the early vampire resists reduction to a single archetype.

The most famous calling to account of the conditional definition—that is, a definition founded on a theoretical set of necessary and sufficient conditions—is probably Ludwig Wittgenstein’s philosophical interrogation of the German word *Spiel*, a thought-experiment most often known in English by the simple question: what is a game? Termed “the problem of universals” (207) by Renford Bambrough, the game-problem is well-known, as is Wittgenstein’s response to it:

Consider for example the proceedings that we call “games”. I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all?—Don’t say: “There *must* be something common, or they would not be called ‘games’”—but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all...Look for example at board-games, with their multifarious relationships. Now pass to card-games; here you find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear...we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way; can see how similarities crop up and disappear. (Wittgenstein 27)

Here Wittgenstein’s response to the problem of universals is to introduce the concept of *Familienähnlichkeiten* or “family resemblances,” under which a set of *familiar* conditions may “overlap and criss-cross” (Wittgenstein 28) between members of a group in sufficient quantities that no single condition, by its presence or absence, can force that member’s exclusion from a group, or guarantee that it belongs to the group.

Consider as a vampiric example Stoker’s *Dracula* and Polidori’s *Lord Ruthven*, who might be called close relatives to one another under Wittgenstein’s familial metaphor: both are predators of humanity, and especially of women, whose parasitic act is one of literal bloodsucking. Both are suave and highly sexualized with an erotic

energy, which, like the energy animating them, is tinged with “otherness,” being something removed from the normalized energies of “natural” humanity. In spite of this, both are creatures whose primary form is a human one—though they have died and undergone a rebirth into the stasis of undeath.

These are among the most common “vampiric” traits—the conditions which, like facial features, denote the family resemblance of the vampire. But other equally common traits are absent here: Dracula is famously slain by Quincey Morris’s Bowie knife—not by a wooden stake or by sunlight. Ruthven is perfectly alert and mobile during the day, and unfazed by the sacraments of the Church, going so far as to arrange and participate in a morning wedding to Aubrey’s sister. We can say that the missing tropes are vampiric: they are qualities (like bloodsucking or immortality) by which family resemblances to the vampire can be outlined. But these qualities (invulnerability to ordinary weapons, vulnerability to sunlight) cannot be *necessary* vampiric conditions, or Stoker’s original Dracula (perhaps the most celebrated literary vampire of all) must be excluded from the family altogether.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Wittgenstein’s model of “family resemblances” was expanded to work as an alternative for many theoretical taxonomies: in literary criticism especially, influential texts such as Alistair Fowler’s *Kinds of Literature* have been credited with popularizing a genre theory of family resemblance, offering critics a happy middle ground between what David Fishelov labels “the Scylla of closed, uncompromising concepts of literary genres, and the Charybdis of denying all generalizations concerning them” (54). This approach to genre is not a universally accepted one for several reasons which ironically include its own explosive popularity:

Fishelov adds that the concept “has perhaps become too fashionable, too little scrutinized. Instead of being a methodology of last resort, it has become the first and immediate refuge in the wake of disappointment with one or other rigid definition made up of a confined list of characteristics” (54).

The tumultuous issue of whether the concept of family resemblance should augment, revise, or altogether replace conventional approaches to genre is, thankfully, not one in which I need to take a decisive stand. I am not looking here to apply Wittgenstein’s analogy to a corrective reading of genres, but to a corrective reading of archetype: speaking of vampires as a conceptual family of archetypes, rather than speaking of *the* vampire as a single archetype, seems vastly more useful to this sort of study, and allows for the kind of multiplicity within the vampire that Taylor’s narrative of secularization might support or even require. In light of this, where I go on to speak of “the vampire,” in the generic singular, for the sake of expedience or economy of language, I hope it will be understood that I am speaking of an abstracted family of vampiric tropes. The vampire is really a shorthand for many vampires, just as the Gothic is really many Gothics.

This complication of “the vampire” illustrates a history of vampires that could be called genealogical, if the associations of genealogical histories with Foucault were not inescapably strong. Even so, there are similarities (family resemblances, if you will) between Foucault’s fragmentary “histories of the present” and the approach I take here. Foucault shares, for instance, Taylor’s dissatisfaction with the origin-stories of traditional history. “For [Foucault],” Xiaobei Chen writes,

to believe that there is a lofty origin of things...is to presume that there is a moment of birth when things are

purest, most precious, and essential. To chase after such an origin is to buy into and participate in the careful fabrication and protection of identities of conceptions, practices, and institutions...[b]y 'emergence,' Foucault makes the point that historical beginnings are lowly, contingent, and heterogeneous[.] (6)

For Chen, who is writing on historical institutions of child welfare, Foucault's concerns with truth, power, and discourse, and with institution itself, are naturally paramount. But the kind of genealogy we are working with here concerns itself centrally with a history of ideas, which, though not divorced from Foucauldian mechanisms of power, are at least abstracted from them. Important here where the vampire is concerned is the idea that the diverse array of vampiric family-traits are echoes of an equally diverse cacophony of source-voices, rather than mutations stemming from a single, definitive origin-point. It is this expanding cacophony, whose diversity and volume grows with modernity (again Taylor's metaphor of the nova is appropriate here), that leads to a parallel expansion of the possibilities of vampirism—a broadening of the family tree, perhaps. But this broadening does not begin from a single Abrahamic point of origin. It is fed by a growing acquisition of new discourses in which pluralism, not power, is the key factor—or indeed, if the idea of power may not be wholly excised, in which pluralism *is* the key power at work.

If there is a “family tree” at work behind this study, then, it does not follow the Cain paradigm, beginning with a mythic progenitor and ending with his descendants. It is instead a story that begins with the many widespread ancestors of the vampire, tracks the dominance and recession of vampiric traits (to borrow a metaphor from genetics), and examines at last the historical provocations, both to prominence and to obscurity, of those protean aspects of the vampire and its forms over time.

I do not hope to resolve the problems of definition inherent in the vampire merely by diagnosing them, but this diagnosis sets the stage to talk about two things, both of which we might call the “historical origins of the vampire.” In the first sense, this phrase refers to the single-origin models of vampire’s evolution that have been held by critics. Stories which follow the vampire back to Serbian or even ancient Greek folklore and then stop, treating the modern vampire in every way as a simple continuation or inheritance of these myths, are an example of such historical origin-stories. Larger studies which situate their single origin point farther back—with Lilith, perhaps, or with some aspect of prehistoric superstition (as in Frost’s *The Monster with a Thousand Faces*) transformed through a collective unconscious—are another example. But in another, wider sense, and in the sense I am most interested in here, the phrase should suggest a point of origin (or more accurately, of descent) for the English literary vampire which has its roots in the genre of history—that is, to say, in the sometimes fanciful “true historie” genre, which débuts in the seventeenth century and comes to inform both the discipline we now call “History,” and the fiction of writers such as Defoe.

These two different senses of the phrase are closely related, at least where vampire literature is concerned, because the translation of “true histories” of the vampire into English forms a historically traceable point at which the word “vampire” (and so, critics have argued, the vampire itself) were first introduced to an English audience, giving traditional historians their point of origin, the small circle of progenitors from which the whole mythos of the vampire (in the English language, at least) can be said to spring. While this point is hardly a holistic origin-point for the vampire—in the sense that the archetype did not step into England, fully formed, off the coach from eastern

Europe—this point is nevertheless an important one as a point of convergence, at which the ideas feeding into the development of the English literary vampire begin to intertwine in a formative way.

The arrival of the word “vampire” in English is historically traceable to the early 1730s: Montague Summers, in his exhaustive 1929 study *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*,<sup>76</sup> discovered what he believed to be the earliest English record of the word, in *The Travels of Three English Gentlemen, from Venice to Hamburgh*, written in 1734.<sup>77</sup> Summers’s finding has gone on to become the generally accepted “moment of first contact,” both with the word and with the concept associated with it (it is, for example, the “first appearance” still cited by the *Oxford English*).

Strictly speaking, this is incorrect. E. J. Clery and Robert Miles have since found one isolated earlier appearance of both the word “vampire” and its concept, in a tract on “Political Vampyres” published in *The Craftsman* on 20 May 1732. They have preserved the entire piece in their anthology *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook* (24–6), and find it to be characteristic of (and consistent with) a political/economic metaphor which does not really emerge until some time later. It is most prominently associated, for instance, with Marx’s famous metaphor in Book I of *Capital*: “capital,” Marx writes, “is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (342). As an early analogue to Marx, the document is valuable; but it also alludes in its text to an early English account of the Arnold Paole vampire-story (under

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<sup>76</sup> Summers’s original text, published in 1929 (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co) is now more widely available as the unabridged (but retitled) reprint *Vampires and Vampirism* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2005). My references are to this edition, though I will refer to the text throughout by its original title to avoid confusion with *Vampires and Vampirism* (1919), Dudley Wright’s early vampire study.

<sup>77</sup> *The Travels of Three English Gentlemen* was collected in Volume IV of the *Harleian Miscellany*, where it has survived. The surviving text asserts that the tale (from a now-lost 1734 manuscript) never reached press under its own title, and was not widely circulated until the *Harleian Miscellany* printed it.

the Anglicised name “Paul Arnold”), which appeared in the *London Journal* on 11 March 1732. This, then, is now the earliest attested date for the vampire’s entry into English; and it must have been read widely enough that the writer(s) of “Political Vampyres” could assume their operating metaphor was intelligible.

While *The Travels of Three English Gentlemen* was thus not the first encounter with vampires, it has endured in part because of its strikingly contemporary definition of what a vampire is and does. Summers excerpts this definition for us in *Vampires and Vampirism*:

our Landlord [at Laubach] seems to pay some regard to what Baron *Valvasor* has related of the *Vampyres*, said to infest some Parts of this Country. These *Vampyres* are supposed to be the Bodies of deceased Persons, animated by evil Spirits, which come out of the Graves, in the Night-time, suck the Blood of many of the Living, and thereby destroy them. (22).

The traits outlined by this passage, all of which become points of family resemblance, are important for reasons I will return to. But the passage has had another story to tell since 1999, when the author of *The Travels of Three English Gentlemen* was first identified as Oxford clergyman and prominent Royal Society fellow John Swinton.<sup>78</sup> The “Baron *Valvasor*” mentioned in the text is certainly prolific Slovenian polymath Janez Vajkard Valvasor, himself an early Foreign Member of the Royal Society, who published widely in German under that language’s variant of his name, Johann Weikhard Freiherr von Valvasor. Valvasor’s most significant work was published in 1689: *Die Ehre deß*

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<sup>78</sup> Swinton is first revealed as the text’s author in T. Shaw’s “John Swinton, F.R.S., identified as the author of a 1734 travel journal,” in *Notes & Records of the Royal Society of London* 53.3 (September 1999): 295-304. Shaw states in the article’s abstract that “[the journal’s] special value is in the practical aspects of travel—languages used (including Latin), roads, horses, inns, costs and even carriage maintenance.” No comment is made about the article’s significance to the history of the vampire in England, though Shaw’s careful discovery of Swinton’s identity opens the door to a wealth of new information surrounding the vampire’s arrival in England.

*Hertzogthums Crain (The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola)* was a lavishly illustrated 15-volume encyclopedia detailing the natural history, customs, and folklore of the territory through which these three English gentlemen traveled. It is here that Valvasor recounts the tale of a shepherd from the Bohemian village of Blov, which echoes in tone and subject the stories of Arnold Paole and Peter Plogojowitz,<sup>79</sup> the two infamous Serbian vampires whose stories appeared in Augustin Calmet's *Traité sur les apparitions des esprits et sur les vampires*<sup>80</sup> and several other influential collections.

It is no surprise that Valvasor's monumental work, written in German, was familiar to both Swinton, a Royal Society Fellow whose fluency in German is evident in his *Travels*, and to his landlord at Laubach (Ljubljana in modern-day Slovenia), for whom German would have been an important language of commerce and the mother tongue of perhaps a third of Laubach's population.<sup>81</sup> It is clear by Swinton's reliance on (and continued reference to) Valvasor throughout the entire Carniolese leg of his journey that the text has been a strong influence on him and his travels. If we were in pursuit of a single point-of-origin, it might be enough to say that Janez Valvasor marks the first known entry of the vampire into the broad English consciousness (perhaps through Royal Society connections), even though the two 1732 articles (the May 20 one collected by

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<sup>79</sup> Arnold Paole is known by several variations of his name, filtered through various languages: Arnald Paul, Arnod Paole, Arnant Paule, Arnand Parle, and variations of these have all been used, making research difficult. Similarly, Peter Plogojowitz has been rendered in the correct Serbian form, Petar Blagojević, or related variations. For the sake of consistency I will use these spellings throughout, though there is no "standardized" form of either name.

<sup>80</sup> The full original title of Calmet's work is *Dissertations Sur les Apparitions des Anges, des Dæmons & des Esprits et Sur les Revenans et Vampires de Hongrie, de Boheme, de Moravie & de Silesie*. It is widely known today under a variety of related titles, and by the title *The Phantom World*, from Henry Christmas's 1850 English translation.

<sup>81</sup> Laubach was at that time the administrative capital of the Duchy of Carniola, part of the *Österreichischer Reichskreis* (Austrian Imperial Circle) of the Holy Roman Empire.

Clery & Miles, and the earlier March 11 one in the *London Journal*) now leave it doubtful that Swinton marks its entry into the English language.

In the end, though, this construction of an unbroken line has little to say about why the vampire is significant in English literature, what changes it has undergone, and what conditions of history provoked those changes. But it does tell us precisely when that process begins to occur—and by that, what medieval monsters we can write out of the vampire story in spite of their superficial resemblance (that is, their sharing of a handful of peripheral traits). By this observation we have greater evidence for treating the English vampire as a modern construct, while the earlier proto-vampires proposed by numerous twentieth-century vampirologists from Dudley Wright to Christopher Frayling are not to be fairly considered as a part of this tradition. The medieval revenants of Walter Map and William of Newburgh, so frequently cited as the first vampires in English, are revealed to be distant analogues at best, whose resemblance to the family of the modern vampire is coincidental rather than genetic. As to the single still-earlier example cited by Dudley Wright, the mysterious Anglo-Saxon “Vampire of the Fens,” we have a curious and long-inherited error of scholarship to parse. This vampire, of course, is none other than Grendel, the man-eating monster of *Beowulf*; his inclusion in vampire tradition should provoke a cautionary tale for scholars of the supernatural, but also illustrates some complications with pursuing a historical (that is, a chronological) model of the vampire’s development at all.

### 3.2 “The Vampire of the Fens”: Grendel as Medieval Proto-Vampire

Initially, *Beowulf* is a text that lends itself to the kind of family-resemblance model I have been working to establish. On the one hand, it is easy to argue that there is nothing vampiric about it at all: aside from predating any sort of recognizable Eastern European vampire tradition in English literature, Grendel and his mother are ostensibly living things, fen-dwelling giants who resemble if anything the ogres and ogresses of Old Norse sagas or the ugly, man-eating giants of English fairy tale. The Slavic elements that give the vampire a distinctly ethnic element in the minds of many folklorists are absent here: the text implies that Grendel is long-lived, but not immortal, and certainly not risen from the grave after a previous death.

The work of comparative mythology has often been to universalize the archetype across ethnic and cultural boundaries, allowing for an all-in inclusiveness to the trope: once again, according to the universalist approach of Brian Frost’s *The Monster with a Thousand Faces*, *Beowulf* would almost certainly qualify as a vampire-story (and indeed, if man-eating trees qualify as vampires, why *not* Grendel?). In point of fact, Frost’s study indirectly paints *Beowulf* as the *first* vampire-story by buying into a complicated chain of research that constitutes one of the larger and more influential mistakes of vampiric literary history: a bibliographical pitfall best described by the nonexistent title of the “Vampyre of the Fens.”

Frost is by no means the first or most influential critic to fall victim to the trap, but his remarks about the origins of the literary vampire most clearly demonstrate the pitfall in action, as well as how completely it is now accepted:

[t]he precise entry of the vampire motif into fiction is something one is not able to establish with any accuracy...I will stick my neck out and opt for an obscure Anglo-Saxon poem called *A Vampyre of the Fens*, written at the beginning of the eleventh century, as the vampire's probable debut in a work of pure imagination. After this humble start all trace of the theme in post-classical literature is lost until the appearance of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. (36)

My initial response here, and it should be the response of any reader of Anglo-Saxon, is that there is no such thing as an “obscure” Anglo-Saxon poem. In *A History of Old English Verse*, Michael Alexander counts “about 31,000 lines” of extant Old English verse, “nearly all of which are to be found in four manuscripts...the *Beowulf* manuscript, the Exeter Book, the Vercelli Book, and the Junius Book” (2). That is all we have—or, at least, all we *know* we still have. Given the scarcity of surviving verse, especially relative to the number of its scholars (*Beowulf* alone comprises 10% of all the Old English verse we have), the discovery of a new work, particularly of the narrative length needed for Frost to classify it as “fiction,” would be a monumental event; it could no more go unnoticed against the backdrop of such a small surviving corpus than could the intact rediscovery of a “lost” Shakespeare play such as Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Cardenio*.

Although he does not mention his source, Frost is likely led astray here by Carol Senf's *The Vampire in 19<sup>th</sup>-century English Literature*, released a year earlier than his book by the same publisher and mentioned in his addendum. Senf is typically much more careful with both her sourcing and her fact-checking; she at least traces her belief in an Anglo-Saxon vampire poem to an anonymous article, appearing in an 1855 issue of Charles Dickens's *Household Words* (Senf 19). The long bibliographic mystery of this Anglo-Saxon vampire was not solved until 2005: it was Eugenio Olivares Merino who

determined that the mysterious poem was, in fact, *Beowulf*, and that the misunderstanding was caused by a long string of scholars who took the initial vague observations of *Household Words* writer Edmund Ollier at face value without verifying the poem's identity or confirming its existence.<sup>82</sup>

The confusion surrounding what Merino calls a "Bibliographical Ghost" claimed victims as central to early vampire scholarship as Dudley Wright's 1914 work *Vampires and Vampirism*, whence the assertion that "there is an Anglo-Saxon poem called *The Vampyre of the Fens*" (189) probably spread the farthest. Even Montague Summers, in spite of an earlier disdain of Wright's careless scholarship and the "insipid olio" (*Vampires and Vampirism* xii) in which this claim appears, goes on in his follow-up study *The Vampire In Europe* to repeat and reinforce (if only vaguely) Wright's erroneous conclusion that "the Vampire was by no means unknown in England during the Anglo-Saxon times" (*The Vampire in Europe* 78). Since Merino's exposé, no major scholarly works have given credence to the Vampyre of the Fens; but its mention in so many seminal texts leaves it hanging over most vampiric origin-stories as an inviting but fatally flawed mystery. The mistake itself, it seems, is vampiric, living on in popular encyclopædias of the undead even after Merino has laid it to rest.

The awkward scholarly vampirization of Grendel, however, does confirm that certain vampiric traits (those present in Grendel, at least) were at work in England long before the Slavic root word and its accompanying tropes made their way west of the Rhine. To this day, a few of Grendel's traits, drawn from Anglo-Saxon and Norse

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<sup>82</sup> The picture Olivares Merino is able to paint is naturally more complex and nuanced than my summary. For the original article detailing the progression of this miscommunication, see "The Old English Poem 'A Vampyre of the Fens': A Bibliographical Ghost." *Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies* 32 (2005): 87-101.

mythology, have entered Western notions of the vampire, even though they appear only in texts derived from the meeting-point of the vampire with English consciousness, avoiding the Eastern European texts (even later ones) that have remained isolated from that cultural crossroads.

This complicated relationship to early texts can result in perilous misreadings when it comes to a history of influence. Consider, for example, the Biblically derived origin-story of the monsters in *Beowulf*, as cursed descendants of Cain, as a precursor to a largely Anglo-American tradition which likewise paints vampires as a race of Cainites. In the surprisingly rich background material of White Wolf's *Vampire: The Masquerade* role-playing game,<sup>83</sup> the setting's central creation-myth is that all vampires are descended from Cain, and that vampirism itself comprises part or all of his accursed mark:

if the myth of the Antediluvians is to be believed, Caine [sic] sired a number of progeny, who then sired childer themselves. These childer, accordingly of the Third Generation, were the progenitors of the modern *clans*, and all vampires descended from them shared common traits and characteristics. (45)

The Cainite origin-story of *The Masquerade*, which further evokes the Nephilim of Judæo-Christian apocrypha, bears a debt to *Beowulf* that should be immediately clear if we consider a key passage from the poem describing Grendel and his patrilineage (my translation follows the original):

wæs se grimma gāst    Grendel hāten  
mære mearcstapa    se þe mōras hēold

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<sup>83</sup> My rationale for choosing a role-playing game for this example, other than its direct echoes of *Beowulf*, owes to its unique cultural position more than its literary significance: *Vampire: The Masquerade* is fundamentally a product of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Anglo-American culture, and addresses the vampiric archetype almost exclusively through this cultural lens—in short, it is as far removed as possible from the medieval Slavic origins of the eighteenth-century “true histories” of vampiric episodes. The point I hope to make is that in works more closely connected to the oft-cited Slavic-history branch of vampiric origin, several of the traits we label as “vampiric” in the case of Grendel simply do not exist.

fen ond fæsten,    fīfelcynnes eard  
 wonsæli wer    weardode hwīle  
 sibðan him scyppend    forscrifen hæfde  
 in Cāines cynne;    þone cwealm gewræc  
 ēce drihten    þæs þe hē Ābel slōg;  
 ne gefeah hē þære fæhðe    ac hē hine feor forwræc,  
 metod for þý mǣne    mancynne fram.  
 Þanon untýdras    ealle onwōcon  
 Eotenas ond ylfe    ond orcnēas  
 Swylce gīgantas    þā wið gode wunnon  
 Lange þrāge;    hē him ðæs lēan forgeald. (ll. 102-114)

[Grendel, the grim spirit was called,  
 The renowned frontier-stalker, he who held the moors,  
 the marsh for his stronghold: the monster-kin's land  
 the miserable man long occupied,  
 since the Creator had expelled him  
 as one of Cain's kin: because he slew Abel,  
 the eternal Lord avenged that death.  
 He rejoiced not in that hostility, but for his wickedness  
 The Lord expelled him far from mankind.  
 Then his progeny all awoke,  
 Ettins and elves and ogres,  
 Also giants, who warred against God  
 For a long time; for that He rewarded them.]

There are, of course, other precedents for imagining Cain's offspring as racially and morally "othered" variants of humanity, and special mention must be given to a few of them. Sam Newton's *The Origins of Beowulf*, for instance, has noted a passage in Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* in which "the fiends who[...]attack Guthlac are addressed by the saint as the 'seed of Cain'...show[ing] that some early eighth-century East Anglians, like the audience of *Beowulf*, believed that fens and marshes were haunted by the evil seed of Cain" (143). Likewise, the *Zohar* of Kabbalic mysticism states clearly that "when Cain was banished from the face of the earth...among his descendants were those

inhabiting the side of spirits, whirlwinds and demons” (III 79).<sup>84</sup> Ruth Melinkoff has further demonstrated that the Noachic lore of the Book of Enoch was widely disseminated in the British Isles, probably through an oral tradition (167), making it unnecessary to establish what Theodore M. Andersson has called a scheme of “bookish transmission” (136). Finally, as late as the eighteenth century, an abundance of pamphlets and political tracts have been printed in which proponents of slavery use Nephilitic rhetoric and reasoning to provide a justified dehumanization of African slaves.<sup>85</sup>

Overall, however, the existence of an established Nephilitic monster-tradition concurrent with the early vampire-stories does not mean they were interacting in the ways we might now assume. Whatever has gone on in this tradition, there is no sign it crossed over to vampire-fiction until the publication of the first *Vampire: The Masquerade* books in 1991, and it was only some time after that it gained what I would call “folkloric currency.” An anachronistic misreading, then, of the Nephilitic or Cainite vampire-tradition backward onto Augustan and Romantic-era vampires, onto Stoker’s *Dracula*, or even onto such recent works as the Hammer Horror films of the 1960s, is one example of the dangerous historical pitfalls that are possible in these complicated discussions of origin and influence.

What is more directly relevant, I think, about the Nephilitic origin-story of Grendel in the context of vampires is that it transgresses a border between religious or scriptural writing and what might be called secular narratives, and may help to explain why English literary tradition was such a suitable home for the evolution of the vampire

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<sup>84</sup> My reference here is to the volume and page number of Daniel Matt’s translation (Stanford UP, 2005). The standardized chapter-verse notation for the passage containing this quotation is 1:178b.

<sup>85</sup> For an example citing “descendants of Cain” specifically, see Charles Boxer’s translation, “Negro Slavery in Brazil: A Portuguese Pamphlet (1764).” *Race: The Journal of the Institute of Race Relations* 5 (1964): 38-47.

from the eighteenth century onward. The border between sacred and secular writing is at times more rigid, and perhaps better defended, in continental Europe, where the Bible and similar religious texts were conceptually removed, a genre apart, from all literature (even religious or moral literature) that was not at least partially considered divine revelation. The oddly hybrid, half-homiletic framework of *Beowulf* strikes a peculiar balance between sacred and secular adventures—a balance shared, perhaps, by the more martial hagiographies like those of St. George, which have provided English literature with a conceptual space in which sacred concerns can be made the subject of secular romance.

The influence of Christianity on heroic poetry, it has been argued, is unique in English verse because in the days of “early Christian epic” it was a major tool of Anglo-Saxon conversion. William Dixon’s 1912 study, *English Epic and Heroic Poetry*, addresses this crossroads of traditions in ethnic or racial terms rather than cultural ones, but nevertheless captures the moment of their meeting:

our forefathers discovered within the new religion room for the old ways of thought, the ideals of their military life. Much, particularly in the Old Testament story, found ready acceptance. The wanderings of the Israelites, the tribal battles, the disaffections and revolts... were in no respect foreign to their mental experience. In the early literature of the converted English it was inevitable that Christianity should be transformed into the image of the heroic world.  
(91-2)

In Anglo-Saxon England, then, the cultural conditions were right for a merging of sacred heroes and adversaries with secular ones: the author (or Christian compiler, depending on whom you believe) of *Beowulf* has given us a king of the Geats who, like St. George, functions on two planes at once. Within *chronos*, the realm of secular time, he is a literal dragonslayer; even as a Christian knight, he is one Christian man who

defeats a monster. Within *kairos*, however, St. George is a tropological symbol of mankind's eternal war against a Christian enemy. His identity is forever fixed in the moment of the deed; just as in a fully secularized context, Spider-Man's Uncle Ben is forever in the moment of being shot, St. George is forever in the moment of slaying the dragon, a moment symbolic of a perpetual act of grace (a literal *coup de grâce*, perhaps).

I have briefly talked about Uncle Ben as a saintly figure already; there is an amount of work being done now on the connections between comic-book superheroes, in the secular world, and saints from medieval sacred tradition.<sup>86</sup> By talking about medieval saints as superheroes—rather than today's superheroes as saints—I mean to draw light to a peculiar hybrid tradition in English literature that predates even the earliest stages of Taylor's secularization story. Even within a porous world, the victories of Beowulf, Gawain, and the martial saints have been at least partially secularized. It becomes possible, for instance, to imagine even Christ as a secular chieftain, as some of the Anglo-Saxons evidently did—as “a ‘man of war’ who invades Hell as a king[,] the territory of his enemy” (Dixon 92), crossing over from religious thought into heroic thought. Similarly, the opportunity for apocryphal teachings that are at heart monster-legends—those of the Nephilim, the sons of Cain, and so on—have an opportunity to pass into secular literature and become something other than religious doctrine, even while we are dealing with a porous world in which Taylor's model of secularization has not yet come into full bloom. This hybridized tradition of sacred and secular heroism, established long before the large-scale social and epistemological shifts of secularization have taken place, facilitates the translation of the problems represented by the oldest European vampires—

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<sup>86</sup> The best monograph on the subject right now is probably Greg Garrett's *Holy Superheroes!: Exploring the Sacred in Comics, Graphic Novels, and Film*. An anthology by B. J. Oropeza, *The Gospel According to Superheroes: Religion and Popular Culture*, offers a broader range of perspectives in a similar vein.

powerfully religious problems, as we will see in the case of Calmet—into the largely secularized problems of the English vampire. The cross-talk that is possible in English literature (even in the Middle Ages) between sacred and secular challenges sets the stage for heroes like Sir Bertrand, who later come to remediate the sacred-secular work of the saintly knight in purely secularized terms.

As a marker of this hybridity, Cain's connection to Grendel retains its usefulness; but as the ancestor of English literary monsters, Cain lies dormant for centuries after *Beowulf* until his single influential resurrection in a fantasy role-playing game. In fact, the earlier vampires of eastern Europe were *especially* unlikely to be considered in Cainite terms: as the returned, re-animated bodies of deceased persons, vampires ordinarily had mundane parents living in the community where they lived before a suicide or improper burial made them restless. In the "historical accounts" of vampirism to which we turn next, the vampire's mother and father (if they were still living) were typically counted among its first victims. Having made sense of how the earliest, supposedly "original" account of English vampirism may in fact contribute only a "late addition" to the mythos leaves us free to take that step free of the distractions of *Beowulf*, Walter Map, and other "medieval vampires" whose part in the story comes later, if at all: that *Beowulf* is generally considered an English poem, and that it predates Swinton's *Travels of Three English Gentlemen* by over six centuries, does not invalidate my starting point of 1732 for this study of English literary vampirism. Rather, it illustrates the complexities and exceptions which stand in the way of a singular Slavic-inflected origin-story for the vampires of English literature, which descend from not one, but many discrete points of origin.

Ironically, though, the errors of Frost, Senf, and others concerning *Beowulf* are somewhat redeemed by this model: while “the Vampyre of the Fens” has never really existed as they understand it, from the perspective of vampiric genealogy, at least, the poem to which they are unwittingly referring has come to occupy a similar place, and perform a similar function, to what they expected of its nonexistent bibliographical shadow. It is, as sure as the true histories to which we now turn, a part of the complicated patchwork at which we have now arrived, and an important contributor to the story of how exactly we came here.

### **3.3 “True Histories”: Calmet as Historian and Spine-Tingling Theology**

What I hope my examination of *Beowulf* has left us with is an exemplary exception: by its example I have meant to illustrate the daunting complexity of a vampiric genealogy, but at the same time I have meant to draw attention to the fact that an analysis of literary and historical trends, in this case at least, is necessarily a road lined and littered with such exceptions, some of which offer the journey some frustrating and complex obstacles.

Not all of these problems can be resolved here, nor is resolution always necessary: any study of a genealogical trend, I think, is enriched rather than contaminated by an active acknowledgement of its exceptions and anomalies. Moving forward, I hope that the “complications” surrounding a simple genealogy leave us with a broader understanding of the discursive site of the vampire than could be provided by a

discussion of the vampire's most common characteristics, targeted exclusively to those mainstream texts which have much to say about the function of the vampire, but very little to say about the conditions of its development.

My second definition of the phrase "historical origins of the vampire" is one in which the word "historical" describes a genre rather than a critical methodology. In this sense, when I say that the literary vampire has historical origins, what I mean (in part) is that the vampire's primary development has been within the genre now identified as "histories," popular in England throughout the eighteenth century but certainly enjoying some sort of formal existence from an earlier date. This stance requires that I confront, rather than simply acknowledge, a complication of genre-theory raised by recent criticism that calls into question the legitimacy of genre itself, at least within the area where I must now operate.

Since the publication of Michael McKeon's *Origins of the English Novel* in 1987, the argument has flourished that the eighteenth-century genres now widely recognized (history, romance, novel, and so on) are later inventions, conceived as abstractions by formalist criticism seeking to establish a retroactive taxonomy for the eighteenth century's catalytic but nebulous explosion of prose literature. Adopting the idea of abstraction from Marx's *Grundrisse*, McKeon traces the process by which the novel becomes "abstracted" and attains an "institutional stability" (20) as genre, a process he refers to as generalization. For McKeon, the moment of this generalization is determined by the accumulation of a critical mass of "novelistic" tendencies, rather than by a single landmark progenitor (Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was a popular example), which gives birth to an altogether new genre. In this, and especially in the idea of critical mass—of

the *momentum* of voices as an instrument of change in literary understanding—McKeon shares my focus on alternatives to the single-origin myths of history. Where he departs from this focus, and where he problematizes the historical origins of the vampire, is in the dates he sets as moments of generic abstraction: this generalization, the development of an understanding of romance or novel *as such*, is invariably set long after several works of the genre have already been produced. In McKeon’s model, after all, the existence of more than a few novels (enough to reach a sort of “critical mass”) is a prerequisite to the development of “the novel” as genre. Put simply, if a text such as Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* or Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* is able to retain its problematic designation as “the first modern novel,” it could not have been so at the time of its publication, as no genre yet existed for it to introduce. Until a critical mass of writing follows it, McKeon’s model suggests, such works stand as anomalies rather than pioneers.

The problem with this approach lies in its argument that histories themselves could not exist *as such* before the late eighteenth century: prior to the generic abstraction of history, McKeon argues, histories had no genre to represent—thus, to say that the vampire has its roots in “the history” is to imagine the influence of a genre that did not exist on authors who could not have recognized it. McKeon in part supports his case for the late development and understanding of genre (including the genre of “historie”) by referring to the instability of generic language in the decades preceding the conceptual abstraction of genre: subtly referencing Ian Watt’s influential *Rise of the Novel*, McKeon writes that

[t]he common understanding that the novel “rose” around 1740...requires that what precedes this founding act will resemble chaos...seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century writers often use the terms “romance,” “history,” and

“novel” with an evident interchangeability that must bewilder and frustrate all modern expectations. (25)

The eventual abstraction of the pre-novel genres of romance and history, he argues, is provoked in part by “a growing impulse to make the dyad ‘romance/history’ stand for an all-but-absolute dichotomy between opposed ways of knowing the world” (25). For McKeon, this dyad develops to confront “questions of truth” (26), which could be validly recast in the shadow of *A Secular Age* as “questions of belief.” The history, as it is understood during this key period of the mid-eighteenth century, is supposed to represent what is true, describing people who really existed and events that really occurred. Conversely, the romance, however it was previously described, comes to take on “fiction” and falsehoods<sup>87</sup> as its defining characteristics: this shift happens at a key time when the impact of Bacon and Locke, and the growing influence of the scientific method, attaches to fiction the pejorative associations of deception, deviance from nature, and through Calvinism’s association of the natural world to God, ungodliness as well.

In her own appraisal of McKeon’s findings about this truth-centered generic dichotomy, Catherine Gallagher notes that the conceptual vocabulary to understand McKeon’s romance/history distinction was already in place, even if it had not yet produced any definitive early writing on the subject of genre. Recent historians of the novel, she observes, have noted

that the concept of fiction, far from being a universal cultural category, developed slowly in early modern Europe, that the immediate predecessors of the novel—romances, secret histories, and memoirs—often claimed historical veracity, and that until the mid-eighteenth century, there was no widely employed means of

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<sup>87</sup> The disdain for falsehoods, as examined in my chapter on the Gothic Schism, may have something to do with the growing popularity of the term “novel,” and the waning popularity of the term “romance,” to describe prose fiction over the same period.

distinguishing between a fiction and a lie[...]the terms for such a distinction were available in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, but they were seldom used. The discourse of fiction, therefore, was awaiting not so much the requisite conceptual tools as some cultural imperative to use them. (163)

Out of this genre-theory debate emerge some telling details about the early life of the history as genre: first, while the distinction between fiction and untruth—between imagination and fraud—was seldom articulated (at least in writing that has survived), there was a tradition of claimed veracity even in the case of works now classified as romances. Given the improbable wonders and excesses of many romances, it is reasonable to conclude that such claims of veracity were often unabashedly dubious, and occasionally even firmly tongue-in-cheek: few readers, as I have already argued, really would have taken *The Castle of Otranto* for a lost fifteenth-century Neapolitan manuscript. The *Travels* of Gulliver, told by Swift with bold-faced affirmation of their absolute truth and nevertheless understood by most of their audience as satire, likewise suggest a reading public that was far from gullible: on the contrary, the enjoyment of *Gulliver's Travels* as something more than fantasy entirely hinges (as does the discovery of its targeted satirical content) on a sophisticated understanding of such claims to veracity as a tonal and narrative device.

Whether or not the literal truth of more improbable “histories” was credible, it seems reasonable to suppose a tacit understanding among readers that even “tall tales” were interesting and worth reading. In the case of texts such as *Robinson Crusoe*, which infamously made so many enemies when its “untruth” was revealed, much of the public anger can be attributed to the book’s credibility rather than its incredibility: with its novelistic verisimilitude existing somewhere in the space between the truth of history and

the supposed fancy of romance, *Crusoe*'s realism misled a readership that would probably not have been duped into taking the vampire-histories collected by Calmet as seriously, in spite of the equally (or more) fervent claims of Calmet's original sources to the veracity of their tales. The case of *Robinson Crusoe* was not one of a gullible reading public, in my judgment, but rather one of a readership with established expectations and some understanding of fiction and non-fiction as generic facets *within* the history. It was likely that the frustration of these expectations by Defoe's formal realism, rather than the inherent falseness of the story, that provoked such a strong reaction against his deceptively "probable" novel.

Calmet's 1746 treatise, though it comes several years after the word *vampire* and the first vampire-accounts are introduced, is widely credited with sparking the first real Western European "vampire craze," but it is a common error to suppose that its impact in England was immediate. Although Calmet's treatise was translated as early as 1759 (Spence II 960),<sup>88</sup> the book is most famous from its 1850 translation by Reverend Henry Christmas,<sup>89</sup> reappearing as it did in the heated moment of England's own vampire craze, in the company of texts such as *Varney the Vampire* (1845-47) and similar vampire-themed penny dreadfuls. The importance and influence of Montague Summers's studies, and his heavy reliance on Calmet's treatise in both, has further lent the work a sort of "influence by proxy" over vampire literature. As an anthologizer, a collector of vampires, Calmet is driven by religious concerns and a particular focus on the resurrection of the undead, both of which limit (as I will explain here) his selection of tales. To take the

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<sup>88</sup> The English text alluded to by Spence is almost certainly the anonymously-translated *Dissertations upon the Apparitions of Angels, Daemons, Ghosts, and Concerning the Vampires of Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia* (London: M. Cooper, 1759).

<sup>89</sup> *The Phantom World; or, the Philosophy of Spirits, Apparitions, &c.* Ed. Rev. Henry Christmas. London: Richard Bentley, 1850.

treatise as a “sample” of vampire-stories, then, as many in the footsteps of Montague Summers have done, is to ignore its narrowness of focus and step into an artificially narrowed version of vampiric history. Calmet’s real importance to criticism, I would argue, comes as a curator or collector rather than an originator of the earliest English vampire-stories: through his work we have a rich example of the threads informing and weaving the vampiric archetype in eighteenth-century England. Even so, his celebrated treatise may have had very little to do with the spread of vampires into English literature (the Arnold Paole story in the *London Journal*, for instance, predates his telling of it), and it is important to recognize the narrow band of vampire stories with which Calmet was concerned.

I have talked briefly of family resemblance within literary vampires, and while Wittgenstein’s fullest exposition of resemblance was not published until 1953,<sup>90</sup> it seems that an innate awareness of something approaching the concept, though more limited, is what governs Calmet’s criteria of selection. Although he uses the word “vampire” frequently and finds that it “signifies, they say, in Sclavonic, a leech” (31), a key term for Calmet is *revenant*, which remains untranslated in Christmas’s 1850 English edition as it entered the English lexicon only a few years earlier. As the active participle of the verb *revenir*, *les revenants* might simply be translated as “those who come back” (that the word now exists as a loanword in English should suggest the reach of Calmet’s influence on matters of undeath). The connotative meanings of *revenant* subsequently inform Calmet’s entire treatise, which focuses entirely on those monsters who have died, been buried, and now return from the grave in their original bodies:

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<sup>90</sup> This was the publication year of *Philosophical Investigations*, which most thoroughly explained the theory. Although this detailed account was published posthumously, family resemblance nevertheless played a significant role in much of the later work published during Wittgenstein’s lifetime.

vampires, which form the principal object of this dissertation, are men who have been dead a considerable time...who leave their tombs, and come and disturb the living, sucking their blood, appearing to them, making a noise at their doors and in their houses, and lastly, often causing their death. (31)

In his introductory chapter, Calmet establishes the centrality of the grave and tomb by directly comparing the return of the revenant to several other incidents of grave-rising, shroud-eating, and postmortem incorruptibility, some of which are related only peripherally to the vampiric tradition he finds in Hungary and Moravia. He begins with Biblical resurrections, citing the return of Christ and of Lazarus from their respective tombs; that he also refers to less frequently cited Biblical grave-raising and resurrections suggests that the act of return itself will become, for him, the chief concern:

The resurrection which Job so firmly expected; and that of the man who came to life on touching the body of the Prophet Elisha in his tomb; that of the child of the widow of Shunem, whom the same Elisha restored to life; that army of skeletons, whose resurrection was predicted by Ezekiel, and which in spirit he saw accomplished before his eyes...in short, all the resurrections related in the sacred books of the Old and New Testament, are manifestly miraculous effects, and attributed solely to the Almighty power of God. (33)

Calmet's conclusion to these cases, and the lesson they have to teach, is that "[n]either angels, nor demons, nor men, the holiest and most favoured of God...could by their own power restore to life a person really dead. They can do it by the power of God alone" (33). He nevertheless goes on to speak of the countless resurrections attributed to the saints, and especially to St. Stanislaus; and in the intervening chapter between Biblical and hagiographical resurrections, he also finds time to examine the seemingly miraculous revivals of those who only appear dead:

The resuscitation of some persons who were believed to be dead, and who were not so, but simply asleep, or in a lethargy; and of those who were supposed to be dead, having been drowned, and who came to life again through the care taken of them, or by medical skill, must not pass for real resuscitations; they were not dead, or were so only in appearance. (33)

The return from death and/or burial remains the chief concern of Calmet's treatise, which purports to examine the possibility (whether scientific or mystical) of resurrection by means other than the divine, "a question which appeared to me important in a religious point of view" (29). It is, we might say, the most dominant and governing "family trait" of Calmet's treatise, in the same way that parasitic hunger is the focus of Brian Frost's study, or embodied entropy of Dennison's. If we treat Calmet's work the way he seems to intend, as a discussion of the possibility of postmortem "revenge" based on supposed accounts from across Europe, it takes on a greater consistency and a theological purpose often forgotten by literary scholars (Summers among them, perhaps) who have mined it for its importance to fiction. However, if we consider the treatise in this second, purely literary manner, as a sort of "ghost-story anthology,"<sup>91</sup> Calmet's focus on revenge reveals and explains a relatively narrow set of selection criteria for the accounts he has chosen to include: the famous accounts of Arnold Paole and Peter Plogojowitz, already in wide circulation at the time of Calmet's writing, are included here, but notably absent is any mention of Elizabeth Báthory (*Báthory Erzsébet*), the infamous Hungarian countess. Following her imprisonment in 1611, legends surrounding Báthory's penchant for literal

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<sup>91</sup> It seems a bit anachronistic to describe even the Gothic chapbooks of the 1790s as "ghost story anthologies," let alone an early and religiously-centered treatise such as Calmet's. As a text inspirational of genre, however, I think the label fits, through the same manner of reasoning that allows us to classify *Robinson Crusoe* as a novel from before "the novel" itself formally existed. Whatever its *formal* genre may have been, the (sometimes reductive, sometimes pejorative) description of Calmet's treatise as a "ghost-story anthology" characterizes the predominant genre of its reception throughout much of its existence, especially through Victorian England's "vampire craze."

bloodbaths had circulated only through oral traditions, owing perhaps to a royal prohibition by Matthias II against even mentioning her name (Melton 33). By the time of Calmet's 1746 treatise, however, Báthory's story had been recovered and printed twice: first by Jesuit priest László/Ladislao Turóczy in his *Tragica Historia* of 1729,<sup>92</sup> and again in 1742, in the final volume of Matthias Bel (*Bél Mátyás*)'s monumental *Notitia Hungariae Novae Historico Geographiaca* (Farin 21). Both of these printings were widely enough received to enter Báthory's name into European legend: until at least the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, she was more infamous as a "vampiric figure" than even Vlad Țepeș, both before and after the publication of *Dracula*.<sup>93</sup> In addition, the basis of Turóczy's account on the original court records of her trial ought to have appealed to Calmet, who shows a clear preference (where possible) for stories connected to official records, especially those connected with the church. But Calmet's omission of Báthory is unsurprising, even logical, when we remember the focus of his treatise. The prevailing legend of Báthory, in which she drinks (and sometimes bathes in) the blood of her victims to maintain her youth and prolong her life, is rife with powerfully vampiric tropes—but at no point does she return from the grave or pass corporeally through the soil to do so, a process which fascinated Calmet and occupies many of his musings on the nature of vampirism. The Báthory legend's lack of this trait, itself a cornerstone of the accounts included in Calmet's treatise, renders it irrelevant to the theological question he

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<sup>92</sup> One surviving printing of the *Historia*, the only one I have personally seen, is in *Ungaria Suis Cum Regibus Compendio Data* (Trnava [modern-day Slovakia]: Societatis Jesu, 1768).

<sup>93</sup> The association of Count Dracula (at least in name) with Vlad Țepeș, properly titled Draculea or Draculya ("son of Dracul") may have originated with Stoker, but it was Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu who first discovered the vampire's tenuous connection with the historical *voivode*, in a series of studies in the early 1970s, the most important of which is probably *In Search of Dracula: A True History of Vampire Legends* (New York Graphic Society, 1972; Warner paperback, 1975). The ubiquity of Vlad's connection with Count Dracula today makes it difficult to hold in perspective how recently it came to light.

has compiled these stories to consider. Consequently, when Calmet is taken by scholars of the vampiric—first Summers, then later experts such as Christopher Frayling—as a fair sample of early vampire histories, the importance of vampiric figures such as Báthory are either undervalued or misunderstood.

Frayling's primary text on the subject, *The Vampyre: Lord Ruthven to Count Dracula*,<sup>94</sup> is perhaps one of the more successful efforts toward establishing a history of literary vampires. Of particular usefulness is an extensive annotated list in his Introduction of "[v]ampires in folklore, prose and poetry, 1687-1913" (44). The list of thirty-six vampires draws from histories, poetry, and prose fiction, covering a broad range of texts in several languages from several countries of origin. A close examination of the resulting "vampire mosaic" (44) reveals several threads which intersect with my own: through the travel-writer now identified as John Swinton, and the allusion he makes in *The Travels of Three English Gentlemen*, I have here traced the origin of the vampire "as such" in English consciousness to the *Ehre deß Hertzogthums Crain* by Slovenian baron Janez Vajkard Valvasor. Frayling appears to have arrived independently at the same conclusion: his earliest entry, under the rocky alternate spelling "Valvassor: *Ehre des Hezogtum Krains*" (44), is the same text: Frayling goes on to name Valvasor's influential vampire as Giure Grando, and identifies some of Grando's significant vampiric traits, including his preference for family members as victims and the famous need to be invited across the threshold of a home before the vampire can enter.

At the same time, the make-up of this mosaic reveals the impact of Calmet's study (and its omissions) on the perceived evolution of the vampire: although he includes

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<sup>94</sup> A slightly expanded edition of Frayling's book, here published by Victor Gollancz in 1978, was issued by Faber & Faber in 1992 under the slightly modified title *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*.

Elizabeth Báthory as an influential figure, and makes brief mention of her first print appearance in 1729, Frayling lists the date of her influence as 1865, the year she first appears in Sabine Baring-Gould's *The Book of Were-Wolves* (54). This late placement of Báthory undercuts her possible importance as an inspiration for a string of female vampires: Keats's *Lamia*, Geraldine from Coleridge's "Christabel," and Clarimonde from Gautier's "La Morte Amoureuse" all predate *The Book of Were-Wolves*, though they come well after Báthory's first appearance in the history genre. Of the major vampiresses of the Victorian age, only LeFanu's *Carmilla* comes after Baring-Gould's book; and while there is not enough hard evidence to confirm that Báthory had a formative influence on the earlier female vampires of English literature, it is a dangerous assumption of Frayling's evolutionary model-building to dismiss the possibility entirely.

Báthory occupies a similarly marginal place in Montague Summers's *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*, where she is given only a single sentence of questionable origin: "[i]n the sixteenth century there dwelt in Hungary a terrible ogress, the Countess Elisabeth Ba'thory, who for her necro-sadistic abominations was known as 'la comtesse hongroise sanguinaire'" (64). In spite of Báthory's relevance, then, to the emergence of the vampire and its movement into fiction (so many early examples of which feature female vampires of fatal beauty), she has been given short shrift by several crucial twentieth-century studies. Raymond McNally, whose *In Search of Dracula* first brought the historical voivode Vlad Țepeș back into public consciousness, was the first to focus his critical eye on Báthory in 1983, with his follow-up *Dracula Was A Woman: In Search of the Blood Countess of Transylvania*. Although the book fails, in the eyes of many

critics, to establish a link between Báthory and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*,<sup>95</sup> it remains a useful biography and reintroduces the Báthory legend to a literary study of vampirism that has largely ignored Báthory's potential contributions to it. Most critical texts before McNally's study have omitted her entirely, or have afforded her (as Summers did) only passing mention: even Frayling's text, published five years earlier than McNally's, includes Báthory only in its efforts to be comprehensive: his list does not mark her as a vampire "of special interest," a vague prestige he nevertheless extends to vampires as obscure as Catherine Larue in Ambrose Bierce's *The Death of Halpin Fraser* (1893).

The primary reasons for Báthory's exclusion from previous attempts to historicize the vampire's development are twofold and intertwined; it is my hope that they will to some extent justify this study and preface the work to come. I have here examined in brief not only a history of vampires, but a history of *studies* of the vampire; and in a few cases I have made efforts to determine the ruling principles of vampiric definition in each of those studies. Where the central criterion of Brian Frost's *Monster with a Thousand Faces* is a parasitic hunger for organic vitality, which the fictionalized Báthory (if not the historical one) came to embody completely, the criterion for the highly influential Calmet was the *revenance*, the return from the grave of a corpse, which by some unknown metaphysical process subsumes through the soil of its burial ground. In my earlier discussion of family resemblances, I observed that Dracula himself, by dint of his ability to move about in daylight or his vulnerability to conventional weapons, could be excluded from the vampiric tradition altogether if the wrong combination of vampiric "traits" became the criteria for definition. This, I think, has occurred to an extent with

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<sup>95</sup> The harshest critique of McNally's attempt to connect the two is probably from Elizabeth Miller, in her book *Dracula: Sense & Nonsense* (Southend-on-Sea, UK: Desert Island, 2006).

Báthory, omitted from the otherwise exhaustive reports of Calmet not because her legend was unavailable to him, but because she was of no concern to his primary question (that of corporeal return/revenance).

The “shock value” of the vampire, evinced by the penny dreadfuls which follow the great Romantic works of vampirism, can easily overshadow the fact that Calmet’s study was intended, at least in part, as a serious religious inquiry: his defense of the book’s theological importance cannot entirely hide its entertainment value, particularly given its success and notoriety; but I believe this defense has too often been taken as a mere tongue-in-cheek justification of a sensational anthology. Standing as it does between the genres of history and fiction, echoing both the improbable travel-diaries that preceded it and the ghost-story anthologies that would some day follow, it cannot be forgotten that Calmet’s work, so often described as a “treatise” without further thought to the implications of that word, occupies a third genre of sorts. By juxtaposing a series of sinister, supposedly historical resurrections with examples from Scripture, Calmet is performing something akin to an exegesis of the vampiric histories; and owing to the scope and significance of his treatise, elements of this primarily theological study have since come to influence the approaches and the most significant texts of future vampiric theorists.

That Calmet remains for many scholars the most important collector and presenter of early vampire histories in Western Europe may a bit misleading in relation to the secularization narrative. As a French Benedictine monk, Calmet is somewhat a member of an “old guard” of religious thinkers, especially in relation to the emerging currents of thought in England during his lifetime. We must not forget that his most productive years

overlapped with those of David Hume, who was busy founding, during this period in England and Scotland, what Taylor defines as an “ethic of purely immanent human good” against which

all striving for something beyond this, be it monasticism, or the life of contemplation, be it Franciscan spirituality or Wesleyan dedication, everything which took us out of the path of ordinary human enjoyments and productive activity, seemed a threat to the good life, and was condemned under the names of “fanaticism” or “enthusiasm”. Hume distinguishes the genuine virtues (which are qualities useful to others and to oneself) from the “monkish virtues” (“celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude”), which contribute nothing to, even detract from human welfare. (*A Secular Age* 263)

Naturally, these new ideas and the momentum they bring to secularization took time to reach “full steam” within the English social imaginary; although Hume and Calmet were contemporaries, the full impact of Hume’s writing was not felt during Calmet’s lifetime. But in a more general sense, the changes which enable Hume’s writing on religion and morality were well underway. Thinkers as central to Taylor’s model of “Providential Deism” as John Locke and Matthew Tindal had come and gone, and the landscape of belief was certainly moving towards a modern moral order.

One of Taylor’s general definitions of secularization is as “a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace” (3). While this was not fully realized in Calmet’s time, even in England, there were by this time a number of possible variants of belief, spurred by religious reform and the rise of new and more secular schools of philosophy. If belief in God (as opposed to its opposite, an absolute atheism) was not yet transformed from a necessity into an option, at the very

least the *kind* of belief evinced by Calmet had undergone this transformation in England: it was a kind Taylor might describe as “an option, and in some sense an embattled option” (3). Generally speaking, a divide existed between the kind of belief that governs Calmet’s relationship to the supernatural and the kind of belief possessed by his readers in England—and even this is assuming as Calmet’s audience the readers of the 1759 translation. By the time of Henry Christmas’s 1850 translation, the divide would be even more pronounced; in light of the wildly different kinds of belief evinced by Calmet and his later, mid-Victorian, English-speaking audience, it should come as no surprise that his *Dissertation* has been read as a sort of early vampire-story anthology rather than a religious inquiry into principles and possibilities of revenance (which is, to say, resurrection of a profane order).

Even if these different orders of belief introduce a discrepancy of understanding between Calmet and his readers, I hesitate to conclude that Calmet has been misread. For one thing, he *is* an anthologist of vampire stories that English audiences will come to read for entertainment. For another, though, the spirit of dialogue, or perhaps of “cross-pressure” (Taylor, *A Secular Age* 302), between kinds of belief is part of what has made this central period such an active and dynamic one within both literature and the secularization process. Misinterpretation has been in many cases an important catalyst for invention, and it may be so here. In any case, the transition of the vampire from history to fiction and poetry may have much to do with a transition in the way such histories were read. The last of the vampire “true histories” from writers like Calmet may form, in a sense, the first of the vampire fictions, at least in the changing eye of their reader. As I turn now to the first English vampire stories *intended* as fiction (and these are all, in a

sense, modern texts), it is worth keeping in mind that the secularization whose effects I hope to chart within them has already had a hand in their development in the way that their antecedents have been written, transmitted, and especially received.

## Chapter 4: Modern Identities in “Christabel”

### 4.1 “Lean and Old and Foul of Hue”: The Transformations of Geraldine

Throughout the Romantic era, the transformations of the vampire are deeply interconnected with a poetics of fragmentation which bears some examination. The device of the fragmented manuscript, the uncanny tale which earns its terrible ambiguity by dint of its physical or textual incompleteness rather than (or in addition to) any obtenebration within the text itself, is already a familiar one—so much so, that when the narrative of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* coalesces from a jumble of manuscript journals, diaries, private letters, even early sound recordings, the vehicle reads intuitively, feels somehow appropriate to an archetype whose unearthed body is in some ways a parallel to the dredged-up manuscript.

The whole of vampire literature bears many serendipitous connections to this: on the most recent end of the scale, Anne Rice’s 1976 novel *Interview With The Vampire* and even L. J. Smith’s popular young-adult *Vampire Diaries* series play with notions of unearthed or “lost” stories: Rice’s tape interviews with her vampire Lestat and Smith’s teenage diary entries echo Stoker’s *Dracula* most directly—specifically, the phonographic records of Dr. Seward’s interviews with Renfield and the diaries of Mina and Lucy—but on a larger scale, they participate in the tradition of the fragmented manuscript that has intertwined with vampire stories from the start. Correspondingly, in unearthing the conclusion to the Aikins’ “Sir Bertrand”—perhaps one of the most famous

Gothic fragments—I should not have been surprised to find in *Almanzor* a few traits of the vampire, as the fragmented form seems especially well suited to these figures even when they do not reveal themselves as outwardly vampiric. Byron’s *The Giaour*, itself a triumph of the Romantic poetics of fragmentation, becomes one of the most influential vampire-texts, even while the poem’s fragmentation and the things it leaves unsaid obscure the vampiric aspects of the Byronic hero and call them into doubt. But in spite of Byron’s gift for the fragment, and in spite of the growing sophistication with which the Gothic device of the unearthed manuscript is wielded throughout the Romantic era, the most influential vampire in Romantic poetry appears in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Christabel,” whose fragmentary form is much more than an aesthetic conceit.

The fragment was started by Coleridge in the year 1797, and by some accounts its incompleteness plagued him to the end of his career. That Coleridge wanted to complete “Christabel” is well-documented:<sup>96</sup> he declares himself in the “Preface” to its 1816 publication that

In my very first conception of the tale, I had the whole present to my mind, with the wholeness, no less than the liveliness of a vision; I trust that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year. (“Preface” 66)

This, of course, never comes to pass; seventeen years later, in *Table Talk*,<sup>97</sup> Coleridge observes more defensively that

[t]he reason of my not finishing Christabel is not, that I don’t know how to do it—for I have, as I always had, the

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<sup>96</sup> The existence of a promising but ultimately dubious three-hundred word summary of the poem’s proposed conclusion, published in Gillman’s *Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* in 1838, ensures that the ongoing debate is less about *whether*, and more about *how*, Coleridge intended to conclude the tale. B.R. McElderry’s 1936 article, “Coleridge’s Plan For Completing ‘Christabel,’” remains today one of the more balanced defenses of the summary’s credibility.

<sup>97</sup> The editor of *Table Talk*, the poet Thomas Ashe, dates this comment to 6 July 1833.

whole plan entire from beginning to end in my mind; but I  
fear I could not carry on with equal success the execution  
of the idea, an extremely subtle and difficult one. (241)

So we have, in “Christabel,” a fragment which does not merely *suggest* a complete referent as a sort of stylistic device (as in the Aikins’ original “Sir Bertrand,” Byron’s *Giaour*, and perhaps even Coleridge’s own *Kubla Khan*). Instead, it *represents* a complete referent of sorts, a narrative which is real and whole, at least in Coleridge’s mind, though perhaps never committed to manuscript. The effect is a poem whose relationships to its subjects, themes, and contexts are notoriously inchoate: the intentions of Coleridge’s fragment, we might say, are a mystery, whereas Byron’s fragment simply intends to be mysterious.

The kind of ambiguity this creates makes the poem’s relationship to the vampires of “true historie” more tentative, and reinforces the importance of sorting out that relationship before moving on. The prevailing image of “Christabel” is one of a transgressive and homoerotic “vampire poem,” but this opinion is not uncontested. Even the argument that the poem is about a vampire is not even particularly old in criticism: it originates with Arthur H. Nethercot’s *The Road to Tryermaine*, first published in 1939, and has met with some resistance. For his part, Nethercot establishes very specific links between Coleridge and vampiric tradition; the strongest of these is the story of Arnold Paole, which he asserts Coleridge happened onto through Calmet, and more indirectly through *Thalaba the Destroyer*, whose repetition of the Arnold Paole story (and several others) in its footnotes has probably done more to fire the late-Romantic vampire craze than Oneiza’s brief period of vampirism in the poem ever did:

Bulwarking the entire passage [of Oneiza’s vampire episode] and solidly filling the lower halves of several

pages is Southey's detailed and extensive explanatory footnote, citing his authorities and recounting the most famous of the vampire stories with which he was familiar. Here again appear the *Letters juives* of D'Argens, the account by Tournefort, the history of Arnold Paul, the story of the vampires at Gradisch, and many similar collectanea. (Nethercot 72)

The phrase "here again appear..." suggests that Nethercot is aware of the sometimes circuitous travels of the vampire histories, and of the possibility that in citing Calmet and *Thalaba* as Coleridge's most probable sources of exposure to the Arnold Paole story and others, he is really citing the same thread of influence twice: once in Calmet directly, and once in Calmet by way of Southey. Of these, Nethercot makes the case for a relationship with *Thalaba* best, by drawing a series of telling links and resonances from a close reading of "Christabel" and *Thalaba*, and also from biographical information which shows just how deeply the two were intertwined as friends, writers, and especially readers of the same material:

Is it likely that Southey would be acquainted with all this material while his intimate friend and adviser was not? For many months the two men had used the same library at Bristol, often signing one another's names for books they had borrowed. They read together, talked together, and wrote together. Why should not Oneiza in *Thalaba* and Geraldine in "Christabel" have been born of the same seed? It would be typical of Southey's talent to label his character a vampire; it would be just as typical of Coleridge's genius not to label his at all. (72-3)

On the matter of having read Calmet, Nethercot plays his own devil's advocate when he admits that Coleridge's French was poor (66-7), but we have an answer to this in the new knowledge that Calmet's treatise was available in English as early as 1759.<sup>98</sup> Nethercot

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<sup>98</sup> See Lewis Spence's *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* (II 960), and my comments on the 1759 Calmet translation on page 129.

finds “no inherent improbability in Coleridge’s having got access to Calmet somehow” (67), and the existence of an English text in his lifetime, well before the 1850 Henry Christmas translation, provides a reasonable explanation for how this might have occurred.

In a more recent article arguing for an earlier draft of “Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” not “Christabel,” as vampire-poem, James Twitchell lays out in exacting detail precisely what is known and what is suspected about Coleridge’s access to vampire lore:

we know that on April 20, 1798, Coleridge checked out Volume II of the *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester*. It is not known but suspected that he also leafed through Volume III[...]because by December 31, 1796, he seems to have read an article on animal vitality that appears in this volume. And if he did this, he probably read the preceding article by John Ferriar, “On Popular Illusions and Particularly of Medical Demonology”[...]near the end of Ferriar’s compendious treatment of spirit life he devotes seven pages to the vampire, seven pages that condense the work of Voltaire (one of Coleridge’s early favorites) and Dom Calmet[...]given Coleridge’s desire to track down sources, he probably read both Voltaire and Calmet in the original. (“Rime” 22)

Even if Twitchell’s detective-work here is somewhat stumped by Coleridge’s evident difficulty with French, the existence of a 1759 translation of Calmet makes his claim all the more reasonable. It was certainly more obscure than the 1850 Christmas translation, which rode a Victorian vampire craze to far greater success; but obscurity has never kept Coleridge from chasing down original sources before.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> In their voluminous edition of Coleridge’s notebooks, Coburn et al. demonstrate this by spending great lengths tracking down Coleridge’s sources for extraordinarily obscure reading. On Coleridge’s knowledge of the *Shahnameh*, an 11<sup>th</sup>-century Persian epic of 50,000 couplets by poet Hakīm Abu'l-Qāsim Ferdowsī Tūsī (مہدی کح مس اقل ل اوبا یس و در ف یس و ت), the editors suggest he may have consulted *Roostum Zaboolae and Soohrab* tr W.T. Robertson (Calcutta 1829), but was more likely to have read the German translation by J. Görres (1820). There are treatments of Firdausi in Sir William Jones’s *Perseos Asiaticae commentariorum libri sex* (1774) which includes several abstracts from the Shah Nameh translated into Latin, Sir William

Ultimately, whether or not Southey and Coleridge shared the same source-material, Nethercot observes that Coleridge has not explicitly framed Geraldine as a vampire: like Keats's Belle Dame Sans Merci, she exists in a vague state of supernature which is informed primarily by Celtic fairy traditions. Perhaps there is a Slavic element at work here too, but unlike Southey's painfully clear demarcation of Oneiza, we are left to determine what signs of the vampire appear—and significantly, do not appear—to be read. This is ultimately, again, a matter best addressed by applying Wittgenstein's model of family resemblance, by judging Geraldine (and, I will suggest, Christabel too) on the preponderance of vampiric traits, a spectral<sup>100</sup> approach which avoids the pitfalls of the systems of absolutes which have sought to characterize Geraldine as entirely a vampire, or not a vampire at all.

The most extreme reaction to Nethercot's study, and a typical example of this sort of absolute system, is probably "The Quantock *Christabel*," in which John Adlard painstakingly charts the poem's debt to the supernatural folklore of the Quantock Hills region of Somerset, and offers a counter-proposal of Geraldine as fairy or goblin queen rather than vampire. The fairy elements are there, certainly, and Adlard does well to track them to the Quantock Hills and catalogue them so fastidiously. But he seems to offer an exclusive alternative to the vampiric Geraldine, rather than entertaining any idea of hybridity—suggesting another tradition for her, in effect, without provision for the

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Ouseley's *Persian Miscellanies* (1795), and the introduction to Turner Macan's edition of the poem in Persian, *The Shah Nameh: An Heroic Poem...By Abool Kasim Firdousee* (4 vols Calcutta 1829). (6130n; no page given). Indeed, there are few limits to the extent of arcane research that could be conducted into Coleridge's wide-ranging and eccentric reading habits; the sources given in this example alone suggest his tracking down of the 1759 Calmet translation is perfectly feasible, especially given his close working relationship with Robert Southey during the time of *Thalaba*.

<sup>100</sup> Although the pun on "spectre" is convenient here, I mean to suggest a spectrum, a variable continuum between the polar constructions of Geraldine as strictly "vampire" or "not-vampire," and a helpful alternative to such binary judgments.

possibility that she might be capable of participating in both. Adlard's rejection of Geraldine's vampirism hinges on a singular familial trait of the vampire, of which he sees no sign in "Christabel":

Professor Nethercot seems to have thrown his own beautiful and many-colored veil over his version of Geraldine. One important point is evaded. Vampires suck blood; it is their outstanding characteristic. Geraldine is nowhere seen, or reported, to suck blood; her vampirism, then, is less obvious than Professor Nethercot would have us think. (235)

Were it not for Twitchell's exhaustive study of Coleridge's vampiric influences and sources for both "Christabel" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Adlard's observation might seem at first a valid one. Even if there is evidence of bloodsucking to be had, as I am about to suggest there is, it does not reveal itself without prolonged effort—and it does separate Geraldine, in a sense, from the company of the later, more explicit bloodsuckers (Ruthven, Dracula, even Byron's nameless Giaour). But whether it amounts, as Adlard claims later in *Folklore*, to "demolishing A.H. Nethercot's theory that Geraldine is a vampire" (108) is another matter entirely, and here I am less convinced. If we accept that bloodsucking is, for Adlard, the vampire's singular outstanding characteristic, we must conversely accept that for Calmet, who informs Coleridge both directly and indirectly through Southey, the vampire's outstanding characteristic is bodily return from the grave. Many of Calmet's fatal vampires are stranglers rather than bloodsuckers: in his account of Charles Ferdinand de Schertz's *Magia Posthuma* (1706), the villagers report a vampire "grasping their throats, and compressing their stomachs, so as to suffocate them" (46). A vampire in Bohemia "alarmed several persons, and strangled more amongst them" (47), and another does not kill at all, but "appears in the

night to his son, asks for something to eat, eats, and disappears” (57). So bloodsucking in Calmet is widespread, but not universal, and Adlard is reading backwards onto “Christabel” a trait which achieves its centrality some time later—perhaps after Polidori’s *The Vampyre*—and has concluded by its absence that no element of vampirism at all informs the narrative.

That we are missing a single trait of family resemblance here, even a central one, should not dissuade us. Observing Coleridge’s debt to Somerset fairy lore can be said to offer an alternative reading; but it also gives rise to commonalities between English folklore and the comparatively unfamiliar vampire lore of eastern Europe. When Geraldine famously swoons at the gate to Leoline’s castle, and must be carried across the threshold, Adlard finds that “Geraldine’s difficulty was probably due to the magic power of iron” (“Quantock” 234). Indeed, Coleridge earlier describes Leoline’s gate as “ironed within and without” (l.127); but the vampire who must be invited over the threshold is an equally common theme—and it may be that both forces are at work here, and that Coleridge is relying on one tradition to feed the other or render it intelligible to readers who might otherwise be unfamiliar with it.

On the matter of bloodsucking, we have also the fragmentary nature of the poem to consider. Aside from the fragment’s abrupt end, we have in the bed-sharing of Geraldine and Christabel a not-unexpected “fade to black” which, though it obscures for reasons of taste the pornographic details of the encounter, may obscure a good deal more:

A star hath set, a star hath risen,  
 O Geraldine! since arms of thine  
 Have been the lovely lady’s prison.  
 O Geraldine! One hour was thine—  
 Thou’st had thy will! By tairn and rill,  
 The night-birds all that hour were still. (ll.302-8)

In the context of the bedroom episode, the “will” of Geraldine seems clear: what, if not a sexual transgression, has transpired in that hour? Christabel’s first words on waking, “Sure I have sinned!” (l. 381), seem to reinforce this. But rising from her bed, she “quickly arrayed /her maiden limbs” (ll.387-8), which is a curious choice of language in the wake of sexual transgression. The word “maiden” carries with it connotations of virginity; did readers of the time consider lesbianism a violation of that chastity? Various sources of evidence suggest they did not: the titular heroine of the notoriously lascivious erotic novel *Fanny Hill*, printed in 1748, is still described as both “maiden” and “virgin” after her lesbian sexual awakening. Jennifer Drouin likewise writes that

for the most part, chastity [in early modern Europe] did not signify abstinence from all erotic activity but merely abstinence from extramarital, penetrative sex, since what was at stake was procreation, the legitimacy of heirs, and the traffic of women’s bodies as a property within a kinship system[...]since most early modern medical and travel writing reveals a certain ignorance of what exactly two women’s bodies could get up to together, and since same-sex eroticism presents no threat of an illegitimate pregnancy that could disrupt patriarchal kinship, intimate friendships and even erotic relationships between women tended to appear innocent. (86)

In many ways, the issue of Christabel’s maidenhood is unresolvable—meaning that we are free to loosely interpret the precise nature of what happened during the fatal hour. Might the sex act have been not only conflated, but combined with the vampiric act of feeding? Coleridge’s framing language is certainly suggestive of sex acts we cannot see—but I think it highly suggestive of the vampiric act as well. In particular, we have a strong clue in the parallel, voyeuristic images of Geraldine’s robing and disrobing: in the morning as Geraldine dresses, “(so it seemed) her girded vests /Grew tight beneath her

heaving breasts” (ll. 379-80) as Christabel looks on. The lines at first seem typical of Christabel’s newfound sexual gaze, perhaps signifying a loss of her innocence. But there has been a physical change of state here, a transformation of Geraldine obscured by the transformations of Coleridge’s poem itself. On the previous night, Geraldine is hardly so voluptuous: H. J. Jackson, the Oxford editor of Coleridge’s works, finds a telling line from a manuscript copy of “Christabel”<sup>101</sup> which forms an interesting contrast to the “heaving breasts” (I have restored the line here):

Like one that shuddered , she unbound  
 The cincture from beneath her breast:  
 Her silken robe, and inner vest,  
 Dropt to her feet, and full in view,  
 Behold! her bosom and half her side—  
 [Are lean and old and foul of hue]  
 A sight to dream of, not to tell!  
 O shield her! shield sweet Christabel! (ll. 248-54, with insertion)

In Jack Stillinger’s exhaustive manuscript-and-print study, *Coleridge and Textual Instability*, the missing line merits a few speculative explanations:

The manuscripts’ line describing Geraldine’s bosom and side at 252/253[...]never got into print, and consequently readers of *1816* and later texts never knew for sure what Christabel saw when Geraldine removed her robe and vest (they could have been quite misled by the reference to Geraldine’s “heaving breasts” in 380). Perhaps Coleridge decided that the image was too horrible; perhaps, on the contrary, he deleted the line in order to heighten the terror, allowing each reader to imagine something even worse in its absence[...]the deletion, however, left two consecutive unrhymed lines in the paragraph (251-52), and a different kind of decorum may have been at work when Coleridge inserted another rhyming line—“It was dark and rough as the Sea Wolf’s hide”—in one of the annotated copies of *1816* (CoS 62). (88-9)

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<sup>101</sup> See Jackson’s note to “Christabel” on p. 701 of Coleridge’s *Major Works*.

In many ways (not only textually, despite the wide number of MS variations), “Christabel” is a poem of transformations: whatever Coleridge’s reasoning for deleting the line, we now have two parallel images of Geraldine’s body and especially her breast, which is withered and ugly prior to the mysterious hour, and glutted to fullness on the following morning. Coleridge’s fondness for opposing and even contradictory images is nowhere more pronounced than in Geraldine’s radically contrary body, but in a vampiric reading of Geraldine, rather than serving as an unresolved error of continuity, these descriptions detail a transformation of form—and in many ways, a transformation of role and meaning along with it.

It was Karen Swann who observed that “the first questions Christabel asks Geraldine refer to identity and origins: ‘who art thou?’ and ‘how camest thou here?’” (533).<sup>102</sup> Behind these seemingly simple questions is a complicated and fluid answer, rendered doubly ambivalent by its ironic contrast with the extremely simplified narrative of Geraldine’s self-construction. Her stock tale of virtue in distress,<sup>103</sup> told in Gothic form and with characteristically Gothic language, “presents sexual and moral categories as unambiguous and distinct” (Swann 534); so too does it represent Geraldine’s identity in an oversimplified frame which Swann suggests was meant to be viewed as ironic: “for any absorbed reader of circulating library romances,” she writes, “Geraldine’s story of abduction works as a seduction—Christabel recognizes Geraldine as a certain type of heroine and embraces her” (534).

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<sup>102</sup> Christabel’s two questions appear in ll. 70 and 76 respectively.

<sup>103</sup> My terminology here is a conscious evocation of R. F. Brissenden’s *Virtue in Distress* (1974), which remains an authoritative study on sentimental literature in spite of its age.

Patricia Adair, whose study<sup>104</sup> Swann references, further suggests that Geraldine's story is intentionally told in "unconvincing and second-rate verse which was, no doubt, deliberately meant to sound false" (146). The inherent falseness of the story and its implications are lost on poor, innocent, Christabel, however: Jerrold Hogle's observation that the Gothic is "continuously based on ghostings of the already spectral" ("Gothic Ghost" 498) seems a prophetic reading of the already-ghostly Geraldine's efforts to further counterfeit herself, and might have saved her—except that Christabel further lacks the ability to recognize a Gothic story when she hears one. To extend some of Hogle's language to the understanding gap in "Christabel," we might say that Gothic stories like Geraldine's, particularly this long after the effulgence of Gothic fiction, are *meant* to be first understood as the counterfeits they are, and then pleurably read (as in Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, for instance) with a similarly counterfeit credulity. Christabel's mistake here, like Catherine Morland's in *Northanger Abbey*, is that her credulity is genuine.

Both Adair and Swann agree that the story rings false, that it engages with a sort of irony, and both credit the early audiences of "Christabel" with enough good sense and literary understanding to recognize the ruse. The two disagree, however, on the ultimate purpose of this counterfeit story. For Adair, at least in Swann's corrective reading, "Geraldine is betrayed by her very conventionality" (Swann 534): the patent falseness of her story is meant to reveal her sinister and wicked nature. In short, she has painted herself as such a laughably two-dimensional figure of sentimental virtue that we can only recognize her as deceptive villain. The abduction-story thus functions as a tool of

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<sup>104</sup> *The Waking Dream: A Study of Coleridge's Poetry* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967).

dramatic irony, a Shakespearean disguise which is really more sign than substance. In *Disguise on the Early Modern English Stage*, Peter Hyland observes that “as a general though not absolute rule, disguise had to be entirely opaque to characters on the stage and entirely transparent to the audience” (42). This stock device of the Elizabethan stage is the same coded principle on which Superman’s highly unconvincing Clark Kent disguise operates today; and for Patricia Adair, this is the principle on which Geraldine’s unconvincing story operates as well.

For Karen Swann, on the other hand, the obvious simplicity of Geraldine’s gothic-heroine story should be taken as an ironic marker not of a contrasting simplicity—that Geraldine is a wicked predator rather than a virtuous victim—but of a complex figure whose many and deeply nuanced dimensions stand in contrast to the gothic story. To summarize this relationship more simply, we might say that both critics accord special importance to the question “who are you?” and to Geraldine’s fraudulent self-definition as a simple and good woman. For Adair, we might say, the operative irony is that Geraldine self-identifies as *good*—and for Swann, that she self-identifies as *simple*.

In light of Swann’s complication of Geraldine, the binary question debated by Nethercot and Adlard, the question of whether or not she is a vampire, seems a dangerous simplification of the question of identity. It is one thing to find in the transformation of her body convincing evidence of her vampirism, and quite another to connect the vampirism of “Christabel” through these transformations to a more complete picture of all the identities at work. To speak of Geraldine as a vampire, in the same terms we might speak of Polidori’s Lord Ruthven, for instance, imposes a degree of simplicity on her that is both undeserved and of little analytical use: it is in the context of the shifting roles of

Christabel/Geraldine as good/evil mother, child, predator, prey, endangered virgin, lover, fairy, and ghost that the poem's vampirism asserts itself. I hope as we move on here that these myriad aspects will be better illuminated, not obscured, by the focus on vampirism.

To return to Geraldine's miraculous transforming breast, then—that symbol which seems at first to mark her not vampirically, but as both a nurturing mother and sexualized lover (or perhaps the reverse, a nurturing lover and sexualized mother)—we have an intricate crossroads at which feminine identities (beyond that of a simple succubus) are intertwined with the superstition and malady of vampirism, justifying Swann's reading of Geraldine as a personification of "hysteria," with all its etymological connotations<sup>105</sup> and in all its variable and contentious definitions.

In Calmet's treatise, there are an abundance of vampires who, when exhumed, are supposedly found full and sometimes bloated from the blood of their victims. As Adlard has observed, we never see the vampiric act of blood-sucking. We do, however, have the contrasting images of Geraldine's transforming body, first withered and foul, then full and heaving, which bookend a period whose events are left to the imagination. The bloating of flesh here, which in Calmet is clearly meant to be repugnant, is figured as a restoration of Geraldine's natural and healthy appearance, presenting not only a freshly sexualized body but a motherly one. As a symbol of motherhood, however, the swelling of Geraldine's breast is an ambivalent marker: it signifies not only a mother-figure ready to nourish her child, but a child whose fluids have nourished the mother.

This vampiric reversal of nourishment complicates Geraldine's already complex role as a false or surrogate mother by suggesting that Christabel is, in a parallel sense, a

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<sup>105</sup> That is, from the Greek *ύστέρα*, or womb.

surrogate mother to Geraldine. By reading these many roles as transformative rather than cumulative—that is, by suggesting that they come and go, changing hands rather than simply overlapping—we might suggest that the physical change signals a shift, either in the form of the mother-role’s migration, or in the nature of the mother-roles themselves. In places, Geraldine mirrors Christabel’s departed mother; in others, the outside presence of that mother is all that opposes her; and now, in the vampiric act of feeding, we have Geraldine as hungry child as well.

We might well be forgiven, in this busy context, for losing our way amid the powerful and sometimes contrary images of motherhood, which establish a powerful maternal image of Geraldine only to contradict it explicitly. As the poem opens, the old mastiff howls at some ghostly apparition of Christabel’s departed mother, though the narrator is quick to frame the moment as hearsay: “*Some say,*” he writes noncommittally, “she sees my lady’s shroud” (l. 13, my emphasis). She reacts again later, in her sleep, at the approach of Geraldine:

The mastiff old did not awake,  
 Yet she an angry moan did make!  
 And what can ail the mastiff bitch?  
 Never till now she uttered yell  
 Beneath the eye of Christabel. (l.144-50)

Christabel seems to forget here (and perhaps the poem does too) the clockwork regularity with which the mastiff howls earlier, “Four for the quarters, twelve for the hour; /Ever and aye, by shine and shower” (ll. 10-11)—and so perhaps, too, the relationship between the dog’s response to Geraldine and to the mother’s shroud are unintentional. But we have looked too carefully at some of the poem’s contradictions to write off the mastiff’s contradictions as an error. The kinship between Geraldine and Christabel’s mother

returns in a curious moment of sympathy with Christabel's maternal longing, suggesting an identification with Christabel's mother that borders on dramatic irony:

O mother dear! that thou wert here!  
I would, said Geraldine, she were! (ll. 201-2)

The line may suggest that Geraldine is conflicted, that a part of her wishes for the interference of Geraldine's mother—that her own parallel affection for Christabel is such that she wishes to be stopped. But it also conjures shades of Odysseus returning home in disguise. It is ironic not only in the possibility that a ghostly mother-figure might be present in Geraldine, but that her mother's presence (if in the tradition of the returning vampire) might prove fatal rather than restorative to her shattered family. Ultimately, though, we do not have time to follow this thread of inquiry for long: immediately after, “with altered voice” (l.203), Geraldine directly addresses Christabel's wandering mother, banishing her from her post as spiritual guardian.<sup>106</sup> We can no longer believe in the face of this explicit admonishment that Geraldine is Christabel's mother—yet even against the current of these facts, the poem continues to tease us throughout by describing Geraldine in powerfully maternal terms as she “holds the maiden in her arms, /Seems to slumber still and mild, /As a mother with her child” (ll. 299-301).

James Twitchell has observed the same maternal tensions, and suggests in passing (though he does not follow the idea far) the intriguing possibility that Christabel has, in a sense, two mothers:

Leoline is Christabel's father, but he seems to be enthralled  
by Geraldine, who, as she becomes his “lover,” becomes by

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<sup>106</sup> Karen Swann reads the sudden change as an indicator of hysteria, couching both the feminine politics of the poem and the struggle between supernatural forces within the quasi-medical nineteenth-century discourse on hysteria. See Swann's “‘Christabel’: The Wandering Mother and the Enigma of Form” (*Studies in Romanticism* 23.4 [Winter 1984]: 533-53).

extension “mother” to Christabel. Christabel has behaved with Geraldine like a “lover” and she has also slept with her “like a child.” This ambiguity about roles is not ours alone[...]Leoline and Christabel proceed to react to Geraldine as if she were exactly what we have been assured she is not: Christabel’s mother and Leoline’s wife. No wonder Christabel’s mind is falling apart[...][b]y the end things are so topsy-turvy that Christabel calls on the good mother to redress the wrongs committed by the evil mother: “By my mother’s soul do I entreat/ That thou this woman send away!” (ll. 616-17). But it is clearly too late.

Christabel is in a sense having it both ways, and so is Coleridge. (47)

Twitchell’s evocative image of “good” and “evil” mothers has the potential to change radically the landscape of the poem: we are nominally left, in the conclusion to Part II, with a moral battle about to unfold between a newly-awakened Christabel and Geraldine, with the life of Christabel’s bewitched father hanging in the balance. The two women are foils for one another, and are typically the primary pair contrasted in the poem. But the idea of two mothers, and in particular of two undead mothers, suggests a reading in which the major conflict of the poem is set between the vampiric Geraldine and Christabel’s ghostly mother, with Christabel’s soul figured as both the prize and the battleground of the conflict.

When Leoline misreads the patently obvious identity of his own daughter in Bard Bracy’s prophetic dream, the waters of identity are further muddied. By describing with extreme specificity “that dove, /That gentle bird whom thou dost love, /And call’st by thy own daughter’s name” (ll. 531-3), it seems that Bracy is for a moment offering us an absolute clarity of identity. If Swann’s article, and her comments on the ironic simplicity of Geraldine’s Gothic-heroine self-construction, had not warned us against the dangers of perceiving simplified identities in the poem, we could easily say that the bird is obviously

Christabel. The predator coiled around her is naturally Geraldine. The animal-image itself, of the quivering bird before the hypnotic snake, is so rife with vampiric baggage (especially in the context of other Romantic-era “vampire poems”) that we must pause to unpack it all before drawing conclusions about what it means for Geraldine’s identity—or Christabel’s.

To the early nineteenth-century reader, the hypnotic power of the serpent’s eye to transfix its prey is less a matter of poetic license, and more one of scientific fact. As late as 1852, Samuel Maunders’s *Treasury of Natural History* claims that

[w]hatever may be the nature of this power, it is certain that its effects on the little animals are irresistible. When the piercing eye of the Rattlesnake is fixed on them, terror and amazement render them incapable of escaping; and, while involuntarily keeping their eyes fixed on those of the reptile, birds have been seen to drop into its mouth, as if paralyzed, squirrels descend from their trees, and leverets run into the jaws of the expecting devourer. (565)

This description, and the many related cultural myths surrounding the snake’s gaze,<sup>107</sup> may owe something, zoologically speaking, to the fact that snakes’ brilles, or fused eyelids, replace the need and ability to blink. As a polymath fascinated not only by

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<sup>107</sup> The reputation of the snake as a creature of hypnotically persuasive deception dates back millenia, and not exclusively in Judaeo-Christian cultures informed by the serpent of Genesis. David Shulman’s “The Serpent and the Sacrifice” describes an ancient myth in Tamil India, wherein a battle of “evil eye meets evil eye” is figured in the form of “the serpent’s poison gaze” (123), though he is also quick to write:

The poisonous glance is[...]common to all great sages in Indian literature, not only to serpent-sages, but there are other reasons as well for regarding the Tiruvārūr myth as an instance of the motif of snake fighting snake. (123).

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the Disney animated film *Robin Hood* (1973), retold by anthropomorphized animals in a manner which yokes the English legend with the Old French animal-fabliaux in the tradition of the *Roman de Renart*. Here the snake, Sir Hiss, is attributed a strange hypnotic gaze (the only supernatural effect in the entire film) without any explanation—a sign, perhaps, of how deeply-entrenched the trope remains today.

natural history and zoology, but also by mesmerism,<sup>108</sup> Coleridge would almost certainly have been familiar with the idea, even if we did not have evidence to suggest it was already in wide circulation.<sup>109</sup> In any case, the image was already well-known by the time the last piece of “Christabel” appeared in print in 1816: Lord Byron’s *The Giaour*, published in 1813 and a massively popular work on the heels of the first cantos of *Childe Harold*, had already brought the image into the public eye:

Oft will his glance the gazer rue—  
 For in it lurks that nameless spell  
 Which speaks—itsself unspeakable—  
 A spirit yet unquelled and high  
 That claims and keeps ascendancy,  
 And like the bird whose pinions quake—  
 But cannot fly the gazing snake—  
 Will others quail beneath his look,  
 Nor ’scape the glance they scarce can brook. (ll. 837-45)

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<sup>108</sup> The German physician Franz Mesmer (1734-1815), whose name is immortalized in the word “mesmerize” as synonymous with hypnotism, was a respected authority on the metaphysics of animal magnetism during the writing of both “Christabel” and “The Giaour.” Mesmer and his animal magnetism were of special interest to Coleridge; for further information, I would recommend Tim Fulford’s “Conducting the Vital Fluid: The Politics and Poetics of Mesmerism in the 1790s” (*Studies in Romanticism* 43.1 [Spring 2004]: 57-78). My work on the mesmerizing, vampiric snake-image is best read in the shadow of Fulford’s article. Even his title, “Conducting the Vital Fluid,” suggests a wealth of untapped connections to vampirism that would reward further study.

<sup>109</sup> There is, in fact, convincing evidence that the idea was a well-known one in circles of zoology and natural philosophy by the first decade of the nineteenth century. In an 1808 letter, William Darlington, a Pennsylvania physician, writes:

Dr. Hugh Williamson has expressed his belief, “that serpents have the power of taking their prey by a process which has been called Fascination.” The Doctor does not, indeed, attribute this faculty to any magical or supernatural influence which the serpent possesses; but ascribes it to the stupifying, or dementing effect of the *fear* which the presence of that animal creates. This explanation is certainly ingenious, and infinitely more plausible than the old obsolete stories about *charming*, which many people formerly seemed fond of believing; apparently, because the supposed process was marvellous, and totally incomprehensible. (258)

Darlington’s outline of what were considered “old obsolete stories” in 1808, as well as recent medical research on the subject, suggests not only that the fascinating gaze of the serpent was already by this time a well-established belief, but that it was still being seriously considered by scientists of the sort Coleridge would have read.

There is more to say about *The Giaour* and its animal imagery, and I will return to it in the pages to come. For now, it is enough to note that of only two canonical vampire-poems published between 1810 and 1820, both contain the same image to the same effect. The pairing might still be carelessly written off as coincidence, were it not for Caroline Lamb, Byron's former lover, who pilloried Byron in the scathing novel *Glenarvon* using the same ophidian image, further enshrining it into the vampire mythos:

The eye of the rattle-snake, it has been said, once fixed  
upon its victim, overpowers it with terror and alarm: the  
bird, thus charmed, dares not attempt its escape; it sings its  
last sweet lay; flutters its little pinions in the air; then falls  
like a shot before its destroyer, unable to fly from his  
fascination. (Lamb 133)

The language of Lamb's passage, and in particular the idiosyncratic Byronism "pinions,"<sup>110</sup> leave little doubt as to her source for the image. That she uses it to describe Lord Ruthven, who shares his name and more than a few mannerisms with the monster of Polidori's "The Vampire," is noteworthy because the image now connects the three most prominent vampire texts of the Romantic era—as well as the public image of Byron himself.<sup>111</sup>

Is there a discernible order to the sharing, sourcing and influence of this image? I am tempted to give Coleridge (with his combined interests in zoology and mesmerism) first poetic ownership of it, passed to Byron through the pre-publication circulation of

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<sup>110</sup> The word "pinions" to mean "wings" had by now been relegated to poetic uses except in specialist circles (or in the emerging mechanical sense of a gear or cog). Byron first used the word in print in an occasional prologue contained in *Fugitive Pieces*, his first volume of verse. It later appeared in the same context in *Don Juan* to paraphrase Psalm 55, where he writes, "'Oh!' saith the Psalmist, 'that I had a dove's /Pinions to flee away, and be at rest!'" (Canto X ll.42-3). The word is notably absent from the King James standard text of the psalm.

<sup>111</sup> The image of the snake bloated from its meal, whatever parallels it may have to the blood saturation of the glutton vampire, seems a particularly cutting one in the case of Byron, who was wildly self-conscious about his fluctuating and tended to gain weight during periods of hedonistic self-indulgence. The subject of Byron's weight and his vanity surrounding it are of passing interest in most Byron biographies; for a more sustained analysis, see Christine Kenyon Jones's "Fantasy and Transfiguration: Byron and his Portraits."

“Christabel,” and thence to Lamb, who mined *The Giaour* for fodder which was, by Byron’s self-imposed exile in 1816, more autobiographical than even he might have intended. Regardless of its pedigree, however, the metaphor proliferates through these texts, and persists from “Christabel” onward as a strong marker of vampiric aspect—a major trait of family resemblance, to put it into those terms.

But to return to the puzzle of Geraldine’s identity, the vampiric snake-image gives rise to as many complications of identity as it resolves. Karen Swann’s article has already informed us about the “Enigma of Form” in “Christabel,” pointing out the deliberately ironic nature of Geraldine’s simplistic self-invention. In light of this warning, when Bard Bracy provides us with a prophetic dream in which identity seems glaringly obvious, we ought to consider the parallels between Bracy’s simplistic fashioning of identity and Geraldine’s. If Geraldine’s deception is that she presents herself as angelically good, as Patricia Adair suggests, then we can take Bracy at face value: he has simply found her out. But if the deception is couched in the appearance of simplicity, then Bracy’s reversed but equally polarized construction of Geraldine is equally suspect. Leoline’s inability to interpret the identities of the dream “correctly,” figured perhaps as his own foolishness, or perhaps the result of his bewitching, is simply a sign or reminder that the identities of “Christabel” are numinous—that they are subject to change, and also to exchange between the characters.

There are other markers to this fluidity: after all the ground we have just covered detailing the unblinking eye of the serpent and its hypnotic associations, Coleridge frustrates our expectations with a single contradictory blink: when Geraldine’s eye “blinks dull and shy” (l. 583), it strips from his vampire the certainty of predatory identity

that is hammered home in *The Giaour*, in *The Vampyre*, and even in the more realistic<sup>112</sup> *Glenarvon*, whose authors offer a much more definite picture of their vampiric antagonists. As Geraldine is both mother and not-mother, then, she is both snake and not-snake. When serpentine (and in context, vampiric) traits begin to manifest in Christabel as well, the protean tangle of identities is complete.

Leoline's misreading of the dove's identity, though Bracy explicitly calls it by his daughter's name, reinforces the tangle to an extent—as Christabel does when she “shudder[s] aloud with a hissing sound” (l. 591), begins passively imitating Geraldine's serpentine gaze, (ll.605-6), and finally finds herself “falling at the Baron's feet” (l. 615), in a manner befitting the paralyzed dove, but also befitting the snake who has sinned, retreading perhaps the Eden myth. At the same time, however, identity in Christabel is now too numinous, too wholly fluid, to do much with the Eden myth. There is little use to assigning allegorical Eden-roles to the players here, as Christabel is at once all sides of it: she is the crawling snake, perhaps inheriting the serpentine qualities of Geraldine in payment for her sin. She is also a conventional Eve, falling easily from innocence and arising with knowledge of her corruption, covering her nakedness even before prayer. Finally, she is Adam too, a motherless child without a mother's protection, ultimately led astray by the feminine cunning of Geraldine, who is thus herself half-serpent and half-Eve.

The transformations of identity in “Christabel,” then, leave us with a wide range of sometimes contradictory possibilities. I have advanced here Twitchell's idea of Christabel as a girl with two mothers; in almost the same breath, I have conversely

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<sup>112</sup> Realistic, here, in the sense of its debt to the realist novel; that is, mundane or “unsupernatural.”

described her as “motherless” in the context of Adam. The *dramatis personae* of Bard Bracy’s dream should be, of all the poem’s riddles of identity, the easiest to solve, yet even here we have new doubts, compounded by a handful of serpentine elements to Christabel and dovelike qualities to be found in Geraldine (who shares a profound colour imagery with the white dove). The fragment leaves us with a damaged Christabel evincing signs of kinship with Geraldine—even vampiric ones—and may even offer a quiet suggestion that she risks become vampiric herself. Unlike nearly all of the later Romantic and Victorian poems and stories in which vampirism may play some role,<sup>113</sup> Coleridge’s poem is titled not after his vampire, but after his victim. Christabel remains the title character in spite of her passivity in the face of Geraldine’s vampiric advances; this centrality directs the imagination teasingly to what might have come, what sort of new identities Christabel (and the others) might have taken on in the third act, if only Coleridge had found a voice to write it.

To an extent, the inchoate identities of “Christabel” mirror the poem’s fragmentary format: unlike most of the intentional fragment-texts scattered through Gothic literature and its descendants, Coleridge never designed—nor was he ever satisfied with—the literal incompleteness of “Christabel.” That he still intended to finish it following its 1816 publication, nearly two decades after beginning it, speaks to a powerful, even painful desire for a suitable conclusion. That he had perhaps given up by the time of his comments in *Table Talk* in 1833, only a year before his death, should not

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<sup>113</sup> A short list of the usual suspects includes Keats’s “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” and “Lamia,” Polidori’s *The Vampyre*, Rymer’s *Varney the Vampire* (sometimes attributed to Thomas Preskett Prest), LeFanu’s “Carmilla,” and finally Stoker’s *Dracula*. Even close French tales such as Gautier’s “La Morte Amoreuse” follow the convention of marking the vampire rather than victim in their title.

surprise us so much as the fact that he still considered the narrative to *have* an ending, if only in his mind.

Ultimately, it seems, this was a narrative end to which the vehicle of the poem proved consistently unyielding, resulting in one of very few genuine and “accidental” fragments of the period. But there is, as we have seen, a different order of fragmentation, an aesthetic of fragmentation, at work here—an element of amorphous uncertainty which permeates the completed sections and might have persisted throughout the poem even if Coleridge had managed somehow to “finish” it. Coleridge’s admission that he “could not carry on with[...]the execution” (*Table Talk* 241) may even suggest that this aesthetics of fragmentation overpowered the narrative, frustrating efforts to complete the story by resisting the kind of certainty a denouement would invariably bring. It is a denouement we now have seen executed in the case of “Sir Bertrand,” and not necessarily to the betterment of the work.

In *The Romantic Fragment Poem*, Marjorie Levinson takes apart a few of the Gothic devices of “Christabel,” reading them not as aesthetic gimmickry of the Gothic mode, but as unanswered narrative elements of classical or even Shakespearean tragedy: “one would infer,” she writes,

that the House of Leoline labors beneath a curse originating in some crime or error involving the head of that house, Sir Leoline. Christabel, the last scion (“The one red leaf, the last of its clan”), is the figure who must expiate the wrong. As one reviews the range of narrative possibilities that might have occasioned the fragment’s opening scene, the conventional and apparently ornamental gothic motifs begin to assume significant structural function. Why, for example, does the mastiff bitch howl at her mistress’s shroud when, according to Christabel, the mother died naturally in childbirth? *Did* Christabel’s mother die naturally or was there foul play? Why is Leoline’s weak

health emphasized? Why does Christabel leave the house to pray? Why is she resigned to weal or woe before we see cause to worry? What portents did her dream contain? Why is Geraldine associated favorably with Christabel's mother? Why does Leoline declare his realm "a world of death"? Why is Bard Bracy possessed of so acute a foreboding? Why did Leoline and Roland separate? (87)

By reading "Christabel" as fiction or drama, as a Gothic narrative with a conventional story arc, Levinson discovers in these questions a hidden laundry-list (with a nod to *Northanger Abbey*) of narrative suspense-tropes. Her questions are the same sort of questions amassed by readers over the first thirty chapters of an Ann Radcliffe romance, to remain unanswered and unresolved until the last three. As elements of a narrative work, these unanswered questions underscore the incompleteness of "Christabel" even while they function as tantalizing mysteries in the context of Romantic fragmentary poetics.

In this view, perhaps, there is no way for Coleridge to "hav[e] it both ways" (47), as Twitchell says, when it comes to the form, aesthetics, and function of "Christabel." To be perfected as a Romantic fragment poem, the text must remain an incomplete Gothic narrative. To complete the text as Coleridge once desired, and to resolve the narrative questions raised, might have the opposite effect, perfecting it as a Gothic narrative at the expense of its poetics of fragmentation. This quandary of form and narrative may lie at the heart of what Coleridge cites as a fatal difficulty in the "execution" of the poem: ultimately, "Christabel" is as ambiguous in its own identity as it is in the identities of its characters, especially where genre is concerned. As Geraldine seeks, perhaps, to be both mother and anti-mother to Christabel, the poem reaches toward completeness and

incompleteness with equal vigor, and occupies in the process a place in genre quite different from the Romantic fragments it draws from and inspires.

## 4.2 Bodies and Texts: Fragments, Transformation, and Secularization

Ascribing a bewildering complexity of identity to Geraldine or Christabel, or even to “Christabel” the poem, is hardly a new critical move. Aside from Adair and Swann, many other voices have arrived at this conclusion: Anya Taylor, writing in 2002, summarizes the critical landscape by observing that

[c]ritic after critic has tossed interpretations into the poem’s “Dark fluxion, all unfixable by thought.” Each interpretation seems to work as well as the next, even if the interpretations are contradictory[...] Some see the poem as having no meaning besides the complex contradictions of language and voice, as a Blakean examination of divided states of body and soul, as a dream or many dreams with condensed or displaced images[...]How do we cope with this tumult of uncertainty? (707)

There is something reductive in this estimation, to be sure, but it does highlight the common general momentum of scholarship<sup>114</sup> surrounding “Christabel” at the time: namely, that it is a contradictory and uncertain poem, and that this uncertainty is something we ought to “cope with.” The terminology of coping suggests a method of allowing ourselves resignation, as if the previous generation’s strategy of unraveling this

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<sup>114</sup> There are, naturally, too many sources to document making up the “common general momentum of scholarship.” A.G. den Otter’s “Literary Criticism as Receptive Data,” a case study of “Christabel” criticism, offers a useful broad survey of materials up to 1991. Criticism from more recent years, including Ellen Brinks’s *Gothic Masculinity*, which treats the contradictions of “Christabel” as a transformed version of the stock Gothic trope of uncertainty, continue this trend (see especially Brinks’s fourth chapter, “This dream it would not pass away”).

uncertainty, of seeing “Christabel” as a puzzle-box to be conquered, has been laid aside or found fruitless.

I am not sure this approach should be abandoned, or indeed, that one reading is arbitrarily as good as another. For instance, Mark Hennelly’s liminal reading of “Christabel,”<sup>115</sup> executed in 1999 at a time when “the liminal” was at the height of its critical fashion, has aged extremely well, and is worth considering as a strong example of the many “interpretations” within Anya Taylor’s cacophony of uncertainty.

Hennelly’s succinct definition of the problem he seeks to address observes, in part, that

even though no contemporary criticism has attempted a liminal reading of *Christabel*, still many readings, like Charles J. Rzepka’s Lacanian approach, do generally validate liminal thematics in exploring, for instance, Christabel’s involvement “the phase of womanhood intervening between sexual vitality and maternal nurturing.” (205)

He goes on from here to collect information from Rzepka, from Anthony John Harding, and from several others who address the liminal aspects of “Christabel” here and there, weaving together a “liminal reading” from what was previously a meandering thread in scholarship, divided and without proper representation. The lasting value of Hennelly’s article is thus enshrined as a cogent time capsule of a particular “interpretation,” collected from far and wide and placed more squarely and clearly within the context of Victor Turner’s theories of liminality.

Admittedly, it may be Hennelly’s execution of the approach, rather than the approach itself, that elevates his interpretation from the dubious praise of simply working

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<sup>115</sup> Hennelly, Mark M., Jr. ““As Well Fill Up the Space between: A Liminal Reading of ‘Christabel.’” *Studies in Romanticism* 38.2 (Summer 1999): 203-22.

“as well as the next,” in Anya Taylor’s words. Nevertheless, the marked prominence of Hennelly’s liminal reading (and certainly there are other equally prominent Marxist readings, Bakhtinian readings,<sup>116</sup> poststructuralist readings) must undercut the suggestion that such readings are arbitrarily interchangeable, all resulting in the same uncertainty. A more useful way of reading Taylor’s construction of the field, then, is to recognize that there are many distinct and valuable approaches to “Christabel,” but that uncertainty—an uncertainty that criticism has failed to resolve—is a common thread to all of them. We are thus left not only with irresolvable uncertainty, but with a proliferation of uncertainties, inflected by different readings and indicating the poem’s place at a theoretical crossroads of sorts. It is this idea of proliferation and intersection that I want to turn to, and by which I want to connect “Christabel,” by way of Anya Taylor, back to Charles Taylor and his own ideas of proliferation.

In the introduction to her article, Anya Taylor outlines not only the current problematic state of scholarship surrounding the poem, but also her intent to establish a new method of coping with the irresolvable uncertainty of “Christabel” by connecting it to a holistic vision of Coleridge’s ongoing agenda of discovery. “I wish,” she writes,

to see Coleridge’s deliberate (and perhaps even gleeful) construction of mystery in ‘Christabel’ in the context of his wider philosophical and psychological investigations. The poem can be seen as a thought-experiment, enacting ideas that he elaborates in other poems and in prose writings. To set “Christabel” in the context of these ideas is not to thin out its maddening density, but to reduce its isolation. As a thought-experiment, a germ of future thought, “Christabel” participates in Coleridge’s continuing work on the development of the human person, on how selves are made and lost. (708)

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<sup>116</sup> Of these, the most focused Bakhtinian reading I am aware of is Avery F. Gaskins’s “Dramatic Form, ‘Double Voice,’ and ‘Carnivalization’ in ‘Christabel’” (*European Romantic Review* 4.1 [1993]: 1-12).

There is a lot here to digest, and much of it is applicable to the reading I want to develop—that is, a reading which reconnects our lengthy discussion of uncertain identity to Charles Taylor, to secularization, and to the canon of Romantic vampires rather than (or at least preferentially to) the canon of Coleridge. What Anya Taylor unearths by exploring “Christabel” in the context of Coleridge’s philosophy and prose writings is a degree of kinship between Coleridge’s concerns and those of *A Secular Age*. What is described here as Coleridge’s “continuing work on the development of the human person, on how selves are made and lost” (708) could easily describe Charles Taylor’s work as well; it too is “continuing,” beginning in his *Sources of the Self*<sup>117</sup> and continuing through *A Secular Age* without stopping. Taylor’s ongoing work on the political culture of modernity and his continuing willingness to participate in the new discourse of secularization he has spawned emphasize that, for him, *A Secular Age* is less a terminal study and more a part of an iterative process of re-understanding modernity. As a self-contained work, *A Secular Age* is complete (or, at least, more complete than *Modern Social Imaginaries*, which by comparison reads like the “first-chapter teaser” of the study to come); but as a signifier of a new methodology, an academic process, *A Secular Age* is only the first major waystation of an incomplete journey.

When Taylor comments in his Afterword to *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* that “the book could have been—in a sense, should have been—longer” (301), he is entering into the same all-too-necessary poetics of fragmentation that frustrated Coleridge. As with Coleridge and “Christabel,” it’s not that he “doesn’t know how to do

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<sup>117</sup> Some may argue, and I could easily be convinced, that Taylor’s work on “the development of the human person” begins even earlier, with ideas surfacing in *Hegel* (1975) that descend almost unchanged into *A Secular Age*.

it”—for Taylor has, like Coleridge, “the whole plan entire from beginning to end” in his mind. His narrative of development, of how human selves are made, is in many ways more complete, more fully formed than Coleridge’s. Even so, there is more work to be done, more of Taylor’s story to be told, and it is now the implied mandate of a new crop of studies—Diane Long Hoeveler’s *Gothic Riffs*, the essays contained in *Varieties of Secularism*, even my work here—that answer Taylor’s invitation to participate in the ongoing iterative process of his secularization narrative.

Taylor and Coleridge alike are concerned with selves, and with the stories of how they came to be. The first words of Christabel to Geraldine, “‘who art thou?’ and ‘how camest thou here?’” (Swann 533), are in many ways the core questions for Taylor, whose very first words in *A Secular Age* are to ask us, “[w]hat does it mean to say that we live in a secular age?” (1) In a sense, he is asking us who we are in the context of this secularity; most of the legwork of his research centers on confronting either this question, or the corresponding question of how we came from there to here. Like Coleridge, he is concerned with constructions of the self; and like Geraldine, whose story of self-identity is cast as Gothic, simplistic, and outmoded, Taylor’s picture of previous stories of secularization highlights their deceptive simplicity, their archaic understanding of what he understands as a proliferation of identities. As Taylor charts a journey from monolithic belief to a broad variety of belief and unbelief, so does Geraldine transform from a one-dimensional identity (the lost Gothic heroine) to a multifaceted and uncertain amalgam (vampire, phantom, mother, child, temptress, serpent).

The leap from this amalgam of identities to Taylor’s concept of social imaginaries is not a large one. Earlier on here (pp.20-24), I have discussed social imaginaries in the

context of readership, centering on the idea that key readerships in the history of supernatural literature—the “consumer base” of Gothic literature from circulating libraries, for example—form a sort of social imaginary by way of shared social existence, expectations, methods of reading and understanding. In essence, when Karen Swann writes that “for any absorbed reader of circulating library romances, Geraldine’s story of abduction works as a seduction” (534), she is talking about a social imaginary. The idea that Geraldine’s simplistic tale of abduction is encoded in Gothic imagery, and that it must be *decoded* to be understood as ironic, requires a reading public in possession of the Gothic cipher—in Taylor’s words, “that common understanding which makes possible common practices” (*A Secular Age* 172). The common practice, in this case, is a common practice of reading:

I’m talking about the way ordinary people “imagine” their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, it is carried in images, stories, legends, etc.[...]it incorporates a sense of the normal expectations we have of each other; the kind of common understanding which enables us to carry out the collective practices which make up our social life. (172)

By “common” understanding, I think Taylor means to indicate an understanding that is both common (shared), and common (prevalent), which fits with the idea of decoding Geraldine’s story: there is meant to be a common understanding here, an agreement that the story is not a factual history, but a Gothic romance. The reader or listener who “swallows” Geraldine’s story uncritically (in this case, Christabel) is not “in the know,” in the sense that she does not share the common understanding of the poem’s readership. She is not a subject of the same social imaginary, and in fact is set apart from it by her credulity: the dissonance between Christabel and the reader here is, as mentioned, the

same dissonance between Catherine Morland and the readers of *Northanger Abbey*, where the friction of conflicting social imaginaries is played for laughs.<sup>118</sup>

It is of note, then, that from this point forward, as Geraldine is developed and her web of identities spun, the “common understanding” evaporates. Criticism is united on the matter of her abduction story, but collapses into a heap of “interpretations” as her identity multiplies. John Adlard, armed with Geraldine’s identity as an embodiment of Quantock Hills folk beliefs and faerie lore,<sup>119</sup> throws out her identity as a vampire. Karen Swann’s sophisticated treatment of Geraldine as Coleridge’s commentary on hysteria—and perhaps a dreamlike projection of Christabel’s own hysteria—in some ways corrects and overwrites most other “dreamlike” readings of Geraldine, including Paul Magnuson’s expressivist version<sup>120</sup> of Geraldine and “Christabel” itself as what Jennifer Ford calls “poetic nightmares personal to Coleridge, rather than as part of a wider contemporary debate” (2). In some terms, this critical debate echoes Taylor’s whole model of secularization in miniature: we can almost “naïvely” accept that Geraldine’s story, her first act of self-construction, is a deception. But there is no substantial agreement on what exactly Geraldine is, only on what she is not; and as her identities proliferate, each new identity is less a prescriptive model, and more a single option among many.

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<sup>118</sup> It should not surprise us that the friction of conflicting social imaginaries between audience and character is “played for laughs” in *Northanger Abbey*: theorizing social conventions of humour is a difficult academic mission, but recent studies on the subject are already leaning towards Taylor’s model without articulating it. Nicole Matthews’s study on humour, especially regarding what she calls “contemporary comic plots, like the ‘fish out of water’ 1980s mid-budget comedies” (31), parses the fish-out-of-water metaphor in a way that leaves it open to redefinition as a conflict of dissonant social imaginaries: there can be little other explanation for films such as the low-budget RAF picture *Hercules in New York* (1969). See Matthews’s *Comic Politics* for a more detailed look at this phenomenon.

<sup>119</sup> Adlard’s primary study on the subject, “The Quantock Christabel,” is supported by the fact of Coleridge’s residence at Nether Stowey, Sedgemoor, from 1797 to 1799, where he probably began work on the poem.

<sup>120</sup> in *Coleridge’s Nightmare Poetry* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1974).

So one of the uses of Taylor's methodology, the most basic use, is to deal with this multiplicity, and to have done with the subtraction story that Adlard's fastidiously researched new model, for instance, can erase the old model of Nethercot simply by overwriting it. Once Geraldine has been a vampire, she can never again not be a vampire, much in the same way that we can no longer divorce Dracula's identity from Vlad Țepeș now that Raymond McNally's tenuous but tenacious connection between them<sup>121</sup> has been made.

That Geraldine's vampirism becomes one option among many, and one aspect among many, does not reduce its importance but instead complicates it. The proto-Romantic vampire that stands in Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer*, with which I have not deeply concerned myself here, is a clone of the Slavic vampires presented in his more influential footnote: in an image that is definitively clear, the livid features of Oneiza's ugly corpse inspire horror because they are a mockery of her beauty in life. Her familiarity in life to Thalaba is a similar magnifier of, in basic Freudian terms, the uncanny experience of meeting her in death. But there is no mistaking her for a beautiful woman, and the abduction-story told by Geraldine could not have been believed from Oneiza's dead lips. In contrast, Geraldine is credible as a mother-figure, as a child, as a projection of Christabel's psychoses, as a succubus, and even—in some earlier time—a young woman of virtue like Geraldine, who carries the curse of vampirism because she was likewise seduced (in which case, perhaps, even her Gothic tale of abduction might not be as categorically false as we have chosen to read it).

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<sup>121</sup> In *In Search of Dracula*.

These readings throw open, as critics such as Adlard indicate, the possibility of what, *other* than a vampire, Geraldine might be; but more importantly for literature to come, they open the possibility of what *more* a vampire can be, opening dimensions of veiling and seduction that come to mark the Western tradition of vampirism as distinctly different from the reanimated corpses of Peter Plogojowitz and Arnold Paole. To an extent, Geraldine's prolific identities foreshadow a proliferation of identities within the vampire. Lord Byron's *Giaour*, as we will shortly see, contributes further momentum to this proliferation; and by the end of the Romantic era, the blood-gorged, loamy corpse who rises from the earth to prey on immediate family members is no longer a naïvely uniform conceit, in Taylor's terms, but rather a single option among many. This proliferation, which becomes by the late twentieth century an uncontrollable exponential expansion,

To an extent, this approach helps us understand how the vampire has transformed in literature—how it has come from a regionally inflected mythology to its present shape in English-language print and film. While criticism has already observed that today's vampires are new and different, yet share similarities, and while the best of it has made an effort to chart an evolution or genealogy of vampiric traits, we can more precisely define and contextualize these traits with the aid of Taylor's model of thinking about sociohistorical change, and against the background of those forces at work in *A Secular Age*. At the same time, there is a greater and broader value to refocusing the vampire through the lens of *A Secular Age*; to continue the metaphor, it has to do with reversing the lenses and asking ourselves what the development of literary vampirism—a literary trope always studied in the context of development and change over time—might tell us

about the social imaginaries among which, and by whose agency, the vampire has evolved.

It is not new to suggest that a knowledge of history can tell us about literature, or vice versa, but Taylor's sociohistorical account of secularization is largely absent on the subject of poetry and fiction, even though so many of his key thinkers—Locke, Hume, Rousseau and the Jacobins—have had a fundamental and already well-documented effect on literature of this period. It is my intent (and has been all along) to count Langdale Hall and Tryermaine<sup>122</sup> among what Taylor calls the “regions and times that I have left relatively neglected” (“Afterword” 301). It is a fairly straightforward claim to suggest that Taylor's narrative of secularization and his new modelling of sociohistorical change allow us a new and useful reading of vampires: in a sense, this puts us squarely in the tradition of existing interpreters. As Mark Hennelly has given us a “liminal reading” of *Christabel*, and as Avery F. Gaskins has given us a Bakhtinian reading,<sup>123</sup> to use *A Secular Age* in this way is to provide a corresponding “Taylolean reading,” another approach which better reflects Taylor's growing popularity within literary criticism, but is similarly reducible to what Anya Taylor calls (in the context of “*Christabel*”) another “interpretation,” which at its most cogent “seems to work as well as the next” (707).

There is value in joining this complementary chorus, I think, and a Taylolean reading allows us to do it. Put simply, the things Taylor has to tell us about secularization have the potential to change the way we think about vampires in literature. It is another

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<sup>122</sup> In “*Christabel*,” the supposed ancestral estates of Sir Leoline and Roland de Vaux. Nethercot's *The Road to Tryermaine* remains one of the few studies to give these places fair treatment as something other than a Gothic fairyland, uncovering most notably a historical Tryermaine, including a number of lords by the name of Roland de Vaux (167-8). Here, however, I mean to indicate them as they are commonly constructed, as realms of the imagination rather than places of practical historical significance.

<sup>123</sup> i.e. the one mentioned in my note on p.168.

business entirely, and a bolder claim, to suggest the reverse—namely, that something as removed from *A Secular Age* as vampire lit can inform or even change the way we think about Taylor’s secularization narrative. This is ultimately what I mean to do: in his tongue-in-cheek apology for the extreme brevity of *A Secular Age*, Taylor remarks that “[t]here should have been lots more chapters, describing regions and times that I have left relatively neglected” (“Afterword” 301). Although he approaches literature through references to a few recurring writers (Goethe, Wordsworth, Mallarmé), the “regions and times” of their writing are among those given little to no scrutiny, especially when they are in some sense imaginary or unreal.<sup>124</sup> Regardless of whether the imaginary world of Coleridge’s *Tryermaine*<sup>125</sup> and its vampiric heiress have more or less to tell us about Western secularization than, for instance, the Cambridge Platonists or the Napoleonic Wars, they nevertheless have something *different* to tell us—and it is the imperative of literary studies such as this one to complete the parts of the narrative map Taylor has gestured to, but never explored.

So far, we have taken a very basic step toward the first and more modest of these two goals, by way of establishing a few links between Taylor’s narrative and Coleridge’s “Christabel.” Both Taylor and Coleridge, I have suggested, are interested in the development of the self, and with the whole idea of how the self is constructed in the imagination. There is a nice parallel between the proliferation of Geraldine’s (and

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<sup>124</sup> I mean “irreal” here in the sense it is used by Todorov and his descendants in the study of fantastic literature. An interesting collection which deals with the irreal in terms almost intuitively suited to readers of Charles Taylor is *Defiant Deviance: the Irreality of Reality in the Cultural Imaginary* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005). The articles are predominantly in Spanish (though a chapter by Cristina Santos on vampires is in English), but the entire volume is worth the struggle for anyone with a reading knowledge of Spanish.

<sup>125</sup> The historical Triermain, whose ruined castle (first crenellated by Roland Vaux in 1340) still stands near Gilsland in Cumbria, is a different entity altogether than the enchanted realm of Coleridge’s poem. Walter Scott’s romantic Triermain, represented in *The Bridal of Triermain*, is also distinct from both of these places.

Christabel's) identities, from a single naïvely conceived identity to an array of optional ones, and the proliferation of social imaginaries available to the early modern self. But drawing attention to this parallel within a single, self-contained example (and an unfinished one at that) explains very little about the development of the vampire, or of the literature containing it. A more detailed look at social imaginaries, I think, will make the bigger picture accessible.

I've considered social imaginaries here in the context of how we construct ourselves, relating them in (as I have with Geraldine) to self-fashioning and identity. I've also connected them to the idea of common practice, which is closer to Taylor's original vision of them. But one of Taylor's alternate words for the social imaginary, "background," adds another dimension of meaning: what the social imaginary encompasses, on a larger scale, is an amalgam of our common practices, the background or common understanding which allows us to make sense of those practices, and the relationship by which background and practice define each other. For Taylor, this relationship is "not one-sided. If the understanding makes the practice possible, it is also true that it is the practice which largely carries the understanding" (Taylor, *A Secular Age* 123). In "Christabel," we can see this theory in action: Christabel does not have the shared understanding, the "background" of Gothic readership, required to see that Geraldine's self-invention is a stylized romance. Conversely, the cues of Gothic romance left to the reader are magnified by Christabel's unwitting participation in a Gothic romance of her own. Her stylized role as helpless, innocent heroine reminds the reader to be alert for Gothic conventions. In a sense, Christabel's ignorance of the Gothic background is what forces her participation in it.

Although we see it for the first time in “Christabel,” the device of the “backgroundless” victim comes to be a staple of the vampire-narrative. The would-be hero of Polidori’s *The Vampyre*, Aubrey, is atypically suspicious, not only listening with credulous fascination to the folklore of his Greek hosts, but connecting the folklore to the narrative in which he participates: even before the death of Ianthe, which firmly makes a believer of him, Aubrey “wondered at the many coincidences which had all tended to excite a belief in the supernatural power of Lord Ruthven” (10).

So from the beginning, Aubrey is not our figure of dramatic irony. But his sister, named only as “Miss Aubrey,” is (like Christabel) the endangered prey, “naïve” in the sense that she does not share the background of the Greek villagers, or indeed of Aubrey, and is unaware of the narrative in which she participates. The climactic tension of the tale centers on Ruthven’s repeated command to Aubrey, “Remember your oath!” (19), which seems to force Aubrey’s silence on what he has learned. There is no question of defeating Ruthven physically, of putting a stake through his heart or putting his body to rest: the only way to defeat him is to introduce the naïve participants of this story, Miss Aubrey or her “guardians” (19), to the background of supernatural understanding they so conspicuously lack.

Stoker’s *Dracula*, too, with its ensemble cast of heroes, relies less on Dr. Van Helsing as seasoned vampire-hunter (unlike later Hollywood versions of the story), and more on his role as educator, as the man who brings the required background—the required social imaginary—to Harker and company. The fundamental defensive weapon in most vampire-narratives is what Van Helsing might call the weapon of belief:

even yet I do not expect you to believe. It is so hard to accept at once any abstract truth, that we may doubt such to

be possible when we have always believed the “no” of it[...]. If it be true! Ah, there is the dread; yet very dread should help my cause, for in it is some need of belief. (Stoker 194).

In the context of Taylor, Stoker’s choice of the word “belief” here is an interesting one. What Van Helsing advocates, ultimately, is the adoption of (or at the very least, participation in) a social imaginary that both Taylor and the late Victorians would define as pre-modern. Belief in the supernatural, and especially in its power to harm, is characteristic of what Taylor has called the porous self, which in his model is more, not less, exposed to the dangers of the supernatural:

the porous self is vulnerable, to spirits, demons, cosmic forces. And along with this go certain fears which can grip it in certain circumstances. The buffered self has been taken out of the world of this kind of fear. (*A Secular Age* 38)

The use of naïveté (or more specifically, of being unknowingly outside the common understanding of a social imaginary, deprived of its common background) as a tension-building device is hardly an invention of vampire narratives. It is present to a degree in Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* and in the conduct novels of Richardson; it is even a “skeleton key” of sorts for William Blake, in that revisiting the *Songs of Innocence* with the common background of “experience” radically transforms the way we decipher the coded experiences of chimney-sweeps, nurses, lost children.

In Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*, too, naïveté is the chief device by which Ambrosio gains his hold over the innocent Antonia. But here the device is working with, rather than against, the expected current of Taylor’s narrative, at least where Antonia and her pseudovampiric sexual predator are concerned. Lewis’s *The Monk* presents a complicated but usually antagonistic attitude toward the (especially Catholic) Church;

and whatever his feelings on the matter, we can say with some certainty that this attitude is not exclusively the product of his personal politics. At least in part, it arises out of a social imaginary, a background and practice shared by most of the major English Gothic novels, in which progressive opposition to the Catholic Church is regularly magnified almost to the point of caricature. Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall describe this opposition as “Gothic fiction’s historically and ideologically conditioned view of supposed Catholic and monastic abuses” (276), and it results in, at the very least, a deep skepticism toward the Catholic Church exceeded only by the skepticism toward its earthly agents. *The Monk*, forged from a background of this skepticism, puts this skepticism into practice by participating in a dialogue with its similarly skeptical readers (no one, I think, would argue that a largely Catholic readership was Lewis’s target audience). While Antonia’s innocence is idealized, even insofar as it puts her outside the social imaginary of religious reform, it is nevertheless figured as tragic: had she shared the social imaginary of the informed English Protestant reader of Gothic fiction, who knows better than to trust the caricatured figure of the doting monk, the whole tragedy might have been avoided.

There is something about this whole arrangement which we might call “progressive,” at least from the perspective of Gothic fiction: Baldick and Mighall see within the anti-Catholic background of *The Monk* a movement which mirrors Taylor’s general narrative of the Reformation, a movement in which we move away from idolatry, dismiss and distrust the idea that the Church and its human agents can be the source of white magic, and ultimately arrive at a series of beliefs which buffer us from the supernatural dangers of the past. What is different about the vampire-narrative—and

where it runs completely counter to the Gothic tales with which it is so often grouped—is that the protective change in belief is, in terms of Taylor’s narrative, *regressive* rather than progressive. Van Helsing’s defense of the heroes in *Dracula* consists of awakening a porous self, of immersing them in a belief with the process of secularization ought to have overwritten in them. Does the same mechanic operate in Polidori’s *The Vampyre*? It is aborted in the case of Aubrey’s sister—she is a fixture of a modern, civilized world, and Ruthven cannot allow her buffered self to be disturbed, lest she find him out. Aubrey, on the other hand, as a veteran of the Grand Tour, has been to Italy and to Greece, figured here (as in sentimental and Romantic tradition) as antique lands of folklore; even this tenuous connection with the ancient, porous world makes him a threat to the vampire. As a fellow of “the dissipations attendant upon a London winter...the various parties of the leaders of the *ton*<sup>126</sup>” (4), Aubrey is at first a figure of buffered modernity and a welcome companion to the dissolute Lord Ruthven. Even when Aubrey thwarts Ruthven’s conquest of a nameless Italian woman, “the daughter of the lady at whose house he frequented” (8) in Rome, this is not cause for an angry response from Ruthven: Aubrey’s interference is not that of a vampire-hunter, but that of a proper gentleman of modern virtue. As long as he is thinking of Ruthven in the same terms Polidori thought of Byron—a licentious, immoral, and thoroughly unpleasant man, but a living one—there is no retaliation against him.

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<sup>126</sup> Baldick and Morrison gloss the word *ton* as “fashionable world.” The word comes from the French *le bon ton*, or “the good mode,” and more specifically refers to the extremely structured high society of the British Regency period. “Dissipations” and parties of the sort described by Polidori would typically occur, at least in London, at mixed-sex venues such as Almack’s assembly rooms. A fascinating look at this culture exists in Ellen Moers’s *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (New York: Viking, 1960).

It is only as an informed believer, with a justified fear of the supernatural rekindled in him, that Aubrey becomes a threat to Ruthven to be silenced by any means necessary. We should not forget that this fire is lit in him by Ianthe, who

told him the tale of the living vampyre...cited to him the names of old men, who had at last detected one living among themselves...begged of him to believe her...detailed to him the traditional appearance of these monsters, and his horror was increased, by hearing a pretty accurate description of Lord Ruthven. (9-10)

I have previously wondered at the death of Ianthe, which stands wildly out of character for the genteel Lord Ruthven. His *modus operandi* is made clear both in Rome and in England: he is pathologically seductive, a bride-murderer—an itinerant version of Perrault’s Bluebeard, perhaps. His killing of the Roman girl is thwarted when his social advances are rebuffed; his murder of Miss Aubrey is carried out because his social advances are consummated. Ruthven, by caricature of Byron, is popularly credited with single-handedly replacing the vampiric of the repugnant Nosferatu with that of the genteel, aristocratic predator: for Nicola Trott, the “transfusion of aristocratic blood” and gentility into the archetype makes him a figurative as well as a literal lady-killer, and is the device “by which Polidori transformed an otherwise unattractive legend into its glamorous modern-day success story” (413). But there is nothing so delicate about the violation and murder of Ianthe, no ponderous game of social and erotic stalking preceding the kill. It is coarse and brutal. Couched in sexualized language, it is a violent rape rather than a predatory seduction.

For Carol Senf, the inclusion of the first comparatively barbaric murder serves chiefly to underscore the artful subtlety of the second. “[t]he brutality of the attack on Ianthe might have come directly from folklore,” she writes, “for it is apparently a crime

of simple hunger. However, the circumstances involving Ruthven's second victim are more complex and interesting because the vampire takes time to seduce Aubrey's sister and even to make her his wife" (34-5). If we believe in the importance of folklore, however, as the device which educates and arms otherwise buffered protagonists against pre-modern threats, then Ianthe's murder becomes complex and interesting in its own right, not just as a foil for the climactic kill. It becomes a desperate and crucial victory for the vampire, who is always solitary, always outnumbered by human protagonists, and relies upon their ignorance to survive.

If we treat Ianthe merely as a pretty Greek girl and the object of Aubrey's affections, as Senf does, she is little more than window-dressing to the story, a stock victim to impress on us the horror of Ruthven. In her role as folklorist, however, Ianthe takes on a greater and more pivotal importance, becoming something of a feminine Van Helsing: she opens the eyes of a man who has "always believed the 'no' of it" (Stoker 194) and arms him against the vampire by inviting him into the discourse of Eastern peasant-lore which, despite being figured as pre-modern, is the best protection a modern "man of the *ton*" can have. Ken Gelder goes so far as to describe Ianthe as "an image for the folk" (34), stating that

what is interesting about this passage...is that these beliefs, and the 'excitement' they generate, are shared by others, who readily communicate them to Aubrey. Ianthe and her nurse believe in vampires; various 'old men' do, too...and after her death, a group of villagers have no trouble identifying the cause...[t]he journey to Greece brings Aubrey into contact with the folk, which is where the origins of vampire superstitions are located. (34)

In the context laid out by *The Vampyre*, the buffered self of modern men and women works as a smoke screen for the vampire: Ruthven is a chameleon within a British high

society which constructs itself as modern, skeptical, and incredulous of Oriental folk superstitions. But in Greece, in what Polidori constructs as the ancient East (and perhaps, in a sense, a porous East), there is nowhere for Ruthven to hide. His nature is transparent to the *folk*, who are quick to raise the alarm, shouting “A Vampyre, a Vampire!” (12) on the discovery of Ianthe’s body.

The superstition of the peasantry, by this point, is boilerplate Gothic gimmickry. Speaking of the later *Dracula*, Markman Ellis describes Harker’s journey “back to a pre-modern feudal world populated by uneducated and fearful peasants: the land of folklore and superstition” (190) in language that would not be out of place in Radcliffe’s romances. Indeed, his take on Harker’s geographical journey as a journey backwards in time reflects Baldick and Mighall’s comments on the Gothic fiction of the 1790s:

To the Protestant mind, Italy, Spain, and southern France were as much temporal as geographic realms...thus the English tourist, like the one who features in the first pages of Radcliffe’s *The Italian* (1797), could encounter “Gothic” institutions merely by visiting Catholic countries, traveling in time as well as space. Gothic novels thus thrive on anachronistic emphases, and their narrative effects derive from the clash between “modernity” and “antiquity,” whether the former finds itself misplaced in the latter, or the latter lives beyond its proper scope and survives into the present. (279)

In classic Gothic literature, the fearful peasants themselves are anachronisms. Their superstition meets with mixed success, and is usually undercut, as in Radcliffe, by a deferred natural explanation. The vampire, however, is the most literal embodiment of antiquity which “lives beyond its proper scope and survives into the present.” Here the superstition of the *folk* serves a very specific function, an anachronistic weapon exhumed to fight an anachronistic foe. In Taylor’s terms, we might say that a buffered self, whose

system of belief is bulwarked against the *idea* of the vampire, is afforded no protection from the literal vampire: only the porous self, living in fear of the supernatural, has developed the rituals to combat it.

Ianthe, then, is not only an emblem of the *folk* but an emblem of the porous self. Constructing herself—and Aubrey, with whom she pleads—as unprotected by modern rationality, she must instead develop alternate means of defence. From this, then, comes an urgency to silence Ianthe before she can pass on her vampire lore to Aubrey—and before he can transmit it, like a disease, back to England, which the text strongly implies remains the landed Lord Ruthven's home and his hunting ground of choice. If the damning word of Ruthven's monstrous true nature were to “get out” in England—as it certainly did for Byron—he, too, might be an exile from his ancestral soil, a situation Byron weathered much better than most vampires could, given their traditional connection to the nourishing earth of their homeland or unholy graves.

In a sense, Ianthe is Ruthven's real enemy: like Van Helsing, she holds the power of folklore, and folklore here is figured as the ancestral weapon which can unravel his deceptions. That Ianthe is a beautiful young girl, who also embodies the stereotypical role of vampiric prey, makes his killing of her possible within the usual habits of vampirism; but her role as a bridge between antiquity and modernity, as a liaison between the would-be hero Aubrey and the “old men” of Greece, are what make her killing urgently necessary.

Given that Ianthe's role is so infrequently played by young women in vampire-stories, and so frequently by the “old men” to whom she refers, it is worth noting that young girls like Ianthe remain Lord Ruthven's exclusive prey. Even when Aubrey is

initiated into the secret vampire-lore of porous antiquity, Ruthven's solution is to compel him to an oath of silence, rather than to turn on him as he turns on the women, with sexualized vampiric predation. If Ruthven was truly meant to pillory Byron publicly, this seems to be a missed opportunity to attack him for his purported bisexuality. As a result, in spite of a critical background increasingly fascinated by Byron's homosexual tendencies,<sup>127</sup> there are curiously few queer-theory close readings of *The Vampyre*, but for a very short passage (pp.58-60) in Gelder's *Reading the Vampyre*. In his book *The Culture of Queers*, Richard Dyer fairly misreads a passage in Nina Auerbach's *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (pp.13-18), which he believes suggests that Byron's "Fragment of a Tale" and Polidori's *The Vampyre* are both "based, fairly evidently, on their authors' morbidly homo-erotic relationship" (Dyer 70). But the terminology belongs to Dyer, not to Auerbach, whose language of "[i]ntimacy and friendship" (14) is suggestive but more balanced concerning the undercurrents of Polidori's tale. Even MacCarthy's *Byron: Life and Legend*, which is extraordinarily well-researched and deeply invested in redefining Byron as predominantly homosexual, finds little to say on the matter. If Polidori, like Aubrey, was forced to silence on the "Greek secrets" of his predatory traveling companion, he has "remembered his oath" very well indeed, even within the lampooning subtext of *The Vampyre*. Aubrey, a man, cannot be preyed upon; Ianthe, who *must* be preyed upon, must therefore be a young woman.

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<sup>127</sup> The critical fascination with Byron's womanizing, spearheaded in the 1970s by works such as Margot Strickland's *The Byron Women* or Doris Langley Moore's *Lord Byron: Accounts Rendered* (both 1974), have been supplanted in recent years by works which privilege his relationships with men. Fiona MacCarthy's extraordinary biography, *Byron: Life and Legend* (2002), likely overcorrects for the previous neglect of Byron's homosexual tendencies when she writes that

in her book *Lord Byron: Accounts Rendered* Doris Langley Moore has argued that Byron's love affairs with women were his main emotional focus, his relations with boys being no more than diversions. I believe the opposite is true...Byron's innate sexual orientation towards boys explains many of the lingering puzzles of his history. (xii-xiii)

At the same time, while the sexual politics of *The Vampyre* certainly colour its relationship to pre-modern folklore and the value of superstition, they do not get us any closer to resolving what seems, at first glance, to resist or even reverse the transition we might expect between the porous self of antiquity and the buffered self of the modern protagonist. How are we to explain the return to medieval belief which, in vampire fiction, paradoxically allows the ancient supernatural threat to be finally put to rest? The return to a porous imaginary goes practically unrealized in “Christabel”<sup>128</sup>; in *The Vampyre* it is somewhat aborted, realized in Aubrey but silenced before he can act on his reconnection to the knowing, porous self; and finally in *Dracula*, the return is fully realized through Van Helsing, who through the synthesis of folklore and medicine brings the porous imaginary fully into the modern sphere. In all cases it represents an increasingly complete archetypal model in which the vampire, as threat, prompts a favorable return to “something like” a pre-modern state. The key questions here in relation to Taylor center on how we might better define that state, and how we might account for it: to echo the two fundamental questions of “Christabel,” what is it, and how did it come here?

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<sup>128</sup> It is typical of “Christabel,” especially within the “multiple identities” context I have examined here, that if there is any initiation of Christabel into the mysteries of the past, it is through Geraldine, whose “initiation” of Christabel takes on yet another dimension here. Whether connected with sexual initiation, or whether through the vampire’s fangs (which make Christabel “porous” in the most literal sense), the initiation of Christabel is enacted, if it is enacted at all, by Geraldine. Christabel’s knowing protests at the fragment’s end mirror Aubrey’s helpless, raging silence; and by this time Sir Leoline, not Christabel, takes center stage as the unknowing victim, suggesting that Christabel—like Aubrey—has been transformed by knowledge.

## Chapter 5: Vampires of a Porous East

### 5.1 On The Borders of Re-Enchantment

It is a characteristic of Taylor's model that there is really no going back. An end to subtraction-stories doesn't mean that every condition or state of belief is forever available in the same conditions as ever: by its very nature, it means the opposite. New discourse cannot be un-invented, and so the proliferation of discursive possibilities which cannot be fully subtracted effectively denies us a return to a condition of fewer possibilities. A fuller, immanent relationship to the enchanted world may still be possible; in isolated instances, it may even be the dominant option. But it can never again be the *only* option in the way it was for the majority of pre-modern Christendom. Like an assembled appliance or an unfolded tent, the exploded pluralism of secular modernity cannot be put back in its original box: it stubbornly and sometimes inexplicably refuses to fold inward and fit as it once did.

This does not stop movements toward the enchanted or continued reaching towards porousness, however—nor, for the most part, does the buffered social imaginary believe porousness to be a waste of time, or some kind of barbaric state from which we have progressed. We still have our rituals, after all—our carnivals, our funerals, and even our vampire-stories continue to constitute a gesture of return, if not a fully realized return, to the porous past or, in Edmund Burke's words, "something like it" (120).

At least in part, the first germ of an explanation for this effort to return may lie in *The Re-Enchantment of the World*, a 2009 anthology on the forces and counter-forces of Weberian disenchantment which has clearly been informed and necessitated by *A Secular Age*. In an essay on literary uses of the supernatural, Nicholas Paige writes:

despite the triumph of instrumental reason that Weber dubbed “the disenchantment of the world,” an older superstitious worldview refuses to disappear, and stages intermittent raids—Mesmerism, ESP, Roswell—into an otherwise predictable, quantified world of well-ordered things. Yet [the *re-* in re-enchantment] carries a powerful hint of estrangement or distancing as well. It cannot simply be that reason and credulity continue to claw at each other’s throats, and that we call the residual beliefs of those who persist in thinking unscientifically re-enchanted. If enchantment implies belief, re-enchantment implies something more like the memory of what it might be like to believe. (159)

So far, Paige’s version of re-enchantment corresponds with Taylor’s “subtractionless” disenchantment story. It agrees with the idea that an old, superstitious worldview—in a sense, an old social imaginary—is never really replaced by a new one, unless, perhaps, the new social imaginary is in part constituted by the old (or by, in Paige’s terms, the memory of the old). The “estrangement” of re-enchantment gives us a new way of understanding the uncanny beyond its sexualized Freudian context; it suggests, furthermore, that the re-experience of porousness, if that is what we are approaching through this literature, is categorically different from the experience of the original porousness common to medieval audiences.

We might, by similarly interrogating the “re-” of re-experience, characterize it as in some sense inauthentic, in the same way that Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* is not authentically a medieval prose romance, in the way that McPherson’s Ossian poetry is

not authentically an ancient Gaelic work. But even without entering into a discourse of “privileged authenticity,” exalting what we had then over what we might achieve now, there is still a visible and important difference between the porousness that was once immanent in everyday life then and the porousness that is accessible now.

For Paige, the “re” of re-enchantment signifies a specifically modern relationship between the modern reader/self and the object of enchantment. Works of supernatural fantasy, in his words, “play at reducing as much as possible the remove with which we experience enchantments, so as to cause our disenchantment to teeter briefly, as if threatening to pull us back down into belief” (159).

The threat of being pulled back down is usually a small one; the stability of our buffered position is shaken slightly and teeters only for a moment. This is not really a full step back from the buffered self, deliberate or otherwise. The “bulwarks of unbelief,”<sup>129</sup> to use another of Taylor’s key terms, have already been raised. To extend this metaphor, the walls and ramparts of the self have already been fortified to keep out supernatural menace. To wander beyond those walls at leisure, as readers of terror-fiction do, does not amount to unmaking them. As an act of re-enchantment, then, the journey backwards is never fully realized: we arrive back at something *like* porousness, but not porousness itself, at least not in the fullest sense of Taylor’s definition.

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<sup>129</sup> This term is a necessary corruption of a phrase that appears *verbatim* in *A Secular Age* as “bulwarks of belief” (25 et *passim*). Here, I think it clearer in the context of Paige to describe the construct in question as “bulwarks of *unbelief*,” even though these seemingly opposite phrases refer to essentially the same thing. In *A Secular Age*, we have a shift from one kind of belief to another; in Paige’s language, on the other hand, “belief” itself seems to be a shorthand for a *porous* system of belief—that is, belief in the supernatural, in a pre-modern system of enchantment—hence I’ve gone with *unbelief* here to express the idea of a disjunctive relationship with what Paige means by belief, not with all belief in general.

This “likeness” to porousness sheds new light on my earlier comments<sup>130</sup> on the “pleasurable frisson” identified by Burke and the Aikins in relation to the sublime. The extremely deliberate and fragile wording of Burke’s “passion similar to terror” (120) is now illuminated by the notion of similarity inherent in Nicholas Paige’s model of re-enchantment. In his terms, the terror of the Gothic supernatural is really just “re-terror,” a modern and safely remote descendant of the vulnerability Taylor finds in authentically pre-modern social imaginaries.

One prominent example of Taylor’s porous self is the idea of demonic possession or control, a thread which is carried forward in the Gothic mode through Fuseli’s *The Nightmare*, through the demonic return of Oneiza in Southey’s *Thalaba*, and even through the body language of Christabel’s frenzied and hysterical<sup>131</sup> fit after Geraldine has worked her magic. In *A Secular Age*, Taylor observes that

porousness is most clearly in evidence in the fear of possession. Demons can take us over[...]once again, the evil spirit has more than just weird and impressive external powers. The malevolence is more invasive than this. It can sap our very will to resist, our will to survive. It can penetrate us as living, willing beings, with our own purposes and intent. We can’t restrict its action to the “external” realm. (35-6)

Clearly Coleridge’s “Christabel” plays with the idea of this kind of porousness. The fluidity of identity in the poem, which sets it apart from the simplified fairy-romance tradition in which it is founded, is an ironically modern way by which Geraldine can be said to “infect” Christabel. The metaphors of infection, penetration, and possession are all

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<sup>130</sup> pp.23-5.

<sup>131</sup> See also Karen Swann’s “‘Christabel’: The Wandering Mother and the Enigma of Form” for the full richness of the meaning of “hysterical” here.

appropriate here. But inherent in the poem, too, is the idea that we must be, in some sense, willingly porous for this to occur.

Geraldine's swoon at the gate, causing Christabel to carry her across the threshold, is typical of the folkloric vampire's inability to enter uninvited; the walls of Langdale Hall, like the bulwarks of Taylor's metaphor, are more than sufficient to hold her out if her presence is disallowed. The metaphor of vampiric invitation works for the whole business of modern supernatural terror, which must be invited past the barriers of modernity. Unlike the demons of the New Testament, who force themselves on victims with comparative ease, these modern monsters rely on willingness: the buffered self is empowered to resist them. We might be tricked or coerced into tasting their fruit, as Laura does in Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market"; but as her resolute sister Lizzie demonstrates, if we are sufficiently unwilling, no power of theirs can force them upon us:

One can lead a horse to water,  
 Twenty cannot make him drink.  
 Tho' the goblins cuffed and caught her,  
 Coaxed and fought her,  
 Bullied and besought her,  
 Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,  
 Kicked and knocked her,  
 Mauled and mocked her,  
 Lizzie uttered not a word;  
 Would not open lip from lip  
 Lest they should cram a mouthful in[.] (ll.422-32)

Is Rossetti's "Goblin Market," written in 1859 and published in 1862, too dramatic a leap forward from the Romantics to provide an effective comparison? On the issue of supernatural vulnerability, the same systems are at work; in some cases, as in Rossetti's poem, what we have is a glimpse at the result of the movements occurring within Romanticism. Both poems, in spite of the years between them, are participating in

the same discourse of secularization, and while the Romantic and Victorian poetries are frequently (and rightly) spoken of as widely different schools, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood provide an exception, being in some ways as much a nostalgic re-experience of Romanticism as of the medieval. We should remember, too, that Christina Rossetti was Polidori's niece, and that her brother William Michael was the first editor of Polidori's diary: these traditions are not as remote from each other as the critical trend toward periodized specialization<sup>132</sup> would lead us to believe.

At work in both poems is the same theme of threshold, a theme often characterized as psychosexual in the Freudian sense, in which the sexualized body is both the vehicle and the real subject of supernatural penetration. We might find in this, I think, a psychosocial reading in which body and castle alike represent a modern social imaginary, which accepts or resists penetration by porous concerns—by supernatural forces—according to a number of factors. In both poems, the thresholds are defined and defended by deliberate agency: like the goblin fruit at Lizzie's mouth, or, in counterpoint, at Laura's mouth, Geraldine must now be *admitted* to Langdale Hall, invited in (whether naïvely or knowingly), or she cannot pass.

The way forward, the way in, is thus shut to Geraldine without the help of Christabel, who is not a passive object in the fall of herself and her buffered home, but a pivotal player in it. This new dependency of the supernatural on the lowering of buffers is characteristic of the modern self, and the theme of invitation in "Christabel," in addition to being a key vampiric marker, is a marked change from pre-modern tradition. The

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<sup>132</sup> Antony Harrison's *Victorian Poets and Romantic Poems: Intertextuality and Ideology* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1990) combats this attitude to periodization with some valour, and provides a more thorough exploration of the relevant links between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Romantics than I can offer here.

succubae and incubi of medieval religious and quasi-religious tradition, with which the sexualized vampire has been compared and from which it is often said to descend, do not wait for invitation. They come as they please, and cannot be banished by human agency but only by an opposing magic—exorcism especially, but in a more general sense, the proprietary magic of the pre-modern faithful, what Taylor calls “the ‘white magic’ of the church” (*A Secular Age* 72).

A typical example of this old-world sort of succubus is the Empusa<sup>133</sup> who seduces Menippus in Philostratus’s *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.<sup>134</sup> The example is an especially resonant one in a Romantic context, given that Keats’s long poem *Lamia* is a direct adaptation of the tale. The extent of Keats’s familiarity with the original text has been the subject of some shoddy research in popular studies of the vampire: J. Gordon Melton’s *Vampire Book: Encyclopedia of the Undead* finds that “[a]s Keats did not read Greek, and no English translation of the *Life of Apollonius* had been published, he had to rely upon Richard F. Burton’s version of the story in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*” (349-50). While Burton’s text is a clear influence on Keats, Melton ignores the crucial 1809 translation of the *Life of Apollonius* by Edward Berwick,<sup>135</sup> which recent scholarship<sup>136</sup> has found at least as important to *Lamia*’s development.

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<sup>133</sup> Initially Empusa (Ἐμψουσα) is the proper name for the daughter of Hecate and Mormo. Her *modus operandi* of drinking men’s blood and draining their strength as they slept resonates with several classic images of the incubus/succubus, particularly Fuseli’s *The Nightmare*. Over time the name Empusa comes to signify a species of such blood-drinking succubae. See also Robert Graves’s entry on the Empusae in *The Greek Myths* (London: Penguin, 1990). Graves glosses the etymology of empusae (somewhat questionably) to mean “forcers-in” (190) suggesting a supernatural creature with greater power than the Romantic-era monsters I am studying here.

<sup>134</sup> There are few modern scholarly translations of the *Life of Apollonius*; the best is probably by Christopher P. Jones (2 vols., Cambridge, MA: Loeb [Harvard UP], 2005).

<sup>135</sup> Berwick, Rev. Edward (trans.). *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana, Translated from the Greek of Philostratus*. London: T. Payne, 1809.

Of fundamental importance in the case of this succubus is Keats's attempt to retell an ancient tale in what is essentially an ancient mode. His *Lamia* is modeled after Philostratus much in the way that the shorter "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," which has long been viewed<sup>137</sup> as a vampire-poem in its own right, has been modeled on medieval court poetry.<sup>138</sup> While Romantic irony is a key to Keats and his work (and it is also, for reasons we will come back to, a key to Byron and especially to *The Giaour*), this is not for him a formal irony, which is to say an irony of genre: these two "succubus poems," unlike "Christabel," preserve more of the early porousness that defines their fated heroes' wholesale vulnerability to the supernatural. There is no question of the pale knight's vulnerability to the Belle Dame, which hinges on no act of his own: he is in the wrong wild meadow at the wrong time, and from the moment he meets the fated creature, he is lost. Christabel, too, meets her seductive monster in the wild land beyond the social buffers: "in each case," writes Thomas McFarland, "the lady is met outside the boundaries of protective enclosure...outside the protections and expectations of ordinary society" (54-5). Unlike Keats's knight, however, Christabel has internalized these social buffers to an extent. By existing farther along a complex spectrum toward bufferedness, she forces upon Geraldine a far more complex pantomime of disarming and seduction. Every layer of protection between her and the supernatural monster, from the castle wall

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<sup>136</sup> The strongest argument for Keats's debt to the Berwick translation of Philostratus is made by Maneck Daruwala in "Strange Bedfellows: Keats and Wollstonecraft, *Lamia* and Berwick" (*Keats-Shelley Review* 11 [1997]: 83-132).

<sup>137</sup> The earliest article in this vein, so to speak, is probably Edwin R. Capp's "La Belle Dame as Vampire" in *Philological Quarterly* 27.4 (Oct 1948): 89-92.

<sup>138</sup> The poem borrows its title from a medieval French poem by Alain Chartier, written about 1424. A Middle English translation, once misattributed to Chaucer, was written "by Richard Ros of Leicestershire about 1450" (Head 620) and available during Keats's lifetime.

to Geraldine's nightgown, is another barrier that must be systematically dismantled before the attack can occur.

This resistance to the predatory act, however we may choose to frame that act (penetration, corruption, vampirism), exists not merely because Christabel is appropriately virginal and Keats's knight is appropriately lusty, as befits their respective literary traditions. On the contrary, we can see through comparison with the chronologically later (but generically earlier) "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" a different and new attitude in "Christabel"—one perhaps ahead of its time—in which a buffered heroine, who is in some ways the representative of a more buffered audience, undergoes a transformation of sorts, plunging back down into belief and inviting the reader with her. This reading gives us something more from "Christabel" than a simple yoking of the pre-modern succubus with the newly-sexualized Romantic vampire on the simplistic grounds that both are supernatural seducers. It gives us an alternative, or a few alternatives, to the simple readings of Romantic and Victorian vampirism as a direct descendant of the succubus, uninflected by any shift toward secularity.

This simpler reading has dominated criticism of vampire literature for most of the twentieth century, and has changed relatively little since its descent from psychoanalyst Ernest Jones's *On the Nightmare*, published first as a short paper in the *American Journal of Insanity*,<sup>139</sup> and later as a book-length study under the same name.<sup>140</sup> As Sigmund Freud's first English-speaking student and biographer, Jones is probably more responsible than any other single figure for the prevalence and persistence of Freudian readings of the vampire, which absorb the figure into the context of the

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<sup>139</sup> Jones, Ernest. "On the Nightmare." *American Journal of Insanity* 66.3 (January 1910): 383-417.

<sup>140</sup> Jones, Ernest. *On the Nightmare*. London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1931.

incubus/succubus<sup>141</sup> in a relatively uncomplicated way. These readings have long overlooked the question of agency, of participation, by one means or another, in the lowering of buffers, which we now have a new apparatus to answer.

I have spoken briefly here<sup>142</sup> of “Mary, A Fragment,” an anonymous story most interesting to me because of its attitudes—attitudes frequently shared, no doubt, by both readers and detractors of supernatural fiction—concerning the willful lowering of buffers against the supernatural. In the harsher rhetoric of the Enlightenment, this seems to consist not only of suspending disbelief, but of abandoning “good sense” or Reason, which in the eyes of detractors was the road to enjoying what was then called “terrorist fiction.” The model at work in “Mary, A Fragment” echoes this: to pick up, open and engage with the supernatural romance, as Henry does, is to open a passageway for monsters such as the spectral Mary. To close the book and set it aside is to re-create the hermetic<sup>143</sup> seal, to bar the passage between the supernatural and the world of Reason. By falling asleep (itself a liminal state) in the act of reading, Henry has failed to close the portal: he has left himself vulnerable to supernatural forces in a way that Taylor might call powerfully pre-modern (Mary herself, after all, appears as both a literal nightmare and a succubus of sorts). It is only by the insistence of the rational world—in this case, his master’s dog—that Henry is drawn back from the brink of porousness, as one might

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<sup>141</sup> See, for instance, Nicholas Kiessling’s “Demonic Dread: The Incubus Figure in British Literature,” in *The Gothic Imagination*, ed. G. R. Thompson (Pullman: Washington State UP, 1974): 22-41. Kiessling’s essay is a strong yet typical example of a genre of vampire/succubus criticism that flourished during the 1970s and ’80s.

<sup>142</sup> p.88-93.

<sup>143</sup> By “hermetic” here, although I primarily mean “impassable” or “impermeable,” I’m also thinking of the word’s etymological origins in Hermes Trismegistus as a patron of the occult, alchemy, and early science. The relationship between “stepping out” of dangerous writing by putting it aside is similarly understood in the period in a variety of ways ranging from the occult to the scientific (as influenced by Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*).

be drawn from a well: thus is he saved, in Nicholas Paige's terminology, from being pulled back down into belief.

The opening of the book, like the opening of the gates in "Christabel," stylizes and even ritualizes the willful lowering of defenses. In later works, especially those informed by the same advances in sexual and cognitive psychology that would inform Freud, the sexual openness of supernatural victims can be discussed in these same terms. What we have in this view is in some ways the opposite of the Freudian story. The predation of the vampire is not reducible to a sexual metaphor; rather, sex itself becomes a metaphor of supernatural vulnerability, a baring of the porous self. My above description of "Mary, A Fragment," can certainly be read in highly sexualized terms: all this talk of the opening of passages, breaking of seals, and supernatural penetration as a road to irrational, even hysterical, pleasure gives more than ample ammunition for a Freudian reading. But Freudian criticism has exhausted itself reading the supernatural as a shorthand for sex; and here, I would just as freely argue the reverse reading—that we can read the highly complicated sexuality of these stories as a symbol for their equally complex relationship with the supernatural. Sexual openness is an easily understood, visible representation of the lowering of defenses, whether against sexual or supernatural predation.

These two predatory forces—the sexual and the supernatural—are so closely entwined by the later nineteenth century that it becomes difficult to separate them, or to privilege one over the other. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* reinforces this connection by establishing a rote narrative pattern of supernatural horror that persists well into modern

horror and B-slasher films.<sup>144</sup> Lucy is fatally victimized by the supernatural because she is cast as wanton and promiscuous. Mina is spared, in the end, perhaps because—like Lizzie in “Goblin Market”—she is resolute and refuses to admit the hostile force. This model has been thoroughly analyzed in the context of sexuality,<sup>145</sup> but never before in terms of its relationship to the cusp of secularity, in terms of the space between disenchanted and re-enchanted worlds.

Once the supernatural evil has been let in—we have seen it happen through vice in *Dracula*, through naïveté in “Christabel” and “The Vampyre,” and perhaps through curiosity as much as wantonness in both “Goblin Market” and “La Morte Amoureuse”—it can only be stopped by letting in with it the ancient lore, a second helping of the goblin fruit—a second dose of the same belief that caused the trouble in the first place. Dracula’s unceremonious death, impaled and beheaded by a pair of mundane knives in a moment of bathos, is nevertheless catalyzed and made possible by Van Helsing’s vampire-lore, which brings the protagonists to the final confrontation. Their efforts to put Van Helsing’s knowledge into practice are realized via thoroughly modern technology—the railroad, the transfusion, the psychiatrist, the gramophone—but much like the body of Frankenstein’s monster, modern science merely produces and assembles the building blocks: something equally supernatural and occult must give the final breath of life to these assembled components. It is Van Helsing’s re-enchantment that empowers Dracula’s enemies; in “Christabel,” it is similarly Christabel’s own re-enchanted belief,

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<sup>144</sup> See especially the first *Nightmare on Elm Street* film, and any other horror films whose protagonists are co-ed teenagers: in an era of greater sexual permissiveness, the youth of the protagonists serves to return the sex act to a place of questionable morality, where once an unmarried state would have sufficed.

<sup>145</sup> Studies of the wantonness/chastity dichotomy in Victorian literature are too numerous to catalogue. A quintessential study of this sort from recent years is Roxanne Eberle’s *Chastity and Transgression in Women’s Writing, 1792-1897: Interrupting the Harlot’s Progress* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

even though it only comes to her through her own victimization by Geraldine (a creature she comes, in the Biblical sense, to “know”), that might have allowed her to save the gullible Sir Leoline in the unfinished final act of the narrative.

The power of re-enchanted belief in these stories speaks to a complexity underlying Taylor’s model: in spite of binary language and a series of (enchantment/disenchantment, porous/buffered), the idea of re-enchantment as something distinct from enchantment suggests a persistent desire for *something like*<sup>146</sup> the porous self—at least, to use a genre-theory term, a porousness in modal form—long after the buffered self has gained a foothold. Those readers who readily engage with supernatural fiction (and it is clear that in the early 1800s, as now, this was not everyone) are in some sense reaching hopefully toward re-enchantment, toward re-establishing a memory of how it might have felt to have been porous.

There is always, for the modern, buffered reader, the possibility of return from such a retrograde journey: Cooper and Donaldson-Evans write that “readers of fantastic literature are similar to tourists<sup>147</sup> too in that the trip they take is circular: the result of their reading is to reinforce the hold of reality, to underline the norms of existence in their, that is, the real world” (128). In many ways, the circular journey of the reader of the fantastic, from the quotidian world to the mythic and back again, does restate and reinforce the boundaries of mundane reality. But this is not really the *point* of the fantastic, or at least not the primary one, any more than returning home is the main

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<sup>146</sup> Cf. Edmund Burke’s “terror, or something like it” (120), on p.23-24 here.

<sup>147</sup> In a related footnote, Cooper and Donaldson-Evans are wise to point out the shared etymology of “tour” and “tower,” both of which carry linguistic connotations of roundness, of ending at the beginning.

objective of going on a tour: it is merely one pleasurable aspect, one significant function, of fantasy.

There is nothing particularly groundbreaking in this “Grand Tour” analogy for reading the fantastic. The stock phrase “transporting the reader” has long been used to describe a certain process of reading, especially where the suspension of disbelief is concerned. But there is a degree of appropriateness in applying this model both to the wanderlust of sentimental and Romantic-era gentry, and to the appetites of readers from the same period. But Taylor’s model allows us to see even the Grand Tour in a new light, allied in a sense with efforts to recapture a sense of porousness. The sublime experience of traveling in space as a vehicle toward re-enchantment has been well-chronicled in Gothic fiction; but in the context of re-enchantment the business of travel, to the Continent and especially to the East, becomes mythologized as a Gothic fiction of its own. There is a common thread of travel and perceived re-enchantment which runs from John Swinton and the *Three English Gentlemen* in 1734, to Byron in 1809 or 1816, and even to those undergraduates of this century—well-off young people of education and means—who “go backpacking in Europe” between degrees or in the summer of their third year. The key tradition of constructing the East as a mythologized vehicle of re-enchantment is still a living tradition, surviving (for good or ill) in the Orientalism still rooted in the English social imaginary; this, too, is a part of the larger story of secularization, and it becomes especially important as we turn toward Byron’s *Giaour*, whose relationship to the East marks a turn back toward the foreign-ness of the vampire as a marker of its modern relationship to the inaccessible mysteries of a porous past.

## 5.2 Re-Enchantment and the Oriental(ist) Vampire

In Baldick and Mighall's take on the Protestant Gothic construction of travel to Catholic countries as a sort of time-travel toward the medieval,<sup>148</sup> we have the seeds of a later Victorian construction of progressive society in which any departure from England—whether to Italy, to the “mysterious” Orient, to Wonderland or Neverland—is steeped in the same rhetoric of going backwards, not only within an imperialist model of “primitivity,” but also toward a world which is enchanted in the sense that invasive English reason has not yet disenchanting it. Places cast as remote in this kind of Romantic English narrative offer the promise of a complex re-enchantment, Nicholas Paige's kind of re-enchantment, in which the remote world is not simply a place resistant to the buffered self, but one against which and with whose aid the buffered self can be re-invented again and again.

In “Permanent Re-Enchantments,” Nicholas Paige reminds us of Voltaire's comments in his *Dictionnaire philosophique* that “half of Europe thinks the other half has long been and still is superstitious” (166). For Voltaire, this clearly references the same Protestant opposition to Catholic ritual and superstition that, for Baldick and Mighall, lie at the root of the progressive heroes' relationship to the medieval terrors in Gothic fiction. But on another level, this kind of relationship defines the places of Europe not only in relation to the specific historical context of Protestant-Catholic interactions, but in relation to the larger overarching relationship between the porous and buffered self,

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<sup>148</sup> See their whole article “Gothic Criticism,” but especially p. 279.

between the enchanted and disenchanted worlds they respectively inhabit. “In that sense,”

Paige writes of Voltaire,

disenchantment is not a moment we can locate, be it in seventeenth-century France or eighteenth-century England, or even a long process through which the stubborn bedrock of belief is slowly eroded. Disenchantment involves endlessly resuscitating—or downright inventing—an enchantment of some past, any past, so that a culture may think of itself as disenchanted. (166)

In a sense, I think, Paige’s notions of disenchantment depart from Taylor’s here. While both have common roots in Max Weber, Paige is speaking of a disenchantment (and re-enchantment) that exists outside of historical events—a perpetual, almost kairotic state. In this model, we are forever enchanting an elsewhere so that we might be disenchanted by comparison. There is, in Paige’s model, what we might call a continual imperative toward re-enchantment: within the analogy of geographic travel as a symbol of spiritual transport, we might call this a continual imperative toward pilgrimage.

For Taylor, on the other hand, the need to think of ourselves as disenchanted is itself a modern development. Taylor might agree that disenchantment is not something we can “locate” in a single chronological moment; indeed, the many contributing factors outlined in *A Secular Age* alone (and Taylor suggests there may be others) preclude any sort of “Big Bang theory” of North Atlantic secularization. Even so, Taylor’s secularization narrative is not a monomyth set kairotically outside of the *temporis* of its contributing sociohistorical conditions. While *A Secular Age* talks extensively of kairotic things, its landmarks of secularization are not themselves kairotic. For Taylor, the complex web of forces which exerts a collective social pressure toward secularization is made up of historical events which occur in chronological time. In a secular social

imaginary, we may be left with the kind of perpetual disenchantment/re-enchantment interplay Paige identifies, but this is an addition to the self brought on by the shift to secular modernity. It cannot be used, for instance, to make sense of the medieval pilgrimage the same way it can be used to make sense of the Grand Tour: Paige's model holds true for the exotic travels of the Three English Gentlemen<sup>149</sup> or Lord Byron, who invest themselves in resuscitating an enchanted past to make sense of a modern, disenchanted world. But there must be some other explanation for the pilgrims of Chaucer's age, who travel, among other reasons, to bring their porous selves into the presence of relics. This is far different from the modern impulse, the Romantic impulse, toward pilgrimage—and while we need not come to understand the older, porous system in its complex entirety, we cannot fully understand the modern imperative toward re-enchantment unless we recognize it as something distinct and different, in spite of any formal similarities (pilgrimage, for instance) it may share with older forms.

I am reminded here of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which engages with both the modern colonial impulse and the mythologization of the East as interdependent qualities of "the West." We might easily draw similarities between the West of Said and Taylor's "North Atlantic" secular modernity, comprised mostly of Western Europe, and later the colonized Anglophone world. Said's descriptions of highly mythologized perceptions of the East echo in Baldick and Mighall's assessment of Gothic literature and in the Romantic obsession with the Orient. More importantly, they resonate within Paige's model, under which we must say the East is characterized by a place of porous enchantment so that the West may define itself, by exclusion, as disenchanted—though

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<sup>149</sup> I refer here to the "Travels of Three English Gentlemen" in the *Harleian Miscellany IV*, the 1734 work that brought the word "vampire" to widespread recognition in England. See my note 68, on page 100.

we have a system in which it is assumed that the “disenchanted,” buffered Westerner may satisfy his re-enchantment impulse simply by visiting an othered place.

In a famous chapter on pilgrims and pilgrimages, Said writes that

every European traveler or resident in the Orient has had to protect himself from unsettling influences[...]there were other sorts of threats than sex. All of them wore away the European discreteness and rationality of time, space, and personal identity. In the Orient one suddenly encountered unimaginable antiquity, inhuman beauty, boundless distance. (166-7)

I mean to consider this in the context of *The Giaour*, but I should first note that this kind of orientalism has already been unearthed, and partially explored, in Stoker’s *Dracula*.

One of the more influential readings of *Dracula* as xenophobic allegory (or, at least, as a work of powerful xenophobic subtext) has been Stephen D. Arata, in his 1990 article “The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization,” which is worth considering briefly here.

Arata’s re-positioning of *Dracula* into a historicist space is a limited historicization, as I will explore later:<sup>150</sup> contextualizing the novel in reference to the anxieties of its historical moment provides a sort of grounding in history, or at least in its zeitgeist, but this does not really situate it in reference to the texts surrounding it, from which a broader sense of history can be found. Nevertheless, Arata accomplishes what is for him the primary goal of bringing the text out of the universalist mire of psychoanalytic studies<sup>151</sup> and restoring to it a measure of cultural context. “While nothing

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<sup>150</sup> See especially my comments in Chapter 8.2.

<sup>151</sup> The specific targets of Arata’s corrective critique are primarily seminal psychoanalytic studies of *Dracula* from the 1970s and early ’80s. These include C.F. Bentley’s “The Monster in the Bedroom: Sexual Symbolism in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,” *Literature and Psychology* 22 (1972), 27-32; Stephanie Demetrakapoulous’s “Feminism, Sex-Role Exchanges, and Other Subliminal Fantasies in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,” *Frontiers* 2 (1977), 104-113, and Phyllis Roth’s “Suddenly Sexual Women in Bram Stoker’s

in psychoanalytic critical theory precludes a ‘historicist’ reading of literary texts,” he writes,

that theory has in practice been used almost exclusively to demonstrate, as Stoker’s most recent critic puts it, that *Dracula* is a “representation of fears that are more universal than a specific focus on the Victorian background would allow.”<sup>152</sup> Yet the novel’s very attachment to the “Victorian background”—what *The Spectator* in 1897 called its “up-to-dateness”—is a primary source of Stoker’s continuing power. Late-Victorian Gothic in general, and *Dracula* in particular, continually calls our attention to the cultural context surrounding and informing the text, and insists that we take that context into account. (622)

Arata’s answer to contextualizing *Dracula* is to establish a postcolonial narrative of “colonizer guilt,” resulting in a fear of, and then a fantasy of, reverse colonization, which appears incidentally in a number of fantastic works from the same period:

The fear is that what has been represented by the “civilized” world is on the point of being colonized by “primitive” forces...[f]antasies of reverse colonization are particularly prevalent in late-Victorian popular fiction. They occur not just in Haggard’s novels, but in Rudyard Kipling’s early fiction (“The Mark of the Beast,” “At the End of the Passage,” *The Light that Failed*), in Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories (*The Sign of Four*, “The Crooked Man”), in H. G. Wells’s science fiction tales (*The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*), and in many of the numerous adventure novels of G. A. Hope, Henry S. Merriman, and John Buchan. In each case, a terrifying reversal has occurred: the colonizer finds himself in the position of the colonized, the exploiter becomes exploited, the victimizer victimized. Such fears are linked to a perceived decline—racial, moral, spiritual—which makes the nation vulnerable to attack from more vigorous, “primitive” peoples.

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*Dracula*,” *Literature and Psychology* 27 (1977), 113-121. Arata’s inclusion of a much later general article, John Allen Stevenson’s “A Vampire in the Mirror: The Sexuality of *Dracula*,” *PMLA* 103 (1988), 139-149, suggests that the prevailing approach to *Dracula* has remained constant ever since, and provides a catalyzing rationale for his need to publish this corrective, re-historicizing reading in 1990.

<sup>152</sup> This quotation is from John Allen Stevenson’s “A Vampire in the Mirror: The Sexuality of *Dracula*,” of which Arata seems to have conceived his article as a direct rebuttal.

But fantasies of reverse colonization are more than products of geopolitical fears. They are also responses to cultural guilt. (623)

Here, then, we have in brief Arata's correction to a *Dracula* painted in the universalist terms of a sexual/Oedipal crisis. His substitute is the more specific cultural crisis of late-Victorian British imperialism,<sup>153</sup> and the focus on *Dracula*'s particular xenophobic relationship to the East is well-deserved. In Arata's reading, and in the host of later works<sup>154</sup> which make use of it, we have one successful version of construction of the vampire fully contextualized in the sense of foreignness. The association of colonizer's guilt—of comeuppance, even—in Arata's model renders the foreign vampire, the oppressed-turned-oppressor, in almost providential terms that are not so different from the “dead hand of the past,” an image which scholars of the Gothic have long carried forward to the vampire.<sup>155</sup>

In all nineteenth-century vampire narratives, but especially in Byron's *The Giaour*, I think it time to revisit and reconsider some of these associations of the vampire with the East, and perhaps to move away from readings of the whole vampire archetype as an emblem of a “restless” Orient that reacts to Western colonization with what Arata's or Cain's<sup>156</sup> readings of *Dracula* might present as “dead-hand” English anxieties of

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<sup>153</sup> Although Arata takes care to mention Stoker's Irishness, and to speculate briefly on how the text might interact with the British-Irish cultural divide, it is clear throughout that to him, the text is primarily a British text responding to British cultural crises.

<sup>154</sup> Studies influenced by Arata which cite this article prominently include Roxana Stuart's *Stage Blood: Vampires of the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Stage*, Susannah Clements's *The Vampire Defanged*, and Jimmie Cain's *Bram Stoker and Russophobia*. Arata seems to hold equal influence in literary studies (Cain's study of Stoker, for instance) and in pop-culture vampirology (as in Clements).

<sup>155</sup> See, for instance, Paul Cantor's “The Fall of the House of Ulmer: Europe vs. America in the Gothic Vision of *The Black Cat*,” in which a section on Gothic archetypes links the vampire to the Gothic through the dead-hand image (143).

<sup>156</sup> Jimmie E. Cain's later study, *Bram Stoker and Russophobia*, is informed and influenced by Arata's article, and places the work's xenophobia squarely in the more specific historical context of Russophobia and fears of all things Slavic in the decades following the Crimean War.

primitive or barbaric vengeance, in which payment for the sins of the colonialist fathers is brutally extracted from future generations. Arata's reading is well-suited to its original purpose, and to *Dracula*; but while Byron's vampire is certainly an Oriental construct of sorts, as Stoker's is, there are three central problems which prevent us from translating Arata's relationship of the vampire to the East back onto Byron.

The first of these problems is that the treatment of the East remains particularly homogenizing in a way that masks cultural specificity: for Arata, the threat of Count Dracula is still a threat founded in a simplified cultural binary, an us-versus them construction in the style of Carol Senf's earlier assertion that Dracula's chief threat is "a kind of reverse imperialism, the threat of the primitive trying to colonize the civilized world" ("*Dracula*" 164). Although recent postcolonial readings<sup>157</sup> continue to reveal Byron's relationship to eastern places as highly problematic, his extensive firsthand travels in Ottoman Greece, Albania and Turkey, even before the comparatively early publication of *The Giaour*, set Byron apart from his contemporaries and erode any suggestion that their homogenizing understanding of the East must necessarily apply to him. Even the extraordinarily well-educated William Beckford, renowned for his Oriental scholarship and travel-writing, and whose *Vathek* profoundly influenced *The Giaour*, did not have access to such a rich tapestry of firsthand experience: Beckford's travels prior to writing *Vathek* consist of three extended European tours conducted between 1777 and

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<sup>157</sup> *Byron and Orientalism*, published in 2006, is one of the more recent scholarly anthologies to focus fully on Byron's relationship to the East. The diversity of the collection and its constructions of Byron suggest that, rather than approaching the simplicity of the us-versus-them fear of reverse colonialism that characterizes (according to Arata) most of his countrymen, Byron's attitudes and relationship to the East remain complicated, problematic, and a matter of some heated debate.

1782,<sup>158</sup> during which time he studied Arabic extensively and became, by the standards of the day, extraordinarily well-read in it. By no accounts, however, did he travel farther east than Italy and Austria; and while Venice “in 1780...was a watering-place for Orientals” (Gemmett 80), we ought not to consider Beckford’s time there in the same light as Byron’s at the court of Ali Pasha in Ioannina<sup>159</sup> some years later, particularly given Beckford’s own candid estimate of Venice as a decadent wasteland of languor, “fitted up in a gay, flimsy taste, neither rich nor elegant” (I. 120). Of the Venetians themselves, Beckford writes,

I will never cite the Venetians as examples of vivacity. Their nerves unstrung by early debaucheries, allow no natural flow of lively spirits, and at best but a few moments of a false and feverish activity...I can scarcely regard their Eastern neighbours in a more lazy light; who, thanks to their opium and their harems, pass their lives in one perpetual doze. (I. 121-2)

Beckford’s languid characterization of Venice’s “Eastern neighbours” here is a far cry from the sword-clashing vigour of Hassan in *The Giaour*. In any case, whatever we might

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<sup>158</sup> Kenneth W. Graham, in his introductory notes to *Vathek*, charts a Grand Tour to Switzerland in 1777-8, a tour of Europe from the “low countries, through Germany and Austria to Italy” (12) in 1780-81, and a final tour of the same countries in 1782 conducted in extreme opulence, “travelling in state with three carriages, physician, harpichord-player, secretary, artist to make a pictorial record, and a variety of servants” (13). By the time he returned to the Continent again, for a Swiss honeymoon with Lady Margaret Gordon, he had left behind the completed manuscript of *Vathek* for translation (Graham 13).

<sup>159</sup> Ioannina sits in western Greece, in the centre of the Epiros (*Ηπειρος*) region, and serves as the region’s modern-day capitol. Although the region is generally considered part of Europe today, the court at the time of Byron’s was decidedly less European, having been held by the Ottomans since about 1430. Under Ali Pasha, who is described by K. E. Fleming as “not just a non-Greek, but a figure who by virtue of association with the Ottoman regime and religion was, to the Western Orientalist cultural imagination, wholly other” (10), Ioannina was a welcoming and accessible symbol of the East to Western travelers, but a symbol of the East just the same. Ioannina was far more directly immersed in all the specific cultural flavours of Turkey, Arabia, and lands more remote, than was a supposedly cosmopolitan centre. Ali Pasha, similarly, was “the most important Eastern neighbor of western Europe...a major factor in the geopolitics of the day” (7), a position hardly shared by the last Doges of Venice. Fleming’s title, *The Muslim Bonaparte*, refers to Ali Pasha by a nickname common among historians, suggestive not only of his enormous influence in East-West relations, but also perhaps of his great significance to Byron, entranced as he was with Napoleon’s character and his mythologized celebrity. As with his personal hero Napoleon, Peter Cochran notes that Byron “was fully aware of the depths of Ali’s barbarity; but never, it seems...lost a nostalgic affection for him” (22).

make of the differing Romantic attitudes toward the East, it is their difference itself that is important to recognize: even approaching the height of the British master narrative of the East, this narrative is a patchwork one, composed of numerous mythologizations which are not always in agreement with one another. Although Byron is certainly not immune to the allure of the common Orientalist shorthand (his feminization of Eastern landscapes<sup>160</sup> is the classic example), the specificity of his writing on Greek and Turkish matters frustrates most attempts to consider Byron's Orientalism, as such, as an aspect of some uniform English Orientalism.

The second problem with adapting Arata's vampires-and-the-East model is, thankfully, a simpler one to explain: in basic terms, Arata's crisis of reverse colonization is a markedly late-Victorian crisis. It is a crisis compounded, as Cain's *Stoker and Russophobia* indicates, by the fallout of the Crimean War in popular thought, which "reminded late Victorians...of their precarious place in a world of hostile imperial forces" (Cain 14). This late-Victorian anxiety does not translate backward onto the Romantics, and is an especially poor fit for the well-traveled and sometimes cynical Byron, whose relationship to English nationalism is deeply conflicted even before his exile from 1816 onwards. The intervening period between *The Giaour* and *Dracula* is a large one, and frequently characterized as "a century of transformation" (Williams 1).<sup>161</sup> This transformation takes the form, at some times, of radical upheaval; at others, it takes the

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<sup>160</sup> The feminization of Greece, in particular, with the intent of serving up the Greek independence movement's call to arms in a virtue-in-distress model palatable to English sensibility, is so prevalent in Byron's poetry that it comes to be recognized as an inseparable quality of "Byronism." See especially David Roessel's chapter on the "Greeces of Byron and Homer" (42-71) in his monograph *In Byron's Shadow: Modern Greece in the English and American Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).

<sup>161</sup> I am doubtful that so large a period can be effectively characterized at all by such large brush-strokes; here, in his introduction to Blackwell's *Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Chris Williams has the unenviable task of summarizing the predominant aspects and significant landmarks of the century in only a few pages. As might be expected, the 85 years between "The Giaour" and *Dracula* constitute, for Williams, the primary arena for most of these transformations.

form of gradual sociohistorical change, of which even Taylor's massive continuing movement toward secularization is only a single aspect. While there is admittedly a growing kinship throughout between the literary vampires of the period—between the *Giaour*, Ruthven, Gautier's *Clarimonde*, Stoker's *Dracula*, and even the pulp vampires like Varney—this does not amount to a sharing of the crises of the day. Even (or especially) Arata, whose primary interest is to restore some historical context to the crisis of *Dracula*, would argue that the model of vampiric function and significance he has built cannot be applicable beyond the confines of Stoker's novel: for him, an understanding of cultural context, and especially of the predominant cultural crisis at any given moment, is the key to understanding the vampire. He would be the first to admit, I think, that to bring his model of colonizer's guilt all the way back to *The Giaour* would be to arrive with a historicist key that did not fit the lock in question, a key whose lock, in fact, was yet to be invented.

There may be cause, when we arrive more properly at Stoker's *Dracula*, to return to Arata's model, which is considerably more appropriate when applied to its intended subject. But the third problem of Arata's model is perhaps the most insidious and difficult to solve, and here is a problem which infects (to use the language of Victorian vampirism) without prejudice vampire-texts of all periods equally. I have remarked that for Arata, the key to understanding *Dracula* is to understand the crisis of reverse colonization, the anxiety of colonizer's guilt and fear of barbaric retribution from an Orient still classified by British thought as not only primitive, but ancient and vengeful. In more general terms, Arata identifies this as the crisis of *Dracula* specifically, and with *Dracula* as his example constructs a model in which the vampire becomes the allegory

for a historically definite cultural crisis, rather than for the universalist psychic crises of a previous generation of psychoanalytic vampire-critics. This revisionist approach departs from the Freudian school in which the vampire's meaning is purely psychosexual, and similarly escapes the Jungian confines of the vampire as manifestation of the shadow.

It is worth noting, where Jung is invoked, that he had virtually nothing to say about the vampire himself: Angela Connolly finds that he “showed no interest apart from one brief reference where he suggests...when a man's relationship with the anima is not sufficiently developed at a conscious level, then it gives rise to states of possession in which the anima takes on a decidedly negative character which can be exemplified in images such as the succubus or female vampire” (96). Much of the association that has occurred between the vampire and the Jungian shadow has been at the popular level, occurring primarily in less scholarly “vampire encyclopedias” (Melton's *The Vampire Book: the Encyclopedia of the Undead*, for instance) where the collective unconscious is frequently presented, without much analysis, as an explanation for the vampire's popularity—and so describing readings of the vampire as shadow-manifestations as “Jungian” speak to an established tradition of later Jungian readings, rather than to Jung specifically,

Ultimately, though, whether we treat the vampire as a symbol of collective/primordial (Jungian), personal (Freud), or specific cultural (Arata) crisis, we are trapped within the same aesthetics of crisis: in all these systems we are lured into assuming that all vampires exist as symbols (worse, allegories) of anxiety, and that the only work left to be done is to determine what exactly the author, reader, and social imaginary of a specific text are so afraid of.

None of these approaches are necessarily wrong ones: it is entirely sensible to deconstruct the monsters of human imagination as symbols of repressed terrors. In particular, there are a few systems my approach displaces that should not be discarded or abandoned by scholarship: first, there is value to placing Dracula squarely in the Campbellian monomyth as the hypermasculine dark father of Harker's hero's journey. A series of strong readings in the late 1980s offering a more conflicted, sexually transgressive portrait of Dracula's gender was spearheaded and inspired by Christopher Craft's "Kiss Me with Those Red Lips: Gender and Inversion in Stoker's *Dracula*" in 1984; but in spite of this gender-fluidity, there are ample structural reasons to discuss Dracula in the context of Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* as a hypermasculine father-figure: he is ancient, wealthy, hirsute, sexually voracious, keeps a harem, first provides for and later opposes an emasculated Harker, and serves as the catalyst for Harker's ultimate rite of manhood. Such Campbellian readings and Craft's more complicated picture of a transgendered Dracula provide equally valid ways of reading the text: Dracula is at heart a shape-shifter, even more so than Geraldine, and his capability to perform any gender for any critic is a derived function of this.

Finally, there remains enormous potential in unearthing from *Dracula* the same colonial anxiety that figures two years later in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, a work which may share its central concerns but is seldom discussed alongside it. Much could be said, I think, particularly in the wake of Jimmie E. Cain's *Stoker and Russophobia*, about the thematic parallels between Dracula's mad servant Renfield and Conrad's ghoulish, nameless Russian, whose attitude toward Kurtz occupies a similar nexus of terror and fanatical awe. Early nineteenth-century medicine and natural philosophy describe a state

of being “deranged by fear, or suffering dementation” (Darlington 258)<sup>162</sup> that matches the characteristic madness of Renfield and the Russian; examining this awe-inspired madness, particularly in the context of each text as a nexus of conflicting colonial nationalisms and the anxieties surrounding them, is work that still needs to be done. At the same time, all these “approaches of anxiety” are necessarily limiting, and the answers they provide to the central questions of vampires in literature (“why do we write about vampires, and what are they *doing* in literature?”) have been narrower and more incomplete, in my judgment, than they need to be. Vampires are symbols of crisis and anxiety, certainly: but they are much more than that, as well.

In the pursuit of the first half of this picture, the half of anxiety, we have already inherited through the writings of Arata and others a complicated history, both in literature and in criticism, of vampires as symbols of the East. I have sketched out here very roughly some of the ways in which the idea of the vampire as a necessarily “oriental” construct has already been advanced. But I hope it is evident why such work will be of limited and very specific use as we go on with vampires in the context of Taylor’s narrative, which is at heart a European (or more properly, in his words, a “North Atlantic”) narrative. I have talked briefly about the vampire as a figure of *kairos*—that is, a symbolic representative of an old order of time, one which is outside and above chronological measure. When we treat Dracula as a being from “days of yore,” rather than a citizen of earlier centuries, we read him as an agent of *kairos*, or at least as a modern agent dressed in the symbolic trappings of kairotic time.

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<sup>162</sup> In an interesting connection, the 1808 letter I have cited here on the subject of “dementation” discusses the term in relation to the fascination of serpents, which at this time was connected by Coleridge, Byron and others to the vampiric gaze (see my remarks on p.153-57 here).

In characterizing Dracula as a purely kairoitic figure, though, we find ourselves at cross-purposes with *In Search of Dracula*, the hugely influential 1972 study by McNally and Florescu which seeks to historicize Dracula in *chronos* by equating him with the specific figure of Vlad Țepeș the Impaler, whose patronymic name “Dracula” Stoker lifted for the character. That Dracula is *named* for Țepeș is generally now accepted; and owing in large part to McNally and Florescu’s study,<sup>163</sup> popular imaginaton now holds that Stoker’s character *is*, in literal fact, Vlad the Impaler, risen as a vampire after his death in 1476. It makes for a good story, of course, and numerous twentieth-century fiction writers have exploited the connection;<sup>164</sup> but for the sake of this good story McNally and Florescu’s speculation has misled a generation of readers: the monumental influence of *In Search of Dracula* in the West is virtually nonexistent in Bulgaria and Romania, where prevailing historical memory of Țepeș as a staunch (if violently overzealous) defender of the Christian faith<sup>165</sup> and of the West against the Ottomans, and a sort of Wallachian nationalist hero<sup>166</sup>—though, as Fred Botting observes in *The Limits of Horror*, the globalizing cultural effects of “Disneygothic” are now starting to change this.

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<sup>163</sup> Margaret L. Carter’s critical bibliography on *The Vampire in Literature* points out that the first source in English to connect *Dracula* to Țepeș was, in fact, Bacil Kirtley’s 1956 article, “*Dracula*, the Monastic Chronicles, and Slavic Folklore” (7).

<sup>164</sup> Elizabeth Kostova’s 2005 novel *The Historian* handles the Țepeș/Count Dracula connection with perhaps the greatest skill and tact. C.C. Humphreys’s *Vlad: The Last Confession* offers a fantastic biography of the vampiric Impaler; and White Wolf’s *Vampire: the Requiem* role-playing game offers the Ordo Dracul, a linguistically confused order of vampires founded by Vlad. The prevalence of Vlad as the assumed first name of Dracula, though it appears nowhere in Stoker’s writings,

<sup>165</sup> Vlad’s historical opposition to the Ottoman Turks opens up interesting but ultimately tenuous thematic connections with Byron’s *The Giaour*: ironically, as a zealous (and perhaps overzealous) “man of faith” Vlad stands as a foil, rather than a parallel, of Byron’s unfaithful vampire.

<sup>166</sup> English-language histories of Țepeș which are unscathed by the vampire mythmaking of McNally and Florescu are now depressingly rare and obscure: the only one freely available now may be Nicolai Stoicescu’s *Vlad Țepeș, Prince of Walachia* [sic] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste Romania, 1978).

In recent years, refutations of McNally and Florescu's overstated Dracula-Țepeș connection have begun to re-stabilize the scholarship surrounding both figures. Elizabeth Miller's "Getting to Know the Un-dead: Bram Stoker, Vampires, and *Dracula*" makes considerable use of neglected primary material, including Stoker's own notes, to determine that "widespread belief that Vlad was Stoker's inspiration for creating his vampire is without foundation. In spite of claims to the contrary, there is no evidence that Stoker discovered any information about Vlad other than the slim pickings in Wilkinson"<sup>167</sup> (12). While Miller's study is the best-documented and most thorough refutation of Dracula's historical connections (as well as, perhaps, a much-needed re-evaluation of how Stoker came by his historical information and how much information he really had), there has been enough critical backlash to suggest taking Dracula out of kairoic context, of historicizing him within the quotidian world, is at best a problematic move, and at worst a distortion of his function in the text for the sake of an archaeology that has little to do with his literary function.

In a way, Dracula's kairoic immortality, like the immortality (or metamortality, perhaps) of all vampires, functions as an erosion of discrete and rational time, even as its other supernatural powers (and the detailed supernatural ruleset governing vampiric existence) reach backward, in a parallel fashion, toward porosity. Vampires which are heavily rooted in "the East," then, are not necessarily creatures of a specific historical place any more than they are creatures of a specific historical time: although the landscape that Byron describes in *The Giaour* is in many ways the landscape of his

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<sup>167</sup> "Wilkinson" here refers to William Wilkinson's 1820 work, *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia*, which Stoker borrowed from the public library in Whitby in the summer of 1890 (Miller 11).

travels, the source of vampirism itself cannot be these familiar exotic<sup>168</sup> places. It cannot be the explored East of Byron, or of his influential predecessor Mary Wortley Montagu.<sup>169</sup> It must be an unexplored east, an east that is mythic and remote: as the mythic “yore” that exists kairologically is beyond the reach of numbered centuries, so is the source of the vampire outside the reach of maps as such. The question of whether England is a greater number of miles away from Greece, Turkey, or India than from Transylvania misses the point: if the vampire is in some way a construction of fantasy, it must come from a world that is a fantasy-world, however much it tries to masquerade as a geographic place.

I want to talk briefly about this tendency of English fantasy-realms to masquerade as actual places—and, in particular, as places that are geographically and/or ideologically remote. After Coleridge’s “Christabel,” this tendency colours the major English vampire narratives of the nineteenth century—*The Giaour*, *The Vampyre*, *Dracula*—and in order to make sense of it in the context of Taylor, it must be understood as an appropriation rather than a mere passive representation or counterfeit, one in which the trappings which signify some existing cultural Other—continental Europe, Africa, Transylvania, Greece, India—are actively removed from their context, and transformed into the realist window-dressing for a fantasy Other in which the primitive and porous are both imagined and conflated. This transformative tendency is at work throughout the nineteenth century, I

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<sup>168</sup> Although the oxymoron of the “familiar exotic” offers associations to the uncanny, I think what I mean by the term here is one step more familiar than should authentically be called uncanny. The explored East made familiar has been made consciously known by writers like Byron, as by Lady Montagu before him; the Uncanny suggested by Freud is one which, strictly speaking, is only *subconsciously* known—in a sense, to *know* an othered place (that is, to define it or make sense of it in the mind) is the first step toward colonizing it.

<sup>169</sup> Byron’s largest debt to Montagu would come later in life with *Don Juan*, but his affection for her writing is well-documented. A recent article in the *Byron Journal*, Arden Hegel’s “Lord Byron, Literary Detective,” reveals the depth of his involvement with her work, both as an admirer and an agent of her scholarly inclusion to the canon.

think, dating from the Gothic Schism and from the earliest pressures toward novelistic probability: the idea that these fantasy-lands might conceivably exist somewhere in the real world, and that a reader need not abandon realist sensibilities to take them seriously, is what contributed to the popularity of a narrative device used all too frequently by nineteenth-century writers who continue to carry the mode of romance forward, even within the kind (formal structure) of the realist novel.

Although this practice has been fruitful for Western audiences, who have managed to have their cake (regarding the need for porous mythic spaces) and eat it too (regarding the constraints of realism), it has resulted in a considerably distorted and frequently unjust depiction of places and people who naturally resent the modern West's rewriting of them as a menacing and often barbaric "dead hand of the past," under whose reimagining they are cast as little more than a threatening and adversarial response to the sins of the West's colonialist fathers. In response to this kind of colonialist mis-depiction, the late twentieth century has seen an abundance of clarifying work toward understanding how this transformation actually operates, particularly from postcolonial critics who take objection to being colonized through writing that amounts to a kind of English mythography. Chief among these has been Chinua Achebe, whose unironic reading of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as heavy-handed mythography crystallizes the dangerous side effects and inherent problems of this practice, and also provides us with some useful ways of thinking about the mythologization of place. While *Heart of Darkness* is far afield from *The Giaour* and other Romantic-era vampires, it is a much closer neighbour to *Dracula*;<sup>170</sup> and in any case, the tools to understand *Heart of Darkness*'s use (and

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<sup>170</sup> Kate Holterhoff, writing on Stoker's *Jewel of Seven Stars*, finds a similar kinship between Stoker's writing and *Lord Jim*, the other of Conrad's major works to feature Marlow. "Increased encounters with the new,

misuse) of place have a lot to tell us about how an earlier mythography of place, in *The Giaour* but even in Coleridge's closer-to-home "Christabel," are working as well.

Achebe's critical essay "An Image of Africa" has redefined the way two generations of Anglo-European scholars must read *Heart of Darkness*. In his particularly pointed critique of a "bloody racist" (788) Conrad, he writes:

*Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as "the other world," the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization...the actual story takes place on the River Congo, the very antithesis of the Thames...[w]e are told that "going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginning of the world." (783)

The points Achebe goes on to make are that Conrad's rewriting of Africa amounts to a gross dehumanization, and that the racial and colonial blinders of a predominantly white North Atlantic audience has allowed this to go unnoticed. Both of these assertions are sound enough, especially for readers who either do not consider Marlow's unreliability and the frame narrative at all, or do not consider them sufficient reason to allow or justify an ironic reading of the text.<sup>171</sup> But *en route* to this destination, the rhetorical scenery of Achebe's argument merits a closer look, as it mirrors in interesting ways some of the arguments I have already explored here. There is, for instance, the central premise of Conrad's river-journey as a sort of time-travel: Achebe parses this time-travel, quite correctly, as the product of a blinkered ethnography which writes Africa and Africans as savage and the English as both cultured and progressive—though under threat, perhaps, of falling back into savagery. But explored in more detail, and in a larger literary context,

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monstrous, and liminal were ensured by Britain's colonial holdings" (139), she writes, characterizing the terrain "at the margins of Western knowledge" (139) as ripe for what we might call porous encounters.

<sup>171</sup> Both irony and narrative unreliability have a role to play in Cedric Watts's 1983 article "'A Bloody Racist': About Achebe's View of Conrad," one of the seminal rebuttals to "An Image of Africa" and one of the better known essays in Conrad studies. I am sure there have been similar rebuttals since, and these issues doubtlessly play a role in many of them.

the time-travel of Conrad's river is a late echo of a phenomenon we have already seen in the Gothic novels of the late eighteenth century. I have already cited<sup>172</sup> Baldick and Mighall's reading of Gothic travel as a sort of time-travel<sup>173</sup> for the Protestant and proto-nationalist social imaginary of Gothic-revival England, for whom Europe, too, is demonized as a Dark Continent—a place where papal superstition and idolatry are given a similarly simplistic, coat of barbarism and primitive superstition.

When Markman Ellis describes Jonathan Harker's journey in *Dracula*, “back to a pre-modern feudal world populated by uneducated and fearful peasants: the land of folklore and superstition” (190), we are wrapped in the same language of the same quest—only now, perhaps, it is Transylvania, not Africa, serving as the caricatured cultural veneer<sup>174</sup> of a place that really exists only in the mind of the English reader. There has been surprisingly little dedicated work on the depiction of Transylvanian natives in *Dracula*, outside of those which center on Dracula himself, whose explicit self-identification as a Székely (Stoker 28-9) frustrates the usual association with Vlad Țepeș, an ethnic Vlach. Virtually all we have on the matter is Mary Burke's “Eighteenth- and

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<sup>172</sup> on page 171.

<sup>173</sup> Specifically, they remark that “the English tourist...could encounter ‘Gothic’ institutions merely by visiting Catholic countries, traveling in time as well as space. Gothic novels thus thrive on anachronistic emphases, and their narrative effects derive from the clash between “modernity” and “antiquity,” whether the former finds itself misplaced in the latter, or the latter lives beyond its proper scope and survives into the present” (279).

<sup>174</sup> There has been surprisingly little dedicated work on the depiction of Transylvanian natives in *Dracula*, outside of those which center on Dracula himself, whose explicit self-identification as a Székely (Stoker 28-9) frustrates the usual association with Vlad Țepeș, an ethnic Vlach. Mary Burke's “Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Sources for Bram Stoker's Gypsies” outlines some of Stoker's reading on the subject, while a recent dissertation by Abigail Bardi, *The Gypsy as Trope in Victorian and Modern British Literature*, devotes a chapter to the role of Stoker's gypsies in “the British national project” (95). Neither of these really touches on the depictions of Stoker's native Transylvanians, whose caricature as a primitive, superstitious people has since picked up as much racist currency in North Atlantic popular culture as Conrad's spear-waving savages have. Even the name Transylvania—from *trans* + *sylvan*—is a colonizer's name for “the place on the other side of the forest [from us].” Vlad Țepeș, certainly, would have preferred his own Wallachia, the “land of the Vlachs,” to be the principality whose name became synonymous with the whole region (though not, perhaps, with vampires).

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What I want to get at here is the idea of porosity, of supernatural fiction's persistent desire "to pull us back down into belief" (Paige 159), and what place has to do with it. Consider again Achebe's title, "An Image of Africa": he has in mind the culturally rich African mosaic obscured and overwritten, in a sense, by the simplistic and distorting mask of Conrad's monolithic Dark Continent. But without discounting Achebe's claims of racism, we can read the image another way: in the text itself,

underneath Conrad's exaggerated blackface, what we find is a mythic place which really bears no resemblance to a historical Africa, and further, has little narrative need to connect with one.

It is possible to seek out a reading of the story in which the text, like Marlow, "criticizes the Belgian ivory company but does not, in turn, dispense with the idea of colonialism in general" (Smith 30-1); in this case, and in this approach to the text, the choice of the Belgian Congo is significant.<sup>175</sup> But the tale is still most popularly read,<sup>176</sup> especially in the North Atlantic world, the "Taylolean West," as a sort of numinous fantasy in the shadow of Gothic romance. Sudarsan Rangarajan's summary of the tale describes the tale in purely mythic terms, a "hero's journey of initiation and his descent into the underworld" (139). In Rangarajan's reading, Marlow is figured as a Charon figure, sharing significant traits with the mythic boatman, especially as represented in Virgil's *Aeneid*. More importantly, in this sort of mythic reading the Congo of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* gains nothing but factual incorrectness from its specificity. It does not need, narratively speaking, to be any more real than the imaginary country "Costaguana" in his *Nostramo*. Like Jonathan Swift before him, whose third book of *Gulliver's Travels* treats both Glubbudrib and Japan with equal *gravitas*, Conrad is weaving a false

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<sup>175</sup> In readings such as Smith's, which characterize Conrad as critical of Belgian exploitation while specifically blinkered to other forms of Imperialism, the biographical parallels of Conrad's life, and especially his own trip up the Congo River in 1890. In readings such as Rangarajan's, which dissociate the tale from a colonial context, the firsthand experience evinced in Conrad's Congo diaries is given considerably less important: divorced from its historical contextualization and considered in a purely fantastic sense, I venture that the question of whether Conrad really went to Africa becomes of no more importance than the question of whether Ann Radcliffe went to Italy, or Jonathan Swift to Japan, or Jules Verne to the moon.

<sup>176</sup> In his extraordinary historical study of the exploitation of the Congo, *King Leopold's Ghost*, Adam Hochschild takes the difficult stance that the popular reading of *Heart of Darkness* is not taken literally enough, suggesting that much of what appears "is simply a record of what Conrad himself saw" (140). Although his arguments on the history of Conrad's voyage are convincing, so is his estimation of how *Heart of Darkness* is still most popularly read—that is, out of its historical context, as modernist myth rather than travelogue.

context out of realist labels which bears little resemblance to the culturally rich place those labels normally denote.

There is validity to Smith's approach, which characterizes Conrad as critical of Belgian exploitation while remaining specifically blinkered to other forms of Imperialism—an approach which hinges on the biographical parallels of Conrad's life, and especially his own trip up the Congo River in 1890. Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost* takes a similar direction regarding historical specificity—but in most cases, this approach is directed toward revealing new information about where the text came from, or how it has been written. Readings such as Rangarajan's focus more intently, on a rule, at how the text is (or can be) read, or in other words, how the text worked and continues to work within the social imaginaries to which it still speaks. This dissociates the tale from a colonial context and allows for focus not on its function within discourses of colonialism/anti-colonialism, but on its function beyond this single dimension. Here the firsthand experience evinced in Conrad's Congo diaries is given considerably less importance: it is difficult but necessary to consider other aspects of *Heart of Darkness*, even if doing so requires taking a story so dependent on its historical background outside of its quotidian context.

In this purely fantastic sense, the historical context serves only as a false veneer of place-names and stereotypes, and there is in a sense no "real" Africa at all in *Heart of Darkness*—only an unreal fantasy-world, a world of primordial vulnerability and porousness, made up to play the part for readers who have no ability to tell the difference (or who have this ability, but suspend it along with, and in the same manner as, their disbelief). In this context, the question of whether Conrad really went to Africa becomes

of no more importance than the question of whether Ann Radcliffe went to Italy, or Jonathan Swift to Japan, or Jules Verne to the moon. Achebe has prompted us to see through the disguise, and to recognize it as offensive. But for him, the disguise remains a failure to represent a real African place, rather than a successful attempt to disguise an imaginary European place—or more specifically, a place that exists conceptually within the European social imaginary—however problematic Conrad’s choice of disguise may be.

Here, I must depart from Achebe’s central concern of whether or not Conrad’s disguise-trappings of choice “belong” to him. The question of whether or not he has stolen and misused the names and likenesses of a place to which he had no entitlement is an important one for postcolonial scholarship to answer; the best answers will naturally be more complex than a simple “yes” or “no.”<sup>177</sup> But this is a separate issue altogether from the question of how this colonially inflected mechanic of fantasy-disguise operates. From the perspective of supernatural fantasy, the important thing to note is the narrative device uncovered by this criticism, in which a fantastic world, and always a porous world, is disguised to the satisfaction of “realism” by the names and likeness of a real but othered place. This narrative device, a sort of colonially inflected bait-and-switch, is a fundamental part of the English Gothic fantasy-world in which vampires can be made to exist on what Clara Reeve called “the utmost verge of probability” (3). By inhabiting a place conceived somewhere between entirely marvellous fantasy worlds (Lord Dunsany’s *Elfland* or William Morris’s *Wood Beyond the World*) and the entirely familiar world of

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<sup>177</sup> John Thieme’s *Postcolonial Con-Texts: Writing Back to the Canon* addresses many of these issues in terms of nominative (that is, naming and defining) colonial writing, and surveys several of the postcolonial responses to Conrad. The key issues of entitlement and depiction that Achebe raises, outside of the model he provides of how this place-depiction works (or fails to work), are given much greater discussion in Thieme’s book than I can afford to give them here.

quotidian life (the cities and towns of the English-speaking West), the vampire is far enough from the mundane world to conceivably exist, yet near enough to that world to provide whatever functions of uncanny menace we might ascribe to it.

Although *Heart of Darkness* (and the criticism surrounding it) brings this device into clearest relief, it exists at the heart of Gothic tradition and becomes more important, not less, as the “Gothic” mode becomes more open to improbability. We can now further recognize the dressing of mythic place in historical veneer in the Spain of Lewis’s *The Monk*, and the Italy of Radcliffe’s *The Italian*,<sup>178</sup> and the Greece (though interestingly, *not* of Italy) in “The Vampyre.” In the case of *Dracula*, the parallel use of this device is especially visible: where “civilized” Europe is protected, for a time, by Kurtz’s death *en route* by boat, Count Dracula instead inverts that safety by arriving as the only survivor aboard a boat of the dead.<sup>179</sup> The effect of the boat, in both cases, is to reduce and make navigable the distance between this world and that.

The symbolism of Marlow’s boat as a ferry between worlds is explored by Rangarajan as well, who suggests that Marlow’s image “blends with that of Aeneas...[but] possesses certain qualities that are most characteristic of Charon” (139-40). It is especially telling, in light of these observations, that the ship that ferries Dracula

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<sup>178</sup> As early as 1920, Clara McIntyre observed the irony of *The Italian*’s title, which manages to signify the otherness of the villainous Schedoni even though every other character in the book is also Italian (70). E. J. Clery, in her Introduction to *The Italian*, finds the “otherness” of Italy to be both the “constant theme” and “a source both of terror and delight” (x).

<sup>179</sup> To Rangarajan, Marlow’s image “blends with that of Aeneas...[but] possesses certain qualities that are most characteristic of Charon” (139-40). It is especially telling, in light of these observations, that the ship that ferries Dracula to England is called the *Demeter*, after the pre-Hellenic goddess of agriculture. Her Orphic descent into the underworld, to seek out her daughter Persephone, is depicted in the Eleusinian Mysteries and considered to be older than the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Although later considered as consort and daughter (respectively) of Zeus, both Demeter and Persephone are “among the Goddesses we know to have preceded the Olympian system” (Spretnak 18). The *Demeter*, then, like Marlow’s unnamed steamer, is a boat between worlds, especially between the porous “underworld” of Transylvania/Africa, both literally lands ruled by dead lords, and the buffered ports of civilization.

to England is called the *Demeter*, after the pre-Hellenic goddess of agriculture. Her descent into the underworld, to seek out her daughter Persephone, is depicted in the Eleusinian Mysteries and considered to be older than the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Although later considered as consort and daughter (respectively) of Zeus, both Demeter and Persephone are “among the Goddesses we know to have preceded the Olympian system” (Spretnak 18). The *Demeter*, then, like Marlow’s unnamed steamer, is also a boat between worlds, and especially between a porous “underworld” disguised with images of Transylvania/Africa, lands ruled by lords of the dead,<sup>180</sup> and the buffered ports of civilization.

There is a popular argument that the technology of *Dracula* represents a triumph of the modern over the ancient. Cannon Schmitt summarizes this argument by observing that “Dracula’s invasion is finally reversed when representatives of the West, armed with this superior technology, penetrate to the figurative heart of the East in order literally to penetrate the heart of the Count” (142). Oliver Lubrich offers an almost identical reading: “how is this monster brought under control? It is hunted down by implementing technologies of documentation and data processing, communication and mobility. This thematic motif is reflected in the formal poetics of the text; the victory over the vampire is a triumph of modern technology” (2). But the victory of modern over antique technologies in *Dracula* does not translate exactly to a reassuring victory of the buffered over the porous, because the same small-world technologies of modern travel that make it possible to “penetrate” the East by bringing it closer allow it to penetrate the West in

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<sup>180</sup> I am reminded of Kurtz’s skull-like head, “like a ball—an ivory ball” (64), which resembles the dead skulls surrounding his compound on stakes (Kurtz, too, is an Impaler of sorts). Marlow’s other curious, oblique comment regarding the “disinterred body of Mr. Kurtz” (he is, at this point still alive) that “[t]hey say the hair goes on growing sometimes” (64) contains other resonant ties to vampire tradition and superstition.

return. This technology does not exclusively serve the buffered social imaginary that spawned it; on the contrary, it also works against the buffers separating the quotidian from the supernatural. Transylvania, literally across the forest, is “over there”; and although the modern tools of travel give out<sup>181</sup> several miles before Dracula’s castle, they nevertheless go a long way toward establishing an immediate and covalent highway between the buffered quotidian world and the porous, animistic fantasy world of Castle Dracula.

In the English vampire literature that serves as *Dracula*’s most immediate background, the same dichotomy of place is apparent. Even Christabel’s key question to Geraldine, “how camest thou here?” (1.76), immediately establishes a dichotomy of place, a *hereness* and *thereness*. In the case of “Christabel,” I have been careful to refer to Tryermaine (which we never really see in the fragment) rather than Langdale Hall (sir Leoline’s estate) as Coleridge’s fantastic world, because it functions as his porous “there,” the mysterious source of Geraldine, and is contrasted with the “here” of Langdale Hall, which is buffered at least until Christabel voluntarily lowers its defenses by inviting Geraldine across the ideologically bulwarked thresholds of her castle, chamber, and ultimately, perhaps, her own body.

In “Christabel,” the reduced remoteness of place<sup>182</sup> is counterbalanced by a greater remoteness of time. Coleridge sets his poem in the fog of yore, which helps to throw the otherwise English world depicted back into porosity, an effect that is largely

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<sup>181</sup> The opening sentence of *Dracula* notes the breakdown of the once-reliable train schedule, and Harker’s journal later observes that “the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains” (2). Something as based in chronological time as a train schedule, naturally, must cease to function in the kairotic space of Stoker’s re-enchanted Transylvania. By the time he reaches Bistritz, he has come to the edge of the buffered world where the train, like the stereotypically fearful peasant guide, must turn back and go no farther.

<sup>182</sup> Tryermaine, in Gilsland, on the border of Northumberland, is not so alien as Italy, Africa, Asia, Transylvania.

managed in vampire-texts set in “present day” (“The Vampire” and *Dracula*) through a combination of geographic remoteness and cultural mythologization. In all of these tales, the vampire is literally a transgressor, committing the fundamentally disruptive gesture of stepping across from there to here. The whole business of thresholds and crossing them is a virtually constant familial trait of literary vampires; in “Christabel” we have many such crossings, but are afforded the luxury of at least one literal crossing—the gate “ironed within and without”<sup>183</sup> (l.127) at the threshold of Langdale Hall.

The crossing of thresholds is not always so literal, or so immediately visible, and so the trope’s prominence is somewhat eclipsed by those other common vampiric traits, the return from the dead and the drinking of blood, which are more literally and explicitly prevented with greater frequency. But for all its metaphoric vagueness, the crossing of thresholds is no less important or common a theme. This is particularly true in a Taylolean reading, and particularly revelant within a model of enchanted and disenchanted worlds, of porous and buffered subjects: although Taylor makes frequent reference to these binaries, I think the picture he has in mind is altogether more complex than a binary world in which one half (disenchanted, modern, natural, buffered) is separated from the other (enchanted, ancient, supernatural, porous) by a clearly defined barrier. The vampire in English literature helps to preserve this complexity by

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<sup>183</sup> Coleridge himself was fascinated by both the physical and metaphysical properties of iron: in an entry in *Table Talk* dedicated to August 1831, he writes:

Iron is the most ductile of all hard metals, and the hardest of all ductile metals[...]Galvanism is the union of electricity and magnetism, and, by being continuous, it exhibits an image of life;—I say, an image only: it is life in death. (130)

The description is interestingly vampiric in itself. But Coleridge’s specific phrasing, “within and without,” suggests that the gate is strengthened by iron’s protective qualities both in this buffered, inside world (hardness, resilience, flexibility) and in the other, outside world (i.e., its proof against faeries and other supernatural creatures).

introducing a covalent fluidity to this kind of threshold-crossing. Through the very act of inviting itself (when we allow it) across the threshold into modernity, the vampire in turn invites us across the border in the other direction, back into belief.

## Chapter 6: Unfaith and the Byronic Vampire

### 6.1 Infidels and Infidelity in “The Giaour”

It has been easy, this far, to say that the vampire is in some way a device of re-enchantment, an anachronistic intrusion into the modern world, in part because the current of scholarship already flows in this direction. The popularity of the vampire suggests that this is not an unwelcome intrusion, and that it hasn't been for some time. But the discomfort symbolized by the vampire in some of these Gothic models is undercut by our ongoing and paradoxical comfort level with the vampire as a symbol of discomfort. Its intrusion is welcome; we invite it and continue to invite it into our literature, where it fulfills a function that, I will argue, is a function that can only be performed by a modern device for a modern readership. In short, it operates as an agent of “re-enchantment”—not of enchantment as it was in the sacred medieval worldview, but of, in Nicholas Paige's excellent words, “the memory of what it might be like” (159) to live in such a world. It establishes for us an inflected relationship with the pre-modern that we must ultimately be modern to experience.

Paige's study has provided us with a more specific understanding of what modern social imaginaries are really reaching back towards, and why. At the same time, the difficulties critics have encountered with problematic “porous mythologizations” of place (of which Conrad's image of Africa is the most infamous example) have forced answers

which lead us toward a clearer picture of how mythic space really operates in texts such as *Dracula*, which straddle the line between the realist and the fantastic.

The apparatus we have developed to approach *The Giaour*, then, is an apparatus that has developed somewhat anachronistically, in late Victorian criticism. Much of the criticism that shapes my approach here has centered on the late 1890s, especially on Conrad and Stoker, and it is important to recognize the pitfalls of this when we carry it back onto the Romantics. Confronting vampirism in *The Giaour* requires a sense of what Arata and others have said about nineteenth-century vampirism, and the reading of *The Giaour* I want to develop requires foreknowledge of some the things have been said about place and otherness in these later works. Through a postcolonial indictment of Conrad's Africa, a complicated project of which Chinua Achebe has merely been one notable voice among many,<sup>184</sup> we have come to understand (without condemning or condoning) a contentious practice of place-writing which is not exclusive to the late 1890s, but was common among English writers of "the East" (which might be expanded to mean virtually any othered, non-English place) since well before even Byron's time.

The escapist<sup>185</sup> Gothic fantasy-writing of the late eighteenth century and the countless travelogues of the Grand Tour throughout the Enlightenment operate on the same principles, and there is a line of mythographic tradition that runs from early works

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<sup>184</sup> The 35 years since Achebe's "An Image of Africa" have seen a flourishing of postcolonial readings of Conrad, and especially of *Heart of Darkness*. Claudia Durst Johnson's recent collection, *Colonialism in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness* (San Diego: Greenhaven, 2012) anthologizes some of the most recent of these, offering a much more thorough representation of the current state of this project than I can provide here.

<sup>185</sup> We are now well past theorizing, I would hope, that fantasy is *just* an escapist tool; but escapism remains a fundamental and important aspect of exactly what fantastic writing is meant to do. "Escape," Brian Stableford writes, "is one of the three fundamental functions of fantasy identified by J.R.R. Tolkien's essay 'On Fairy-Stories,' which defends the notion of escapism against the pejorative connotations frequently attached to it" (136).

such as the *Travels of Three English Gentlemen*<sup>186</sup> to Conrad and beyond. There are naturally differences of genre among works that share this tradition: The Turkish embassy letters of Mary Wortley Montagu, for instance, are a different kind<sup>187</sup> of writing altogether from Byron's *The Giaour* (in spite of their influence on his "Turkish Tales"), or even from Stoker's epistolary *Dracula*. But in purely escapist terms, and couched in the idea of "transporting" the reader, there are thematic and stylistic links between supernatural fantasy and the non-fictional travel-writing of the eighteenth century. Many of these generic links have been explored as a matter of course in criticism both of fantasy and of travel-writing, but there are scant resources<sup>188</sup> fully dedicated to establishing a stronger cross-talk between these genres. It is along this continuum of "travel literature" that the Romantic vampire-tales sit, an axis not so much of formal genre as of theme and tradition which ranges from the factual late-medieval accounts of Hakluyt and others<sup>189</sup> to the marvellous fantasy of Jules Verne. Collectively, the tradition defines a complicated structure of colonialist mythography in relation to porous and othered realms—and it is within this structure and context that the Romantic vampires undergo a unique development in the service of re-enchantment.

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<sup>186</sup> The 1734 work, which brought the vampire into the English consciousness, is engaged by this and other means in writing the East as a porous space in which the fantastic has survived into "modernity."

<sup>187</sup> I mean "different kind" here according to both the common, inexact use of the expression and the more specific *kind* expressed by Frow in *Genre: The New Critical Idiom*.

<sup>188</sup> Carol Dougherty's *The Raft of Odysseus: The Ethnographic Imagination of Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) is one of very few works in which the overlapping generic relationship between ethnographic travel-writing and imaginative fantasy is fully explored—and we must be careful, in this case, not to read Homer's *Odyssey* as too analogous to the modern genres of travel-writing and romance, from which it remains thousands of years removed, however loudly it may echo in them.

<sup>189</sup> Richard Hakluyt's 1589 account of his travels, known by the abbreviated title *Voyages*, is a widely influential work of travel-writing. The text has other resonances with *The Giaour* as well, not least of which is its inclusion of the word *giaour* for the first recorded time in English writing.

Although it contains only a single brief passage of explicit vampirism, there is now no getting around the idea that Byron's *The Giaour* is one of the most prominent vampire tales in English. Its famous vampiric curse, more frequently excerpted and quoted than any other passage of the poem, is the basis for including it in that tradition:

But first, on earth as Vampire sent,  
 Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent;  
 Then ghastly haunt thy native place,  
 And suck the blood of all thy race,  
 There from thy daughter, sister, wife,  
 At midnight drain the stream of life;  
 Yet loathe the banquet which perforce  
 Must feed thy livid living corse;  
 Thy victims ere they yet expire  
 Shall know the daemon for their sire,  
 As cursing thee, thou cursing them,  
 Thy flowers are wither'd on the stem. (ll. 751-62)

Gone from this passage (which extends, in greater detail, to line 786) is the folkloric ambiguity that marked Coleridge's *Geraldine*: there is no denying the nature of the monster described. The *Giaour* is cursed to be a vampire; more tellingly, the reader is expected to know what this word means and to intuit from the text that follows all that it entails. There is no need here, as there was in Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer*, for an extensive explanatory footnote: by 1813, when the curse first appears in print, Byron has the luxury of assuming that the vampire has passed into public understanding—that is, the “common understanding” (Taylor, *A Secular Age* 172) of a shared social imaginary—even if it maintains for Byron's readers an aspect of the exotic.

Byron's use of the word “Vampire,” preceded in prominent English poetry only by Southey, and his specific and detailed description of undead bloodsucking have provided an explicit incentive to treat *The Giaour* as a poem about a vampire. This evidence, and the passage containing it, are leaned on more heavily by popular studies of

the vampire as cultural phenomenon than by literary criticism, for reasons that I hope will become obvious. This attitude, and the frequency with which the infamous “vampiric curse” is reprinted, has led to readings of *The Giaour* which privilege this fragment as its centerpiece. Although my focus here virtually compels me to treat *The Giaour* as a vampire-poem, I think it a mistake and a misreading to suggest too enthusiastically that the poem hinges on the Giaour’s vampirism as a matter of course. The poem explicitly participates in vampire literature, but does not exclusively belong<sup>190</sup> to it: we are surrounded by reliable modern editions of *The Giaour* which are typically based on the seventh, last, and longest authorial edition,<sup>191</sup> and in this climate it is easy to forget that the first copy of the poem was much shorter, and did not contain the sensational word “Vampire” nor any part of the curse.

Byron’s addition of these things is certainly more than mere afterthought, and it appears in every edition he authorized for large-scale public consumption; but like several other passages, including the Giaour’s entire confession to the friar (ll.971-1318), the vampiric curse was not part of the poem’s original core, those 344 lines probably written in late 1812.<sup>192</sup> Over the following months, the poem underwent an extensive series of additions, comprising perhaps the most exhaustive revision of any of Byron’s works. Jerome McGann’s edition of his *Complete Poetical Works* catalogues the

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<sup>190</sup> Compare Derrida’s comments on genre from “The Law of Genre”: “every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text, there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging” (230).

<sup>191</sup> The seventh edition was, according to Barbara Ravelhofer, the “last edition Byron supervised himself” (23). She cites as her source a significant letter from Byron to John Murray dated 26 August 1813, collected in Leslie Marchand’s edition of Byron’s *Letters and Journals* (III 100).

<sup>192</sup> See McGann’s notes in the *Complete Poetical Works*, especially on III 413 regarding “The Giaour”’s composition, revision, and early circulation.

extensive revisions and additions to what Byron described as “this snake of a poem—which has been lengthening its rattles every month” (Marchand III 100).

Barbara Ravelhofer has charted in similar detail the poem’s rapid development from a first published edition of 344 lines to the 1,334 lines of the seventh edition. In part, she finds these revisions a well-used “special effect” of the Romantic fragment poem, adding both mystique and metatext to a poem which plays, as *The Castle of Otranto* played, at being a found fragment. “Byron pretends to suffer,” Ravelhofer writes,

from a flawed recollection: “I regret that my memory has retained so few fragments of the original”, he playfully notes at the end of his piece. Yet he kept adding new material to the tale. “*The Giaour* was no sooner issued than bought up,” one reviewer groaned in late 1813, “edition trod upon the heels of edition; and before we had time to determine whether we ought to review it, the fifth with large *additions* (we wish we could add *subtractions*) is laid upon our table.” “Were his readers to assume, as each new and augmented edition of his ‘snake of a poem’ came out, that he periodically recalled additional snatches of the original lay?”, McGann remarks about the strange workings of Byron’s memory. (26)

Among these “additional snatches,” the vampiric curse is one of the earlier arrivals, entering the poem somewhere after Byron’s first corrected and expanded fair copy,<sup>193</sup> but some time before fifteen copies of the poem were made “for private circulation in late Mar. 1813” (McGann *CPW* III 413).<sup>194</sup> Nevertheless, the two original MSS.<sup>195</sup> of *The Giaour* indicate that the poem’s central narrative of infidelity and murder was already in

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<sup>193</sup> McGann identifies the fair copy as *MS. M*, after its present location in the John Murray Archive.

<sup>194</sup> McGann cites one of Byron’s letters (see Marchand III 40) for evidence of this pre-First Edition circulation. Two of the original fifteen copies, he reports, survive in the Murray archive (*CPW* III 413).

<sup>195</sup> The aforementioned *MS. M* and an earlier, undated rough-draft of only 344 lines, identified as *MS. L* after its location in the Lovelace collection at the Bodleian library. McGann considers *MS. L*, quite convincingly, to be Byron’s original rough draft of the poem (*CPW* III 406).

place before Byron appended the additional dimension of the Giaour's vampiric punishment.

To read *The Giaour* and its vampirism properly, then, we must consider it not as a poem *about* a vampire or vampirism, as a great deal of popular criticism<sup>196</sup> has mischaracterized it: instead, we must ask what it was *first* about, and then consider how the addition of the vampire's curse augmented and transformed this foundation. The answers to these questions reveal a poem whose relationship to secular modernity is both complex and troubled—and which makes sense of them, to great extent, through its incorporation of the increasingly familiar figure of the vampire.

Even before we proceed on from its title, *The Giaour* has already established itself as both a narrative of transgression, in the vein of “Christabel,” and a reversal of that transgression in which the protagonist himself is a monster from a strangely disenchanted land. The word “giaour” itself, a powerfully loaded Turkish word describing non-Muslims,<sup>197</sup> is typically glossed in editions of Byron as “infidel,” and treated as such by criticism without further engagement. Marilyn Butler's article on “The Orientalism of Byron's *Giaour*,” for instance, glosses the word briefly in passing when describing “the ‘Giaour’ of the title (the word means foreigner or infidel)” (86). As far as single-word

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<sup>196</sup> A chapter by Katherine McGinley in *The Gothic World of Anne Rice* typifies this sort of popular characterization, offering this simplistic summary of *The Giaour*:

The poem centers on the hero's love for a Muslim's wife. The Muslim throws her into the sea for her unfaithfulness, and the Giaour exacts his revenge. Before the Muslim dies, however, he places a curse of vampirism on the Giaour, who is to suffer guilt forever for having committed murder and lost his love. These intertwining themes of love and guilt can be traced throughout the vampire legend. (73)

<sup>197</sup> The word was not exclusively used for Christians and Westerners: coming from the Persian *gōr* by way of Turkish, it originally referred in antiquity to those Persians who retained the Zoroastrian faith after the fall of the Sassanid dynasty to Islamic Arabs in the seventh century. Touraj Daryae'e's recent chapter (pp.187-207) on the Sassanids in the *Oxford Handbook of Iranian History* condenses into an accessible summary the most important details of this conquest, which are more thoroughly explored in his earlier monograph, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co., 2009).

translations go, this is pretty good; it will serve for most purposes and for most casual readers of the poem. At the same time, it conceals more than it reveals about the importance of faith (and unfaith) in Byron's poem, and so within Taylor's context of belief and unbelief, a closer look at the applications of the word is warranted.

We cannot even take Byron's authoritative single-word glossing of Giaour (he, too, glosses it simply as "infidel") as a sign that he intended it to be a shallow Orientalist label: the simplicity, and at times perhaps the over-simplicity, of Byron's notes may be a tongue-in-cheek gesture. Barbara Ravelhofer notes that the poem "has long been recognized as a swipe at Robert Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), in which orientalist subject matter was heavily glossed by long-winded, ponderous annotations" (27). The deceptive simplicity of Byron's glossing, then, may be in part a skewering of Southey's sometimes interminable notes, of which his now-famous footnote on vampires in Book VIII of *Thalaba*, amounting to an extensive (if abridged) summary of several stories from Calmet's treatise, is now a particularly strong example. In light of this, we ought not to take the brevity of Byron's glossing of Giaour as a guarantee that his intentions for the word as either the hero's name or the poem's title were anything so simple.

The Oxford English Dictionary finds the word *giaour* to be known in English as far back as 1589,<sup>198</sup> when Elizabethan geographer Richard Hakluyt uses the word twice in succession:

I might not be suffred to tread vpon his holy ground, being  
a Christian, and called amongst them *Gower*, that is,  
unbeleuer: esteeming all to be infidels and Pagans which

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<sup>198</sup> See "giaour, n." in the *OED*. The edition of Hakluyt I have cited throughout, made available through the *Short Title Catalogue*, is a later reprint, from 1599, but is the same work cited by the *Dictionary*.

do not beleeeue as they do, in their false filthie prophets,  
Mahomet and Murtezalli. (349)

[...]

Then he reasoned with mee much of Religion, demanding  
whether I were a *Gower*, that is to say, an unbeleeuer, or a  
Muselman, that is, of *Mahomets* lawe. Unto whom I  
answered, that I was neither unbeleeuer nor *Mahometan*,  
but a *Christian*. (349).

In the context of secularization it is the second of these uses that interests me more. Here the word *Gower*<sup>199</sup> signifies an “unbeleeuer” not only in the Muslim faith, but in any religion at all. The usual glossary translation of *infidel*—from the Latin, “not faithful”—is somewhat appropriate here, but only in most the literal sense. The infidelity of this second definition of *giaour* is an “unfaith” which goes, at least in the English narrator’s mind, beyond the binary choice of loyalty/disloyalty to the religion of the region. The first usage of *Gower* in Hakluyt simply indicates a foreigner, disloyal to the approved religion of the land; the second usage suggests an individual who has stepped completely out of the social imaginary of belief. This is a curious thing for Hakluyt to imply as early as 1598, and suggests that secularization, as Taylor indicates, is a more gradual process, and perhaps an earlier one, than might be expected. More importantly, however, it

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<sup>199</sup> There is, apparently, some disagreement in English as to whether the *G* in *Giaour* ought to be hard or soft: The prevalence of hard-voweled *a* and *o* in the *OED*’s earlier alternate spellings (*gower*, *gaur*, the Persian *gōr/gyaur*, and so on) suggests, at least early on, the hard-voiced consonant, as does Byron’s taste for alliteration on strong beats (cf. line 722, “Woe to the Giaour! for his the guilt.” and line 745, “Who falls in battle ’gainst a Giaour!”). There are, at the same time, later variants given such as *Jaours* from Edward Wolley in 1654 (*OED*), which suggest a soft-*g* pronunciation was common in English during Byron’s day. Indeed, the reading public was sufficiently divided on the pronunciation for Jane Austen to lampoon the whole philological issue in *Persuasion*, when Captain Benwick offers “a brief comparison of opinion as to the first-rate poets...and how ranked the *Giaour* and *The Briade of Abydos*; and moreover, how the *Giaour* was to be pronounced” (192). As for Byron’s personal tastes, his spelling mirrors Beckford’s in *Vathek*, which would strongly indicate (especially in Beckford’s original French) a soft-*g* pronunciation; but Byron’s exposure to Turkish suggests the personal hard-*g* pronunciation which more likely manifests in the poem. Byron’s often recounted admission of his ability in “French to read with ease—but speak with difficulty” (Marchand III 100) suggests that the French spelling inherited from Beckford should not be considered binding.

deepens the possible meaning of “Giaour” in Byron’s poem (it is, we must remember, the only name we have for his protagonist), and fills the act of calling him an “unbeliever” with powerful potential implications in the context of both secularization and vampirism. The lack of any other name for the Giaour gives us, in essence, a far-travelling protagonist called Unbeliever, whose journey is one of progressive decline: the nearly allegorical tone of this move marks the Giaour as a deliberately secularized reversal of Bunyan’s Christian in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. In that case, while the Giaour as Byronic hero is frequently taken (quite aptly) to be a symbol of Byron himself, and while the anxieties of the Giaour are rightly taken as Byron’s personal anxieties, there is nevertheless good reason to consider the Giaour as a sort of secular everyman, standing in unabashedly for all unbelievers just as Christian stands in for all Christians.

In offering a Taylorean reading of *The Giaour*, then, part of my task must be to try and determine which sort of unbeliever Byron means the Giaour to be, how this figure of “unfaith” comes to inflect the vampire as they are tied together, and what new information, if any, this has to tell us about the shift to secular modernity. From the outset, the evidence is strong to treat the Giaour as an outcast from the world of belief altogether: Hassan’s description of the Giaour as an “Apostate from his own vile faith” (l. 616) paints him as an enemy of faith itself, including Christianity, rather than an enemy of Islam specifically. Instead of a simple carnivalesque<sup>200</sup> reversal of the traditional

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<sup>200</sup> It is possible to argue that Byron’s entire *oeuvre* is a project of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque. Frank Riga’s chapter in *The Foreign Woman in British Literature* makes the case convincingly for *Don Juan*, and constructs Byron as a “heteroglossic” satirist in a vein different from the “single, clear-cut voice and a single controlling idea such as one finds in customary forms of satire as described by Northrop Frye” (2). This undercuts in many ways the convention Bakhtinian theory of “the presumed monophony of poetry” (Parpalā 237), though he does admit, in Parpalā’s estimation, “the heteroglossia of so-called low poetic genres, like satire, comedy, and others (237). “The Giaour” is a similarly contestable space in which heteroglossia can be reasonably proposed; whether this is because of a satiric dimension is a question worthy of discussion. The comments on the pages to come, and particularly Jerome McGann’s comments

European romance, in which the “outsideness” of Christianity and Islam are inverted in the Eastern setting, we instead have a protagonist who functions as an exile from faith regardless of which religion is normalized or centered in the text.

Over and beyond the theme of vampirism, the poem’s chief thematic concern is a multifaceted and complex infidelity. At its heart, the narrative of *The Giaour* centers on the marital infidelity of Leila and her particularly Turkish punishment,<sup>201</sup> but at the same time, we have in her lover the Giaour a matching narrative of infidelity and punishment, in which sexual disloyalty is joined or replaced<sup>202</sup> by the even more egregious infidelity of unbelief. This more complicated infidelity lies at the heart of, and is highlighted by, the addition of the curse: vampirism is, after all, traditionally figured in folklore as a side effect of living outside the social imaginary of belief, whether by one’s own choice or by imposed punishment. Montague Summers considers the vampiric significance of excommunication, with which we might also group the Giaour’s seemingly more deliberate apostasy. In *Vampires and Vampirism*, he writes:

Very closely linked with this idea [of proper versus indecorous burial] is the belief that those persons become vampires who die under the ban of the church, that is to say

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on the importance of the balladeer in “The Giaour,” suggest there is ample ammunition to defend the poem, and poetry in general, against the presumption of monophony.

<sup>201</sup> A common Turkish punishment for infidelity during Byron’s first time in Ottoman Greece was to sew the offending woman into a sack and throw her into the sea. One of the best-known and most reliably attested anecdotes of Byron’s sojourn concerned his intervention in such a case near Athens in 1811. In a concise account by Karen Willis, “Byron came upon a crowd watching her, wrapped in a sack and about to be thrown into the sea. Byron stopped the soldiers at gunpoint, then cajoled and bribed the Turkish governor to let the girl leave Athens” (28). The incident is similarly detailed in Stephen Cheeke’s *Byron and Place* (62-3). Most interestingly, Fiona MacCarthy’s longer and more detailed account of the event in *Byron: Life and Legend* offers a second possibility, based on Byron’s own words to Tom Moore, that “he knew the girl and their affair had been the reason for her sentencing[...]and when Byron met the procession on the shore the girl in the sack was already dead” (132), a telling which mirrors “The Giaour” far more directly.

<sup>202</sup> At first it seems the Giaour’s only unfaithfulness is a spiritual one: as the “other man” in Leila’s triangle, he is culpable only as an accessory to her adultery. But if we take at face value the assertion of the vampiric curse that he will “from thy daughter, sister, wife, /At midnight drain the stream of life” (ll.759-60), then the Giaour is by definition an infidel in his own marriage as well—though it is never mentioned elsewhere that the Giaour has a wife of his own.

who die excommunicate. Excommunication is the principal and most serious penalty that the Church can inflict[...]a punishment that deprives the guilty of all participation in the common spiritual beliefs enjoyed by all the members of the Christian society. (84-5)

Excommunication was, naturally, a greater punishment for believers than for unbelievers: As Jürgen Stein writes, it “was significant in the Middle Ages because it dissolved all relationships and allegiances. Today it is relevant only if those concerned desire to be brought back into the congregation. In Europe the widespread indifference to religion and the church works against its significance” (237).

The link between excommunication and vampirism is not, at first glance, deeply explored in *The Giaour*, perhaps because, as Stein would find, such an ostracizing is of little serious weight to an unbeliever. But Summers’s point, hinging on what is for Taylor a key word, “common,” is in line with Taylor’s model: in a pre-modern social imaginary of sacred order, excommunication is both a social and ecumenical matter. Stein’s definition of excommunication describes its original function as precautionary rather than punitive, “to protect the whole body [of the church] against divine wrath because of an individual offender” (236). This is in line with Taylor’s picture of a pre-modern cosmos which is divinely correspondent, such that “disorders in the human realm will resonate in nature, because the very order of things is threatened” (*A Secular Age* 164). The general idea is that the transgressor’s debt to Providence follows him, and that by separating him from the congregation, absolves the congregation from incurring the debt on his behalf should he prove unrepentant.

In spite of this protective justification, however, excommunication in a sacred-centered social imaginary is inherently an ostracizing act. Within that social imaginary, at

least in Medieval Europe, the conceptual divide between physical and moral sickness was much more inconsistent,<sup>203</sup> and so a structure wherein the spiritually diseased were sent out, like the physically diseased, for the good of the community, should not be surprising. From this sense of spiritual contagion, perhaps, and from a parallel (and perfectly valid) fear of contagion from corpses improperly disposed of, comes a reasonable link between excommunication, consecrated burial, vampirism, and so on. The typical vampire in this model begins its supernatural unlife as it ended its natural life, as an outcast shunned by practices which amount to a sort of spiritual quarantine.

Byron's Giaour certainly fits the model of outcast, and the act of shunning above all seems to be the central feature of his punishments, extending even to the "Gouls and Afrits" (l. 784) with whom he shares a kinship, and who "in horror shrink away /From spectre more accursed than they!" (ll.784-6). It is a powerful sign of the Giaour's divorce from the world of belief that he finds himself, through this curse, separated not only from the "white magic" of the divine—that is, the holiness of either the Christian or Muslim paradigm—but even from the wretched "black magic" of his fellow monsters.

If separation, and more specifically isolation, is for Byron a characteristic both of his secular hero/antihero and of the punishments levelled against him, there is a formal symmetry in isolating the vampiric curse from all other fragments of the poem, as Byron has done. The whole fragment in question (ll.747-86) is disjoined from the more clearly attributed and voiced fragments, and as a result there is no critical consensus on the curse's speaker: Michael Sundell, in 1969, believed it to be spoken by the fisherman, serving "to balance the sympathy the main character inspires by showing the great hatred

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<sup>203</sup> Irina Metzler's *Disability in Medieval Europe* offers an excellent recent study of medieval concepts of the body, health, and infirmity during the effulgence of a pre-modern, enchanted world.

he arouses in the fisherman” (593). Judith Barbour, conversely, calls it the “curse of Hassan’s mother on the Giaour” (103), owing perhaps to the clear establishment of the mother’s point of view two fragments prior, at line 690. Kathryn McGinley’s admittedly confused summary tells us “before the Muslim dies, however, he places a curse of vampirism on the Giaour” (73), adding Hassan himself, however out-of-sequence, to the possible speakers.

More careful readings have resulted in a variety of ways to work around the pitfalls of (mis)attribution: David Seed avoids the issue altogether by adopting a passive voice, describing only “the introduction of a Moslem curse on the Giaour” (130). He recognizes more clearly the difficulty of identifying a speaker for any part of the poem, suggesting that “the perspectives of *The Giaour* are not only unresolved; they are so extreme in their opposition to each other that they almost tear the poem apart” (130). Finally, an early reading from Jerome McGann cites the poem’s anonymous Eastern narrator as the overall orchestrator of its many voices, and thus the only speaker whose presence behind the curse can be confirmed:

*The Giaour* really has only one narrator, the ballad singer, who assumes different roles at different moments in his performance but who is himself the source of the work’s final consistency precisely because he lets us know that he is assuming roles, that the poem is a virtuoso production.  
(*Fiery Dust* 144)

McGann’s focus on the balladeer, first presented here in 1968, has in many ways stood the test of time: Barbara Ravelhofer’s 2005 article, “Oral Poetry and the Printing Press in Byron’s *The Giaour*,” takes from McGann’s position the idea of a fully realized dramatic monologue in which, just as the Giaour is a typical hero-mask for Byron, the cast of characters themselves are all masks for a singular narrator:

Through this singer, other characters either speak or think—among them Hassan and his mother, a monk, a Tartar, and a fisherman who saw how Leila was drowned. At the end of the tale, the Giaour himself indulges in an inordinately long dying speech with makes the most of its one-man audience, a friar. The singer, Jerome McGann argues, avails himself of a technique used since Homer: he assumes as many roles as he needs, and enters into the psychology of his characters in a virtuoso performance. (25)

On the other hand, the painstaking effort by Wolfson and Manning to sort out the tangle of narrators in their edition of Byron's *Selected Poems*<sup>204</sup> suggests that the model of one balladeer with many masks does little to diminish the importance of exactly which mask the narrator is wearing when.

So who finally speaks the vampiric curse, and why does it matter? Its direct address to the Giaour, in a section entirely separated from this cast of characters, makes all of the existing attributions (Sundell's to the fisherman, McGinley's to Hassan, Barbour's to Hassan's mother, McGann's to the Homeric narrator himself) equally valid, while at the same time rendering a definitive answer impossible. In this passage in particular, we find ourselves as readers back in the same kind of relationship we had with the uncertainty of "Christabel": Anya Taylor's referential description of Coleridge's poem as "Dark fluxion, all unfixable by thought"<sup>205</sup> (707) could well refer to the narrative voice behind the Giaour's curse, which nevertheless rings as something to be

<sup>204</sup> See especially their notes to "The Giaour" on p.790-1.

<sup>205</sup> Anya Taylor's words on the "unfixability" of "Christabel" (and especially of Geraldine's identity) are quoted from Coleridge's late poem "Self-Knowledge":

What is there in thee, Man, that can be known?—  
Dark fluxion, all unfixable by thought,  
A phantom dim of past and future wrought[,] (ll.6-8)

In addition to the obvious undead overtones, the lines are especially resonant with "The Giaour," underscoring a rich Byronic theme that Andrea K. Henderson summarizes as "the mutability of that thing often fixed on as 'true character'" (163).

taken seriously, even when—or perhaps *because*—we cannot assign the words to a single speaker with absolute certainty.

The resulting isolation from this cast of characters, and from their generally negative emotional responses to the Giaour, allows the passage to take on the weight and seriousness of prophecy. The “characters” assumed by the phantom balladeer are themselves somewhat unreliable, and so distancing the fragment from them makes the curse less personal, less inflected by their unreliable presence. The striking direct address<sup>206</sup> of the curse allows us to treat it as an independent fragment, something different from every other piece of the poem; nevertheless, we can also read it as a simple foil for the description of Hassan’s afterlife in Paradise directly preceding it:

But him the maids of Paradise  
 Impatient to their halls invite,  
 And the dark Heaven of Houris eyes  
 On him shall glance for ever bright;  
 They come—their kerchiefs green they wave,  
 And welcome with a kiss the brave!  
 Who falls in battle ’gainst a Giaour,  
 Is worthiest an immortal bower. (ll. 739-46)

I am inclined to follow the latter approach, treating the curse in counterpoint to Hassan’s fate. Marilyn Butler offers a convincing argument for this approach on thematic grounds, describing these lines in concert with the curse as “a meditation on the afterlife, first as the pious Hassan will encounter it, then, anticipating the end, as the Giaour eventually should” (90). But again, the textual history of *The Giaour* offers compelling

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<sup>206</sup> Ravelhofer dismisses the idea that the lines, spoken to the Giaour in second person, are direct speech, noting that “quotation marks signposted every line of direct speech in the 1813-1815 editions” (30), and observing that the curse breaks this convention. This observation provides, I think, some suggestion that the words were less likely intended to belong to the fisherman, or Hassan’s mother, or any other defined character in the narrative. I am less convinced that it is sufficient to disqualify the curse as direct speech of one sort or another, but at the very least it does provide one more mechanical device which further establish the vampiric curse as an anomaly even in a poem of anomalous fragments.

material evidence in favour of this reading. Byron's original undated rough draft of the poem, identified as *MS. L*,<sup>207</sup> predates both the vampiric curse and Hassan's predicted afterlife, proceeding directly from "Yet died he as in arms he stood, /And unaveng'd, at least in blood" (ll.737-8) to the first line of the Monks' fragment, "How name ye yon lone Caloyer?" (l. 787). The later addition of the curse to the manuscript is accompanied by lines 739-46, introduced at the same time as part of the same revision (*CPW* III 406). McGann finds another identical introduction of these lines together, in the additions to the fair-copy manuscript<sup>208</sup> in the Murray archives (III 407), suggesting that for Byron, at least, Hassan's fate was realized of a piece with the Giaour's. There is at times a striking symmetry between the Giaour and Hassan; in *Fiery Dust*, McGann asserts that "Hassan can pass his curse to the Giaour<sup>209</sup> because he and his enemy are alike. Traitors both to what Leila represents, both become traitors to themselves" (160). This symmetry is apparent even in the original first draft, but with the introduction of ll.739-786, it continues on to colour both characters beyond the grave. It is significant that the ultimate fate of Hassan, who bears the most direct responsibility for Leila's death, is decided by dint of his faith rather than a preponderance of explicit and implied atrocities. Even the Muslim narrator of Hassan's portion of the tale does not paint a one-sided picture of the pasha: his scimitar was first stained, for instance, not with mere blood, but with

the best of Arnaut blood  
When in the pass the rebels stood,  
And few returned to tell the tale

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<sup>207</sup> The manuscript is identified *L* with respect to its present location, the Lovelace collection at the Bodleian Library).

<sup>208</sup> McGann identifies this manuscript as *MS. M*, and classifies the emended text as *MS. MA*, that is, manuscript M, with additions (*CPW* III 407).

<sup>209</sup> This is a curious phrase from McGann, who for the most part avoids the pitfall of trying to identify an originator of the vampiric curse.

Of what befell in Parne's vale. (ll.525-8)

Putting aside the poetic and literary associations of Parnassus in Philhellenic tradition, Byron may have in mind a specific clash (or type of clash) between Albanian rebels (Arnauts) and the Ottomans, whose rebellion began during the Great Turkish War of 1683-99 and lasted for decades. Byron's Advertisement places *The Giaour* some time shortly after the Russian invasion of Greece in 1770, and Carol Franklin's biographical guide to Byron finds both a historical context and a possible (and unflattering) model for Hassan:

by 1779, as Byron explains, the pasha Hassan Ghazi was able to restore Turkish rule by beating back the Arnauts (Albanians) from the Morea which[...]was plunged into unparalleled savagery for several years. No wonder that the memory of the savage reprisals after this first major attempted uprising was enough to deter the Greeks from listening to the Russians' blandishments to rebel in the mid-1780s and later. This is one reason that Philhellenes such as Byron would not succeed in spurring on the movement for independence until 1821. (52)

In spite of a life of considerable explicit and implied "savagery," then, and in spite of the fact that the purpose of Hassan's sortie is "to woo a bride /More true" (ll.533-4)—essentially to replace the wife he murdered—Hassan's death against an unbeliever is enough to guarantee him an afterlife in the paradise of his faith. The imagery and language of lines 739-46 imply that Hassan has died as the most militant sort of *shahid* (شهيد)—an Arabic term for "martyr," derived from "witness," whose meaning can extend to include warriors who fall in battle against an infidel. In very concrete terms, then, he earns a *shahid's* end, a death and rebirth appropriate to the nature and strength of his belief.

Are we to take from this that the Giaour's fate, by extrapolation, is a somehow "appropriate" death and rebirth for an unbeliever? This question is worth asking, especially given how flawed and compromised the image of Hassan as *shahid* has turned out to be. It does not seem to matter to the poem, or to affect Hassan's fate, that the cause for which he fights and dies is far from exalted, or that it has nothing to do with *jihad* in the militant sense of spreading faith through warfare. At first glance, Hassan is at best the victim of a revenge tragedy here, a sort of Eastern Claudius, cut down by the Giaour in payment for Leila's death. At worst he seems an avenger himself, whose primary grudge with the Giaour concerns the act of marital, not spiritual, infidelity. Both dimensions of unfaithfulness are linked in this battle, tied closely enough together that one may effectively stand in for the other.

The ensuing class of faiths, or rather the clash of faith and faithlessness, is thus represented by the straightforward and even stock device of marital infidelity: by throwing in her lot with the Giaour, and by choosing the path of marital faithlessness, Leila is herself symbolically choosing a form of spiritual faithlessness as well. This is the kind of thing that, according to many kinds of folklore, leads one to rest uneasily after death. I have said much here of the faithful Hassan and the unfaithful Giaour as foils for each other; but what I have not considered, and would like to consider next, is that Leila herself is a spectre of unfaith—a being condemned, as the Giaour with his own family, to haunt whom she loves most in payment for her infidelities both marital and spiritual, both secular and sacred.

## 6.2 The Hunter Becomes the Haunted: The Afterlife of Leila and the Giaour

It is significant, I think, and foreboding, that Leila's name means something like "night" in Arabic and related languages. The poem, after all, is divided curiously into some curious fragments of day and night: the action of the Giaour's ambush and much of Hassan's riding is rendered by day (Eugène Delacroix's famous 1825 painting, *The Combat of the Giaour and Hassan*, reflects this). The Giaour's later scenes at the monastery are frequently treated as nocturnes; the moments of haunting he revisits in his final confession, at least, explicitly happen at night. Leila's presence fills the poem in this night-scenes, though she is already dead, and she exists only in a state of afterlife, living on, as the poem suggests, through a combination of memory and apparition.

We must remember the battle here begins as an ambush by the robbers with whom the Giaour has allied himself, as there is an important shift in tone when the Giaour himself takes the field, and Hassan recognizes him as "Lost Leila's love" (l. 619). The initial goal of the ambushed party seems to be simple survival; Hassan's claim that he has "scaped a bloodier hour than this" (l. 596) prioritizes escape over victory, perhaps wisely so given the clear success of the ambush and the dire tide of the skirmish. When the Giaour appears, Hassan's focus (and his alone, it seems) turns at once to his enemy's death. This, coupled with his curious description of the woman he killed as "lost" suggests a sophisticated degree of characterization below the surface of the poem: does Hassan, forced as a "believer" under Turkish law to kill his wife, shift the blame to the Giaour for forcing her death by forcing her adultery? The clash between these enemies could be narrated as a revenge tragedy from the perspective of either side. This implied perspective humanizes, to an extent, the otherwise vile Hassan; correspondingly the

Giaour undercuts his own heroism, even at the very moment he serves as an unambiguous agent of justice, by openly mocking Hassan's faith at the sword-point of his own unbelief:

‘Yes, Leila sleeps beneath the wave,  
But his shall be a redder grave;  
Her spirit pointed well the steel  
Which taught the felon heart to feel.  
He call'd the Prophet, but his power  
Was vain against the vengeful Giaour:  
He call'd on Alla—but the word  
Arose unheeded or unheard.  
Thou Paynim fool!—could Leila's prayer  
Be pass'd, and thine accorded there? (ll.675-84)

Here the Giaour not only plays along with the poem's depiction of him as a dangerously subversive figure of unbelief, but self-consciously identifies it. The quotation marks and the first-person passage to follow (ll.685-9) mark him clearly as the speaker, and in the context of Hassan's failed prayers, which he audaciously suggests are not only unanswered but “unheard,” he self-identifies by the title *Giaour*, and seems to approach his vanquishing of a “Paynim fool,” especially in spite of Hassan's religious battle-cries and entreaties, as a sort of retrograde *jihad* of unbelief. In the Giaour's own eyes, his victory is a moral one, and not exclusively an act of vengeance.

There is one other aspect of this passage I want to consider carefully, and one that is frequently glossed over by readers too exclusively focused on the vampiric curse which follows. The single line that Leila's “spirit pointed well the steel” is an interesting bookend to the monks' later description of the Giaour, who

On cliff[...]hath been known to stand,  
And rave as to some bloody hand  
Fresh sever'd from its parent limb,  
Invisible to all but him,  
Which beckons onward to his grave,

And lures to leap into the wave. (ll. 826-31)

Leila's presence is felt throughout the poem, though at no point do we come face-to-face with her in the text. We see her only remotely, through the veil of narrative memory, save a brief and immediate passage, in two fragments (ll.352-87), where she is both silenced and hidden from us by an actual shroud—bound and gagged in both a literal and metaphorical sense. Here the narrator, a Muslim boatman, is hired by a strange Emir to ferry a nondescript “burthen” out to sea and plunge it into the depths; the Charonic image so powerfully rendered both in *Heart of Darkness* and Dracula's trip aboard the *Demeter* is powerfully foreshadowed here by the Emir, who inexplicably asks the boatman to row rather than unfurl the sail (ll. 366-7) and describes the seemingly short trip as “the longest voyage, I trow” (l. 372).

Daniel Watkins suggests that “Leila is not allowed human dimensions” (881) as an ironic means of problematizing the social context of the Giaour. For Watkins, her remoteness within the narrative represents an objectification of women (an objectification indulged in by the Giaour as well as Hassan) with which the poem means to take issue. It would strengthen Watkins's argument, I think, to observe that Leila's only moment of immediate presence in the narrative, she, the burden, is characterized as an “it”:

Sullen it plunged, and slowly sank,  
The calm wave rippled to the bank;  
I watch'd it as it sank, methought  
Some motion from the current caught  
Bestirr'd it more,—'twas but the beam  
That chequer'd o'er the living stream— (ll.374-9)

Even Leila's final struggles, if they are indeed struggles, are misread by the fisherman as, at most, a kind of pathetic fallacy, some trick of the light or the waves or both. Leila's end, like her life, are as “unheeded and unheard” as Hassan's final prayers; it is only after

the grave, in memory and death, that Leila takes on both a human shape and a controlling power in the narrative.

In life, Leila is reduced to the relatively unremarkable lust-object of the two main characters, neither of whom is entirely sympathetic in their relationship to her. In death, she drives the narrative of the poem, from guiding the Giaour's sword-point to continuing to tempt him toward the grave. The "bloody hand," as he have discussed, is a powerfully Gothic symbol of the sins of the past enduring (in many cases, beyond the grave) to haunt the present. While the Giaour is cursed to *become* undead, then, Leila's image—whether ghost or memory—continues to reach out to torment him: in a real sense, the haunter has become the haunted.

Watkins characterizes the Giaour's retreat to the monastery as a flight of desperation. "He literally buys his way into the monastery (902-904)," Watkins writes, "or, phrased differently, he buys his way out of a troubled and oppressive society, leaving the world that so disturbs him" (887). Watkins's powerfully historicist reading approaches *The Giaour* as a critique of the brutal social imaginary in which it is set, allowing us to see

that the religious and domestic tensions described in the poem are not abstractly psychological, but rather are conditioned by circumstances that actively deny the possibility of human betterment[...]that such episodes as the murder of Leila and the brutal assassination of Hassan are not necessarily isolated, arbitrary, and purely private acts, but rather are predictable incidents in a world pervaded by extreme violence[...]in short, knowledge of the historical situation surrounding the story offers us a way of measuring many events in the poem that otherwise would appear to be local and without social or intellectual content. (875)

Significantly, Watkins's article, which otherwise proceeds methodically through the narrative events of *The Giaour*, makes no mention of the vampiric curse and has nothing to say about it. This is characteristic of a divide between readings which ground the poem in its historical context, at the expense of considering its supernatural elements, and readings which divorce the poem from this context to psychoanalyze it, to evaluate it in the space of supernatural myth and myth alone, irrespective of history. Attempts to cross these paths have resulted in one side or the other being given short shrift, as with Peter Thorslev, who writes in his contextualizing study *The Byronic Hero* that

Byron obviously intended the curse as a bit of 'local color,' and there is no evidence whatsoever that the [curse] passage became at all notorious in Byron's time[...]for the most part the Byronic Hero was a typical romantic lover, and nowhere in all the poems is he referred to either literally or figuratively as a vampire-lover. (9)

James Twitchell provides ample refutation to this sweeping claim in *The Living Dead*, calling Thorslev out both for misreading *The Giaour* and for overlooking Byron's use of vampirism to characterize the Giaour, the Corsair, Conrad, and especially Count Manfred (75-6). But Twitchell's study speaks from the other side of the critical divide; it is a study of archetypes, of vampiric motifs, and it operates with a historical understanding of the long-lived vampire myths interwoven in these Romantic texts, but has little to say about the immediate historical climate of their production—that is, the English Romantic social imaginary.

In reading vampires as an informative effect of secularization, then—or perhaps, more precisely, as an effect of the pressures and counter-pressures of secularization—we have an approach that not only allows for significant contextualization, as in Watkins's "Social relations in *The Giaour*," but provides a historically rooted way of making use of

the fanciful images for which Watkins and Thorslev have little time. Taylor's provision and definition of the social imaginary provides us with an invaluable, historically rooted alternative to an imagined and neurotic collective psyche in the analysis of such traits. It is, furthermore, an inclusive alternative: the tools of psychoanalysis need not be thrown out entirely, if they can be used amidst the richness of background associated with a social imaginary, rather than the relative sociohistorical vacuum in which the invented "collective mind" of psychoanalytic readings is sometimes supposed to exist.

*The Giaour's* supernatural elements—Leila's after-image in all its forms, the Giaour's vampirism, even God or Allah and His implied denial—invite this alternative reading, precisely because they are not fully addressed by the other systems in place. To speak of Leila as powerless in the narrative, and to suggest a sociohistorical reason for this ironic depiction, Watkins must ignore her supernatural afterlife and the images through which she exerts her real influence over the Giaour and his narrative. Conversely, to simply acknowledge that vampiric motifs are present, as Twitchell does, and to trace them from text to text in the interest of establishing a continuity of analogues,<sup>210</sup> tells us little about what the vampire is *doing* in the story and why, in this broader context, aside from providing a basic intertextual road-map of how the vampire came to be there. Determining what vampirism has to do with unbelief in *The Giaour*, as I hope to do here, will answer these larger supernatural questions.

If we consider Leila's supernatural presence (whether through visions, hauntings, or the simple device of memory) as a counterpart to the foretold afterlives of Hassan and the Giaour, the poem becomes a mosaic of afterlives against which some of these

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<sup>210</sup> This kind of the work nevertheless makes possible some interesting and powerful readings. Twitchell, for example, offers an especially telling thematic comparison of vampiric motifs in *The Giaour*, *Manfred*, and Shelley's *The Cenci* (75-89).

answers begin to stand out. Even the poem's elegiac opening, a somewhat disjointed fragment lamenting "Greece—but living Greece no more"<sup>211</sup> (l.91) finds a new place and relevance in this reading. The elegy for Greece is typically discussed in relation to Leila: either Leila is seen as a symbol of this ravaged and feminine East, or the reverse of this standard metonymy is charted, and the fallen Greece is read as an echo and symbol of the fallen Leila, who adopts a sort of feminized Fisher-King archetype in relation to the land. Jerome Christensen, in *Lord Byron's Strength*, manages to explore both of these familiar paths at once, finding an effective covalence between Leila and the subjugated Greece. "The display of Leila," he writes, "as of Greece, renders an image both metaphoric and metonymic of the poem: body pictured as 'living page,' enlivened by the 'lines where beauty lingers,' by line and hue" (100). Treating the "living pages" of both Leila and heroic Greece as afterlives, however, invites them into the otherwise binary dialogue between the Giaour's fate and Hassan's, complicating a portrait of afterlives that does not readily break down into a simple conflict of belief versus unbelief.

The Giaour's simple comment that Leila's spirit guided his sword (l.677), which foreshadows his confession regarding her apparition, does not seem to be fanciful hyperbole, particularly given its juxtaposition with his claim that Hassan's prayers were unheard. This suggests a sort of belief in the supernatural—a porous belief, in essence—which complicates the usual picture of the Giaour as a hard-edged figure of unbelief by virtue of his atheism. Consider for a moment that picture as it initially stands: as far as the religiously-centered social imaginaries of the Muslim Turks and the Christian "Caloyer[s]" (l.787) go, the Giaour is straightforwardly an outsider, even to a greater

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<sup>211</sup> The line echoes Byron's depiction of Greece in *Childe Harold* as "Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth! /Immortal, though no more! though fallen, great!" (Canto II.73, ll.693-4)

extent than the typical Byronic hero. The best counterpart to the Giaour is possibly Lanciotto, the Venetian renegade from *The Siege of Corinth*, Byron's 1816 poem commemorating the earlier Ottoman conquest of the Morea in 1715.<sup>212</sup> Where Lanciotto is a complete convert, exchanging one religion (and its social system) for another, the Giaour seems abject from all these systems. He is a wretched outcast from the social imaginary of the land he departs, the land he arrives in—even from, as I mentioned earlier, his fellow-monsters in the future predicted by the curse. Even the last possible social sphere in which the Giaour might find some sense of belonging—the domestic sphere, with his escaped lover—is frustrated by Leila's death. Like a sort of Romantic-era Bond Girl,<sup>213</sup> Leila's life provides the teasing image of an escape, in the dangled promise of the domestic sphere, from the antihero's perpetual outsiderhood, and her necessary death shatters that possibility and normalizes the Giaour's position outside the reach of social norms, and outside the “cant” that defines such spheres in Byron's eyes.

Byron's apparent intent, inasmuch as critics have tried to ascertain it, is for the Byronic hero to operate from this isolated, marginalized vantage point as a sort of cultural critic, a devil's advocate (sometimes almost literally) against the defining principles of the social imaginaries he shirks. Jerome McGann describes the Byronic hero, and the Giaour in particular, as “a living challenge to the comforts of undemanding and conventional ethics...a new and terrifying problematics of morality” (*Byron and*

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<sup>212</sup> Daniel Watkins locates the narrative theatre of *The Giaour* in 1779, during the time of Hassan Ghazi's attempt to re-establish Ottoman authority in the unruly Morea (875).

<sup>213</sup> The archetypal substance of the Bond Girl is dissected by several critics in Christoph Lindner's critical reader, *The James Bond Phenomenon*. There is a considerable divide between the small-r romanticism of James Bond (both Fleming's original and the cinematic Bonds) and the large-R Romanticism of Byron's heroes; but as dehumanized narrative objects presented in reference to their respective archetype, the women of both cultural traditions share many of the same themes, traits, and problems. Christine Bold's chapter, in particular, has much to say that rings true of Romantic objects such as Leila.

*Romanticism* 26). In Mary Hallab's vampire-centric study, the Giaour is "cursed to his eternity of unrest for his contempt for human life and his affronts to community values" (37). Both of these readings, in different ways, treat the Giaour as a challenge to the social imaginaries whose expectations he defies. This echoes the popular image of the Byronic hero as rebellious, intellectually daring outcast, a portrait which not only flatters the figure (especially the ignoble, murderous Giaour), but ascribes to him a powerful agency over his own life. His unapologetic departure from what McGann calls "conventional ethics" and Hallab calls "community values" could easily be figured in terms of an unapologetic, progressive step out of the pre-modern social imaginary represented by both Hassan's Islam and an antiqued, Orientalized Christianity.

This is, at present, the popular reading of the Giaour. It sets him squarely in the familiar spirit of Romanticism and has provided a straightforward way of understanding him in the context of both literary figures (Lanciotto and other Byronic heroes) and cultural ones (Byron himself, his idolized hero Napoleon, his controversial friend Percy Shelley). But this reading is tacit on the matter of Leila's afterlife, of the Giaour's continued evocation of her spirit and its powers, of the peculiar placement of the vampiric curse in an ostensibly Muslim speaker's voice. In short, readings that figure the Giaour as an unambiguous rebel or outcast from the religiously ordered systems are not sure what to do with his continued porosity, to use Taylor's term. The Giaour's escape from conventional morality, from the community of organized religion, is not an absolute escape from the porous condition of belief. Despite his unabashed mockery of Hassan's faith and his denial of the monks' sacraments, the Giaour remains haunted by the supernatural—first figuratively, and finally literally, as revealed to his confessor:

I saw her, friar! and I rose,  
 Forgetful of our former woes;  
 And rushing from my couch, I dart,  
 And clasp her to my desperate heart;  
 I clasp—what is it that I clasp?  
 No breathing form within my grasp,  
 No heart that beats reply to mine,  
 Yet, Leila! yet the form is thine!

[...]

I care not—so my arms enfold  
 The all they ever wish'd to hold.  
 Alas! around a shadow prest,  
 They shrink upon my lonely breast;  
 Yet still—'tis there—in silence stands,  
 And beckons with beseeching hands! (ll.1283-99)

I am always surprised to find this image cited so much more infrequently than the curse of vampirism, particularly given that the two passages speak to one another and bookend several key themes of the poem. Aside from providing a second undead being to critique, which should be of great interest to those who mine *The Giaour* exclusively as a vampire- or ghost-story, this vision addresses and resolves a small degree of the poem's maddening fragmentary ambiguity by lending credence to the monks' otherwise speculative assumptions of the Giaour's tendency to

Rave as to some bloody hand  
 Fresh sever'd from its parent limb,  
 Invisible to all but him,  
 Which beckons onward to his grave,  
 And lures to leap into the wave. (ll.837-31)

These apparitions of Leila, or of her spirit, appear fleetingly in the text, and are merely implied until the Giaour describes this intangible specter in detail. The placement of Leila's "big reveal," in which her physical presence<sup>214</sup> is sudden and startling, coincides

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<sup>214</sup> Her "braided hair, and bright-black eye" (l.1300), for instance, is the only description we have of her, other than an extended blazon (ll. 473-518) whose overflowing, extravagant language seems to obscure rather

with what might be the poem's climax, though it is always difficult to tell in a narrative poem whose fragmented structure so effectively resists narrativity. In *Byromania and the Birth of Celebrity Culture*, Ghislaine McDayter describes this climactic moment in psychoanalytic terms, framing Leila's appearance as a literal manifestation of the Giaour's own terminal hysteria.<sup>215</sup> "By the end of *The Giaour*," she writes,

the hero's state of hysteria has progressed to such an extent that the body of the poem has come to manifest its classic "convulsive" symptoms....echoing his new "hysterical" relationship to Leila, the Giaour's relationship to language similarly reveals his refusal of closure and fulfillment as potentially tyrannical acts. (84)

By arguing for the reader-as-psychoanalyst, McDayter at least provides a function for the spectre, though that function (i.e. as psychotic symptom) is problematic in a poem that offers us extremely spare commentary on what parts of the narrative, if any, should be taken at face value. But while McDayter takes Leila's apparition seriously, she does not read it as a fact of the poem's narrative. She does not trust the Giaour's senses, which are for her the senses of a man driven to psychosis; Leila's final presence in the poem, then, is something imaginary—another Gothic counterfeit—and in no way a woman with her own identity. Even in death, she is robbed of authenticity and autonomy, reduced at best to a fragment of the Giaour's mind.

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than detail her features. Leila's act of apparition comes, perhaps, as a striking repossession of her own human image, a powerful contrast to the gagged "burden" thrown overboard earlier in the poem—a woman with a literal bag over her head. Watkins's claim that she is "denied human dimensions" (881) is reinforced by the material props of this passage, but subverted by her powerful, climactic appearance from beyond the grave.

<sup>215</sup> Karen Swann, who wrote so extensively about hysteria in "'Christabel': The Wandering Mother and the Enigma of Form," is an excellent counterpart to read alongside McDayter's passage on hysteria in *The Giaour*. Swann's definition of hysteria is clearer and more robust on the surface, I think, but placing its detail next to McDayter's book provides a richer understanding of the concept and its history than could be had from either work alone.

If the existence of Leila's ghost in the poem, as something outside the Giaour's added imagination, is subject to argument, it is essentially the same as the vampiric curse: how literally are we meant to take these words? Is the Giaour really doomed to rise as a vampire after his death—or does he retreat from the monastery's sacraments because this has already occurred? There are many conflicting readings of just how real a vampire the Giaour is, or will become. I imagine the same spread of conflicting readings is possible on the apparition of Leila, whether she is a psychotic symptom, a real ghost, or a metaphorical creature of memory. What is significant, though, is that the Giaour *believes* she is real, because this has understandably important repercussions on the Giaour as we have seen him constructed—as a modern, secular, buffered unbeliever.

It is worth asking the question of whether the Giaour believes in Leila naïvely, as in Taylor's model of the pre-modern self, or whether his belief merely constitutes a willing participation in the "afterlife" of a pre-modern social imaginary. The Giaour's presentation throughout the text suggests the latter to me: Byron makes much of his skepticism, depicting a rebellion not only against the God of Christ or Mohammed, but of the whole social realities that have been shaped by common thought and practice regarding these two systems. Too much has been said<sup>216</sup> of Giaour's refusal to participate<sup>217</sup> in various options of belief: wherever we place the Giaour on this spectrum, he is not naïvely thrown into a porous social imaginary, but seems to choose one that suits him. That element of choice, whatever choice he might make, is a fundamental

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<sup>216</sup> Watkins provides an especially good example of this criticism, not only identifying the Giaour's refusal but characterizing it in a sociohistorical context.

<sup>217</sup> As non-participants, and as conscientious objectors to their respective social imaginaries, Byron's Giaour and Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener* have much in common. It is somewhat surprising how little comparative work is done on the two authors: Edward Fiess's 1952 article "Melville as a Reader and Student of Byron" sets the groundwork for such study, but has not to my knowledge been followed up.

marker of the modern, buffered self within Taylor's model, as are other aspects of the Giaour's Romantic makeup—individual agency, for one. Juxtaposing the text with *Christabel* brings the modernity of the protagonist into stark relief by highlighting a two-pronged naïveté that the Byronic hero lacks—or has consciously purged from himself.

Christabel's naïveté takes two distinct forms, or perhaps more accurately, she possesses two different qualities that might be described by the same word. First, she resides in a fantastical poem whose internal logic naïvely admits certain beliefs, symbols and acts of supernatural power (the iron gate and threshold, the tolling bell, the evil eye). This “common language” of the supernatural is the kind of naïveté with which Taylor concerns himself, the kind I am chiefly concerned with in *The Giaour*. The other dimension of naïveté, the one we might more closely associate with the word's connotations of innocence and gullibility, consists of Christabel's seeming ignorance of this common language (a language known to the reader) and the dramatic irony and tension that descend from this. These two “naïve” dimensions should not be confused with each other: the text's depiction of the supernatural is “naïve” in the first sense, but not in the second, in that it is intimately aware and in full command of its own internal logic regarding the supernatural.

*The Giaour*, by comparison, offers a different and perhaps inverse set of uncertainties. The Giaour himself is intimately aware of not only his own “common practice” of belief, but the common practices around him as well. He speaks their symbolic languages; he is equally capable of references to both the Houris (l.1046) and the Mark of Cain (ll.1057-8) in his speech to the friar, and his resistance to social pressures is a calculated one. However, the text itself no more accepts his attitude to the

supernatural than anyone's. The Giaour's exclamation that "I saw her, friar!" (l.1283), with the haunting passage to follow, form an admission of belief, but it goes unanswered, uncontested by the silent friar, but unconfirmed outside of the Giaour's emphatic but highly subjective account. In a similar fashion, we have no act of vampirism in the present tense of the poem's narrative: the parallel to Leila's accursed afterlife, the Giaour's curse, is presented entirely in future tense. We are left to wonder whether we even see it fulfilled, free to speculate whether the Giaour is a literal vampire who has come to the monastery after drinking the blood of his family, or whether he has simply come here under the weight of such a curse, perhaps in an effort to prevent it. Does the monastery, in fact, constitute consecrated ground? How, then, can a vampiric Giaour cross onto it, whether he buys his way into the monastery or not? It is telling that the spirit of Leila beckons him to her rather than coming to him fully; the prevailing image is one in which she comes to him at the edge of his consecrated sanctuary, but can go no further unless he comes out to her—as Christabel did to Geraldine.

In spite of its frequent citation as a "vampire-poem," then, I see scant evidence to confirm that the curse has come to pass, that the Giaour is a vampire in literal point of fact anywhere in the narrative. The wife, sister, and daughter whose blood he is cursed to drink exist nowhere else in the poem, and it is possible they never existed. Given how much is made of Leila's adultery, the complications would be great if the Giaour were, as the language of the curse suggests, married to another woman with a daughter of his own. We might instead believe that the curse hangs in wait until the Giaour's death; his corpse, after all, "shall from its tomb be rent" (l.756) to go about the nasty business of his destroying his family. In this way, by ending with the Giaour's death, we might say the

poem is “finished,” formalistically speaking, in a way unlike *Christabel*, but that it ends mid-narrative, shortly before the vampiric rampage we are told to expect. Even here, though, there is a problem: at the time of the Giaour’s death, according to (perhaps) the friars,<sup>218</sup> he “pass’d—nor of his name and race /Hath left a token or a trace” (ll.1329-30). What family does he return from beyond the grave to kill, if he has not left one?

There are a few ways we might read the poem which make sense of this curse in the context of belief. Let us return for a moment to Daniel Watkins’s observation that the Giaour “literally buys his way into the monastery (902-904), or, phrased differently, he buys his way out of a troubled and oppressive society, leaving the world that so disturbs him” (887). Although Watkins is serving the typical model of the Giaour as simple social outcast, he has correctly framed the Giaour’s final retreat into the monastery as a venturing *away* rather than *toward* something. The important aspect of the Giaour’s flight to ground is not whither he flees, but whence. In the context of his own avowed atheism, the monks and their sacraments function to the Giaour as antique curiosities and little more:

here it soothes him to abide  
 For some dark deed he will not name.  
 But never at our vesper prayer,  
 Nor e’er before confession chair  
 Kneels he, nor recks he when arise  
 Incense or anthem to the skies,  
 But broods within his cell alone,  
 His faith and race alike unknown. (ll. 800-807)

Although his faith is “unknown,” and we see him in the context of the broader religions as an unbeliever, the Giaour never manages to exist completely outside the paradigm of

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<sup>218</sup> The single word “we” (l.1333) in the second-last line of the poem indicates a quite unusual plural narrator for these last six lines of *The Giaour*. It makes sense to read these as the collective words of the friars—though it could easily be a single friar, misrepresenting his own thoughts as the thoughts of his brethren. Narrative voice and the potential for irony are closely linked here, as throughout the poem.

belief, the paradigm of porousness. The other predicted afterlives of the poem are appropriate, somehow, to the systems of belief in which each character is enshrined: as a holy warrior of sorts (and particularly as a man), Hassan's promised paradise with its Houris is somehow appropriate to his system of belief. Leila, conversely, whose fate is to be drowned, and to speak more powerfully in death than in life, is doomed by her participation in a system of belief—a social imaginary—which the poem suggests is inherently hostile to women. Her adultery, “worse than faithless, for a Giaour!” (l.536), is not simply a rebellion against her husband, but a rebellion against the social imaginary which contains her, a courageous but failed attempt to “escape the system” as it is suggested the Giaour has done. The Giaour complicates the picture by suggesting that a life outside the predominant social imaginaries—in essence, within one's own proprietary social imaginary—is not the utopian escape her flight would make it out to be, but a problematic state with challenges all its own.

In the context of these social imaginaries and the afterlives they provoke, the vampire's curse is somehow appropriate to the Giaour's private system of belief, about which we otherwise know very little. We have, as Byron's contemporary readers had, a textbook definition of Islam to consult in the case of Hassan—and even if that definition was (or is still, for some readers) inaccurate, formulated for a Western Christian readership in such a way that something is lost in translation, it remains a way of decoding Hassan's thoughts and behaviour in the context of a larger social imaginary. For the Giaour, we are not given such an explicit skeleton key—only the tantalizing clues, in his comments and actions, that he is not altogether immune to porousness.

If the curse of vampirism is never realized, if it is merely an attempt to echo (whether seriously or ironically) the simple vampirism of Southey's *Thalaba*, why does the poem continue to fascinate as a vampire poem? Why does this passage in particular important? The most obvious answer is that somehow, the text suggests to the reader that the curse is important—but less obvious, I think, is that the Giaour specifically feels the weight of its importance. The curse of vampirism is one that befalls unbelievers, especially those not buried on consecrated ground. Most significantly, it is not a remote afterlife, like Hassan's in *Paradise*, or even a liminal one like Leila's periodic haunting. To be "on earth as Vampire sent" (l.755) is to suffer the punishment immanently, in the same material world occupied by the living. It is a supernatural punishment, like damnation; but unlike damnation, it does not require a commitment to the systems of belief that the Giaour has eschewed.

The curse of vampirism thus works in tandem with the apparition of Leila, threatening to pull the Giaour back down into belief: when I describe Leila as "liminal," what I mean is that she reaches across to the Giaour from a porous world, or from a porous mode of being in the world, and pulls him toward it. For her, he even seems willing at times: his plea to "ne'er again depart— /Or farther with thee bear my soul" (ll.1317-18) are the closest he comes to expressing this will, though the friars' depiction of the Giaour as a man "lure[d] to leap into the wave" (l.831) suggests his willingness to follow Leila, not only into the water but into the afterlife (and suicide, we must remember, leads to impure burial, and thus to vampirism in traditional folklore). The poem is rife with motifs which powerfully suggest this suicide impulse. The "Scorpion girt by fire" (l.423) alludes to an ancient and popular superstition that a scorpion so

threatened will sting itself to death. The scorpion as a symbol of suicide is well-known to the Romantic imagination, appearing the same year in Percy Shelley's *Queen Mab*:

Some eminent in virtue shall start up,  
Even in perversest time:  
The truths of their pure lips, that never die,  
Shall bind the scorpion falshood with a wreath  
Of ever-living flame,  
Until the monster sting itself to death. (Canto V, ll.33-38)<sup>219</sup>

We do not need to psychoanalyze *The Giaour* to see the suicide-act as a symbol of a surrender to porousness. On the contrary, a psychoanalytic approach might lead us away from this reading, toward a typically Freudian union, in Leila's beckoning, of *eros* and *thanatos*, the urges of sex and death.

What this usual reading of the Giaour's yearning for self-annihilation would not answer for us, however, is a series of important questions about the sort of self being annihilated. For instance, is the annihilation of self, to the modern self, materially different than it was to the pre-modern self? Studies on the subject such as Christian Baudelot and Roger Establet's *Suicide*<sup>220</sup> suggest that it is, at least in sociological terms, representing Émile Durkheim's beliefs<sup>221</sup> on the subject to suggest that "modernity results in individualism, and individualism results in suicide" (33). Even in this extremely simplified summary of Durkheim, we have a language which fits Romantic traditions, and romantic traditions of suicide in particular. If Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* did not exactly glorify suicide, it nevertheless catalyzed an aesthetic and moral climate in

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<sup>219</sup> There is no known "Romantic originator" of the motif, though it is a superstition drawn from classical tradition. In Reiman & Fraistat's edition of Shelley's poetry, the suicidal scorpion is traced back at least as far as Pliny, several works of whom Shelley translated (565).

<sup>220</sup> The original study was published in 2006 by Éditions du Seuil. The text I refer to here is an English translation, under the title *Suicide: The Hidden Side of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).

<sup>221</sup> Baudelot and Establet are probably referring to Durkheim's 1897 study *Le Suicide*.

Romanticism in which self-annihilation stood as the ultimate expression of the kind of social defiance the Giaour evinces in nearly every lesser means.

Nancy Rosenblum finds a variety of Romantic variations on the destruction of the self, all of which break from the Western pre-modern tradition of suicide (the tradition after Judas Iscariot,<sup>222</sup> for instance) to represent suicide as something other than ultimate religious despair. In *Another Liberalism*, she writes that

the sensitive soul “half in love with easeful death” is a familiar theme in romantic literature. For the philosophical idealists among them, death means becoming one with the universe, as in Shelley’s “Adonais.” For others it is an escape from ennui; Werther’s suicide in Goethe’s early novel was the first of many such final retreats. Death has a somewhat different significance for romantic militarists. The dream of heroism is a dream of self-assertion, not self-transcendence or self-annihilation. Unlike suicide, which is retirement from the world, death in battle is manifestly in the world. Where suicide suggests that the romantic is unfit for life, heroism pronounces his efficacy. (20)

Against this background, *The Giaour* becomes an even more complicated nexus of Romantic ideas: if death in battle is a heroic trope of Romantic militarism,<sup>223</sup> it is followed here not by the Giaour but by Hassan; the language and figurative trappings of heroism adorn both combatants, and the narcissistic savagery of both men serves to open several possible Romantic ironies within this picture of heroism. What *sort* of suicidal figure is the Giaour, who feels the impulse toward both self-destruction and death in battle, but ultimately suffers neither? The answer depends heavily on whether we read his suicidal impulse as an idealistic, Shelleyan desire for oneness—sexualized as eternal

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<sup>222</sup> See especially Matthew 27:3-10.

<sup>223</sup> The definition of “Romantic militarism,” ultimately, may be left up to Rosenblum to decide, as she coined it herself in an earlier article by that title (*Journal of the History of Ideas* 43.2 [Spring 1982]: 249-68.) Is it fair to consider the Byron who authored *The Giaour* as a “Romantic militarist” on the strength of his own wartime death more than a decade later, which he could not have foreseen? At best this seems a reductive reading.

oneness with Leila<sup>224</sup>—or in the footsteps of Werther as an escape from the ennui of a life without her (for Werther, like the Giaour, is lured toward suicide by the unavailability of a woman promised to another). I see an element of both these constructions, or perhaps the possibility of either, in Leila's temptation of the Giaour: if death in battle is a way of being "manifestly in the world," as Rosenblum suggests, then it is ironically the Giaour's heroic victory over Hassan that denies him this immanence and forces his retreat.

All of these variations on the theme of suicide paint the Giaour as a figure who is both thoroughly Romantic and thoroughly modern, reinforcing the contrast between his identity as unbeliever against the background of pre-modern social imaginaries. So intrinsic is suicide to the Romantic construction of the modern man that Goethe's *Werther*, the definitive text of Romantic suicide, is one of the four formative texts read by the monster of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, an ironic construction (in the most literal sense) of modern man redefined in secular terms. It is thus a contradictory puzzle, and perhaps the key to a Taylolean reading of *The Giaour*, that Byron's tortured hero, an icon of modernity and unbelief, seeks to escape both his multifaceted guilt and the hostility of an unfriendly and incongruous social imaginary not through suicide, but through retreating to the cloistered shelter of a monastery.

This end for the Giaour runs counter to the spirit of Romantic suicide, standing in Western literary tradition as a fate symbolic of medieval religious tradition. As a self-imposed punishment for illicit sexual conduct, the most famous retreat of this kind is probably that of Guinevere, which appears from Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* onward<sup>225</sup> and

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<sup>224</sup> The suggested image of their shared watery grave forecasts, perhaps, the entwined skeletons of Quasimodo and Esmerelda in Hugo's later *Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

<sup>225</sup> In Arthurian legend, Guinevere is described as retiring to a convent following Arthur's death as early as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie* c. 1136. The retreat was not connected with

becomes an important part of Arthurian tradition in future retellings. But it also features in the life of medieval philosopher Peter Abélard, who—like Byron—is as famous in the Romantic era for the indiscretions of his life as for his writings.<sup>226</sup> Even Shakespeare's *Hamlet* references the same binary option for the guilt-ridden: behind the oft-cited double meaning of Hamlet's admonishment of Ophelia<sup>227</sup> is the same prescribed end for the fallen woman who, if not redeemable in any sense of social propriety, may yet be redeemed in the religious sense. When Ophelia succumbs to her romantic madness and chooses suicide, we might even say she is exercising a precociously modern agency in her own demise, escaping a spurned existence (as Werther does) by denying existence altogether.

The Giaour's refusal of a tempting death-by-water contrasts sharply with Ophelia's end, and with Werther's, and with many significant literary suicides in a Romantic or proto-Romantic mode. But more tellingly, his alternative, the retreat to the monastery unto death, contrasts sharply with Guinevere or Abélard's retreats of religious contrition. The Giaour retraces their steps, and goes through the same actions, but he does not believe, as they do. The function of the monastery, of being "shrive[n]...on his dying day" and buried beneath a cross on holy ground, cannot justifiably be read unironically,

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Guinevere's infidelity with Lancelot (who appears nowhere in the *Historia*) until Malory made the affair explicit.

<sup>226</sup> Alexander Pope's 1717 poem *Eloisa to Abelard* (revised in 1720) was a widely influential piece of the ill-fated couple's infamous legendarium. An edition combining Pope's poem with the John Hughes translations of the *Letters of Abelard and Heloise* was extremely popular throughout 18<sup>th</sup>-century England, while in France, Rousseau's 1761 revisionary retelling *La Nouvelle Héloïse* stands as a testament to the impact of Eloise and Abélard's sensational life, as well as their writings, on Romantic thought. The work was known and revered both Byron and Percy Shelley: in his biography of Polidori, D.L. MacDonald relates Byron and Shelley's spellbound pilgrimage around Lake Geneva in 1816, through "a number of spots sacred to the memory of Rousseau" and especially to the grove immortalized in *Héloïse* (94).

<sup>227</sup> "Get thee to a nunnery" (III.i.122), Hamlet's phrase in question, is more often addressed in its second, veiled meaning, indicating a brothel in Elizabethan street slang. But the motif being referenced by the pun, and less often now discussed, is the same motif that sends Guinevere to a true nunnery as a "fallen" medieval woman.

in the same spirit as the pre-modern tradition it echoes and imitates. It can, however, be read as a symbolic reaction, a sort of precautionary antidote, to the vampiric curse levelled against him.

In this reading we begin to answer some of the difficult questions we have thus far accumulated: was the Giaour witness to his own curse? His behaviour and words, especially concerning the mark of Cain (ll.1057-8) seem to answer it, suggesting that he either heard it spoken or at least has come to some awareness of it. Does he believe in it—and thus, believe in the supernatural through some form, if not through a standard vehicle of the surrounding social imaginary? His actions are the actions of one who does—or at the very least, of one who is hedging his bets. Seen as a believer's response to the curse, coupled with his earnest belief in Leila's apparition, the Giaour's retreat to the monastery following the curse forces open the possibility of an ironic reading of his professed unbelief, much as his savagery and admitted pettiness force an ironic reading of his supposed heroism. Byron's "modern" unbeliever, then, echoes the argument Taylor might have told us all along: that talking about belief as something "subtracted" from modernity, as a sort of scrubbed-off text utterly erased from the palimpsest of the modern self, does not tell us a very complete story about how we came from there to here—or even where, exactly, "here" might be in terms of the secularity at which we have arrived.

Subtraction stories of secularization, applied to *The Giaour*, would make for a dull reading indeed, in which the Giaour, as a figure of secular modernity, attaches no special significance to the quaint superstitious curse of the locals, nor to the monastery where he seeks his final sanctuary. The Giaour's words and actions, even in the fragmented form we are given, suggest otherwise. If we attempt to interpret *The Giaour*,

Byron's most explicit poem of the tensions between belief and unbelief, as (among other things) a poetic exploration of the shift toward secular modernity, we require a secularization narrative like Taylor's, expounded on by critics such as Nicolas Paige, to make sense of the Giaour's sometimes ironic situation between belief and unbelief.

Vampirism in *The Giaour*, then, in spite of being shunted to its own dedicated fragment of the poem, seems of a piece with the other supernatural trappings ambiguously invested with power by the Giaour's beliefs. This includes, notably, the spectre of Leila, but excludes the afterlife of Hassan, which he discounts even though the Muslim narrator (the fisherman, most likely) describes it with sincerity. More subtly, it includes whatever supernatural function the Giaour ascribes to the monastery, though this must be vastly different from the supernatural function given it by the narrator, in the voice of the monks themselves. The cacophony of discordant voices in the text suggests, as it always has, that any one voice is inherently unreliable; but the unreliability of these voices is not as important as their variety. We cannot say with certainty whether the Giaour sees the monastery and its holy ground as a shelter of "white magic," attached to received notions of Christian divinity or not; as a bane of vampirism which is more cultural or folkloric than sacred in the old sense; as a place of quiet where secular meditation is as likely as prayer to bring peace; as a practical sanctuary for a secular refugee, divorced from the world and its superstitions. The silence of the Giaour on the matter leaves open all these possibilities. But inherent in all of them, and in the unrealized vampiric curse, and in Leila's unanswered beckoning, is the potential for

porousness—and not only porousness, but many types and grades of porousness—in the private imaginary<sup>228</sup> of a quintessentially secularized protagonist.

Among these many options of belief and unbelief, we are not told exactly what model of porousness the Giaour adopts, or to what extent. But his insistence in recounting Leila's apparition suggests that he has not taken the most mundane, buffered option available. Perhaps by choosing to be pulled back down into belief, the Giaour enters into a system that unites him, through this apparition, with Leila. In that sense, though she beckons him physically into the waves, he need not "take the plunge" physically to be with her: belief in the supernatural, even a godless, unexplained supernatural, is all that is required to verify his connection with her, rather than dismissing her out of hand as a hallucination, a nightmare, something he ate,<sup>229</sup> and so on. Surrendering to porosity—which might include putting an empowering faith in the vampiric curse and its associated remedies—may be the tempting submission, and submersion, for which the drowned Leila asks. Paige's descriptive language of "pulling down," to which I have often returned here, echoes nicely the metaphor of submersion and undertow that may be at work in *The Giaour*; it is not by accident, I think, that the same language appears both in Paige's text, which answers Taylor's model of secularization, and Byron's, which demonstrates the peculiar and complicated turns of that model in practice.

Taylor, for his part, mentions Byron only once in *A Secular Age*, where he describes the poet in relation to a sense of "self-legislated, yet nevertheless irrevocable abandonment" (383). One nineteenth-century response to this sense, he writes, is "titanic

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<sup>228</sup> As opposed to Taylor's social imaginary—a world and ideology common only to the Giaour's "consensus of one."

<sup>229</sup> The parallels between Leila's appearance to the Giaour and the comical "Mary, A Fragment" are many. That Byron's poem is richer and more detailed, and that the Giaour does not suddenly wake from the dreamlike Turkish Tale to a dog licking his hand, may be all that separates them from a shared narrative.

action, defiant, possibly even destructive and immoral; the kind of self-affirmation we see in Byron” (383). Does he seek to describe this response in the poet himself, or does he mean them as they appear in Byron’s works? His juxtaposition of Byron with Matthew Arnold’s “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse” suggests the former, but as with most statements from a great distance on Byronic defiance, it does not seem to matter: like the medieval Abélard before him, any moral commentary Byron might offer in text is inseparably accompanied by the romantic sensationalism of his biography. But Taylor interestingly follows this aside with a summary of Mrs. Humphry Ward<sup>230</sup>’s *Robert Elsmere*, an 1888 novel on the subject of an Anglican clergyman who “loses his faith in orthodox Christianity...but instead of falling into indifference, or even becoming an open enemy of Christianity,” Taylor writes,

he struggles to an Arnoldian position. He wants to redefine the faith, free of its—now indefensible—supernatural myths, and make it once more the vehicle by which humans can accede to a higher moral life. (*A Secular Age* 384)

The placement of this somewhat obscure novel near his comments on Arnold makes natural sense. But its juxtaposition with Byron and his radical, immoral defiance seems at odds, at least until we make the observation that both Byron and Ward (and Ward, perhaps, echoes the crises of Tom Arnold, Arthur Hugh Clough and James Anthony Froude<sup>231</sup> with *Robert Elsmere*) are actively engaged with divorcing the “indefensible” supernatural myths from the sacred structure of religion.

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<sup>230</sup> Mary Augusta Arnold Ward, writing as “Mrs. Humphry Ward,” was the niece of Matthew Arnold and the daughter of Thomas Arnold the Younger, whose falling out with the Anglican Church more than likely influenced the development of *Robert Elsmere*.

<sup>231</sup> Anthony Kenny’s biography on Clough, *Arthur Hugh Clough: A Poet’s Life* (London: Continuum, 2005), provides a good sense of the biographical and theological ties among these Victorian writers.

Taylor's narrative, or at least the narrative thread followed in *A Secular Age* through a larger and even broader imagined master narrative, keeps up with Christianity after this divorce, as it and its believers transition "to some religion of impersonal order" (387) and thence "to other compromises, which promised to save the (moral and cultural) furniture from the burning (theological) house" (388). His hands are full with the resulting conflicts between Victorian science, especially Darwinism and structures of Christian Deism and especially of theodicy. But amid the cultural fireworks, what Taylor calls the "supernatural myths" fall out of sight. It is not enough to say that in the years following Byron, and especially in the long Victorian age, the changing variations on Western faith were forcibly "freed" from supernatural myths. Where did the myths go? They certainly did not disappear; and Taylor does not suggest that they did. But they were no longer necessarily wedded to theological concerns. The vampires of the changing age, for instance, are of literary significance: Polidori's Ruthven, LeFanu's Carmilla, and ultimately Stoker's Dracula are named beings, characters *with* human character, a part of the same literary world as Austen, Dickens, or Brontë, and with the same potential (though it was seldom so well realized) for depth. But these vampires are not of religious significance—not in the way that Arnold Paole or the other vampires of Calmet's treatise were.

If I have afforded *The Giaour* a heavy weight here, it is because its hero sits at the nexus of this divide, fully aware of the theological connections of its vampirism, but never taking those connections for granted. If the Giaour, who makes for himself an existence outside of traditional social imaginaries of belief, can be threatened by vampirism, then vampirism can exist outside of those structures as well. If he responds as

a buffered individual to religious faith and its social manifestations, but as a porous individual to superstition, then a divide must exist between the supernal reality of Western, usually Christian, faith and the separate and discrete supernatural world of vampirism.

The same argument could be made for ghosts such as Leila, or for magical beasts, or for the goblins and faeries of pre-Christian folklore; and indeed the Victorian era sees a resurgence of all these forces, within a supernatural order that stands separately from both Victorian Christianity and the imitative poetry<sup>232</sup> in which they previously appeared. But vampires especially, half-resurrected corpses which were the subject of significant religious anxiety to Calmet, become after Byron a stock monster whose supernatural traits no longer guarantee a religious significance. Such religious iconography, when it is present, is held over to varying degrees, a familial trait of the literary vampire that is significant, but no more necessary than any other such trait (weakness to sunlight, hunger for family, and so on).

I do not mean to assert that *The Giaour* was responsible for this transition, though it was certainly widely read, and became only more influential as Byron's associations with the vampire grew. But it does mark the beginning of the modern vampire as we know it today, as a vehicle of supernatural porousness which persists even in the absence of what we might call pre-modern belief.

It is here, with the Giaour and his immediate literary descendant Lord Ruthven, that robust psychoanalytic and psychosexual readings of the vampire begin to surface. I have commented already, by bringing criticism surrounding *Dracula* to bear on earlier

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<sup>232</sup> By "imitative poetry" here I mean to suggest works such as Keats's *Lamia*, or Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, or even Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, works which imitate a foreign (often Classical, but sometimes Celtic) tradition and imitate their mythologies as a sort of poetic device.

vampire-texts, on the scarcity of such readings in these earlier cases. It is appropriate, perhaps, that a school of thought developed by the notoriously atheistic Freud only begins to seriously interrogate literary vampires from this point onward. It retroactively “vampirizes” others from the Romantic tradition—Gothic villains, other Byronic heroes—but the earlier vampires cannot be psychoanalyzed as Dracula so frequently is, as Ruthven is. The only psychoanalysis possible—as in Frost’s *The Monster with a Thousand Faces*, or the earlier chapters of Nina Auerbach’s *Our Vampires, Ourselves*—centers not on the vampire as character, but on the person, audience, or culture that spawns it.

It is still not my intent here to psychoanalyze Dracula, or any of the Victorian vampires we now turn towards. But the emergence of that possibility heralds an important change—a distancing—between the vampire and the changing crucible of secularization in which it first began to take literary form.

## Chapter 7: Victorian Vampires and the Nova Effect

### 7.1 Sacrament and Secularity in *The Vampyre* and *Dracula*

John Polidori's 1818 novella *The Vampyre* is often, perhaps too often, cited as "the first vampire story in English"<sup>233</sup> without further comment. A few writers cover their tails by appending the word "prose" or "fiction" to this definition, in the hopes of disqualifying questionably narrative vampire-works of Romantic poetry (*Thalaba*, *The Giaour*, *Lamia*) from subverting the claim. Nothing is ever said of how Calmet's anthology, which was translated into English as early as 1759,<sup>234</sup> might complicate the phrase "in English," or how the bilingualism of writers such as Beckford might further muddy the water. In spite of these problems, the idea has popularly caught on that Polidori's novella is the proto-*Dracula*, that it ushers into English storytelling a new kind of writing, and a new kind of antagonist.

This idea has not, generally speaking, come as the result of sophisticated analysis; in many cases, it appears alongside seeming contradictions. Many of the works (Melton's *Vampire Book* in particular) which describe Polidori's Ruthven as the first English vampire nevertheless cite in their chronologies the earlier creatures described in Walter Map's *De Nagis Curialum* or William of Newburgh's *Chronicles*, both listed as 12<sup>th</sup>-

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<sup>233</sup> This description appears verbatim in dozens of sources, some of which include Hennessy's *The Gothic Novel* (19), Twitchell's *The Living Dead* (109), Melton's *The Vampire Book* (xxiii), Holte's *Dracula in the Dark* (5), Browne and Browne's *Guide to United States Popular Culture* (869), and even the British Medical Journal (Dalrymple *BMJ* 2009;338:b801).

<sup>234</sup> See my earlier comments on translations of Calmet on p.129.

century English prose “vampire-like” beings (Melton xxxiii). We have even seen a few who carry on Dudley Wright’s mistake concerning the “Vampyre of the Fens,” effectively misidentifying Grendel from *Beowulf* as a separate monster. In spite of this misunderstanding, we might indeed bravely title Grendel the “first English vampire,” though the argument for Grendel is weaker, I think, than that for Polidori’s Ruthven, for reasons I have already discussed. But on the matter of Geraldine or the Giaour, the picture is less clear. Why, then, is there an overwhelming consensus on the matter of Ruthven’s primogeniture? And what kind of vampire-story, exactly, is *The Vampyre* the first English example of?

Popular studies of the vampire are talking about two different things, I think, when they juxtapose the medieval chronicles with Ruthven: the judgment being made is one in which Polidori provides the first “real” vampire-story, whatever that means, while medieval writers—and indeed, by definition, all writers before Polidori—provide merely historical analogues to the kind of tradition Polidori finds with *The Vampyre*. But this seems to me a dangerously unstable taxonomy. *The Vampyre*, after all, can in the same vein be labeled a mere historical analogue to *Varney the Vampire*, the first vampire “novel,” which is itself an earlier foreshadowing of *Dracula*, the first sophisticated or “literary” vampire novel—and perhaps in the minds of many, the catalyzing “granddaddy” of the modern pulp genre-fiction that has followed it. The argument that a linear progress exists between these texts is not, in itself, a bad one; but implied in the critical language surrounding Polidori’s “first vampire story in English” is a dismissive attitude toward earlier works. In this model we are supposed to believe that *The Giaour*,

*Thalaba*, “Christabel,” the translated works of Calmet, are not vampire stories (or, more precisely, that these earlier works do not even *contain* vampire stories).

On the other hand, there are some compelling reasons why we might see a divide between *The Vampyre* and all the “vampire stories” preceding it. If it is not exactly the first of its kind, we might call it the first *modern* vampire story, as long as we can arrive at a clearer picture of what exactly a modern vampire is, and how this differs from what came before it. In *The Giaour*, we have seen the beginning of an answer to this, and it is an answer I hope to finish here in relation to Taylor’s narrative of secularization.

The first thing to be observed is that this attitude to *The Vampyre* places a somewhat contentious dividing line between *The Vampyre* and *The Giaour*. This runs against a popular current in Romantic criticism, in which *The Giaour* and other “quasi-vampiric” Byronic texts such as *Manfred* are wedded to Polidori’s *The Vampyre* for reasons which are based on the juicy biographical details of their celebrated authors. Both *The Giaour* and *The Vampyre*, in this view, have something to say about Byron—the former because of a self-conscious mythmaking and an imagined narcissistic fascination with the themes of the Byronic hero, and the latter as an exercise in political satire, pillorying Polidori’s capricious employer after a well-known falling out. But when criticism treats these texts as if they are *only* about Byron—that is, as if biographical allegory is a necessary component of any successful reading—key differences between the two texts are elided. Continuity between the texts is privileged, and discontinuities that are otherwise worthy of note are too frequently left undiscussed.

I hope that by distancing myself from a biographical approach here, I can more readily outline the divide between these sibling texts and examine their discontinuity in

greater detail. In the end, I do support the popular position that Polidori's *The Vampyre* is the first of a new breed of vampire text—though this “new breed” has less to do with any migration from poetry to prose, and more with an alteration in how the vampire is used. If *The Vampyre* is the first of a new breed of English vampire-text, we must consider *The Giaour* as the last of an old—or perhaps, more delicately, as a text situated on the verge of modernity, and one that dictates from that position how the modern vampire-text, and with it the modern vampire, is going to operate.

Ken Gelder's recent work, *Reading the Vampire*, provides a strong example of the gains to be made by a biographical reading of Byron and Polidori, and warns us that distancing ourselves from this kind of methodology should not be equated with throwing it out altogether. He makes a strong case for the continued relevance of heavily “expressivist” treatments of Byron's and Polidori's works, and is particularly generous in his reading of *The Vampyre*, seeking to free it from old evaluations of it “as a crude narrative written under the influence of a greater and more subtle talent” (31). By redeeming the work in the context of biography, however, and by going so far as to treat *The Vampyre* as “a kind of substitute” for Polidori's commissioned-but-unpublished diary of his travels with Byron (32), Gelder continues to yoke Polidori's work to Byron, and through him, to *The Giaour*, in a way that leaves many of the same gaps and unanswered questions as the older works he takes great pains to revise.

Byron's relationship with Polidori and their considerable influence on each other is an important aspect of their backgrounds, but an aspect that is already familiar terrain to Romantic scholarship. The celebrated Summer Tour of 1816, culminating in its famous night of ghost-stories at the Villa Diodati, has been thoroughly plumbed by critics: David

Ellis's recent retread of this ground, *Byron in Geneva: That Summer of 1816*, slyly alludes to just how commonplace the major facts have become. He need not have specified the year, or even the place, for most of his readership to know exactly what summer "that summer" ought to suggest. For Byron, or for the Shelleys, but especially for Polidori who otherwise lacked the sustained success of his companions, "that summer" can mean only the sojourn at Diodati.

The natural counterpart to Ellis's study of Byron in Geneva is D.L. MacDonald's critical biography *Poor Polidori*; between these two texts, a fairly thorough account of Polidori's and Byron's mutual intersection can be put together. Nevertheless, in spite of a surprising tapestry of available facts concerning the events of June 1816, the "mystery" of the occasion has remained a favourite topic of biographers and critics alike. The summer at Diodati, while it was probably something more significant than a short intersecting chapter in the lives of its participants, has been heavily mythologized into perhaps the defining keystone moment of Romanticism. This mythologization has come, sometimes with balanced admiration, and sometimes with a Byromania bordering on the grotesque, by way of both criticism and popular film and fiction. Ken Russell's indecipherable film *Gothic* might be considered the outer reaches of Diodati's mythologized narrative—but the tradition of fictionalizing the summer's infamous events could almost be said to begin with Mary Shelley herself, who recounted the stay and its night of ghost-stories in her 1831 Introduction to *Frankenstein*, "an account written fifteen years after the fact, and wrong in almost every verifiable detail" (MacDonald 83).

The infamy of the newly-exiled Byron, whose scandalous reasons for leaving England were still fresh in the English consciousness, certainly adds to the sensationalism

of the gathering. If we accept the modern caricature of Byron as “the First Rock Star”<sup>235</sup> (Cochran 7), we must take the meeting of Byron, Polidori, and the Shelleys (as well, Ellis’s biography reminds us, as a few other “supporting acts” including ghost-story prodigy Matthew “Monk” Lewis) within the same metaphor as a sort of “rock summit” of now-celebrated English Romantics on a major European tour—and we must be ready to painstakingly separate the texts spawned at such a meeting from the trappings of the nascent celebrity culture that is implied by this anachronism. We are now talking about a celebrity that exists not only among the readers of Byron’s lifetime, but among most of the criticism since then: in moving from that circle (English readers of the early 1800s) to this (Romantic scholarship), Byron’s stardom has not really faded, while the stardom of Polidori and both of the Shelleys has risen to stand alongside it. The “bigness” of the English Romantics once termed the Big Six poets, though the term is now in decline, indicates just how much of the Byronic cult of celebrity (and its fascination with the private life and melodrama of the author-subject) continues to inform Romantic scholarship.

The phenomenon that Byron’s wife Annabella Milbanke first described as “Byromania” is perhaps self-inflicted, but that does not make it “authorial” or “authoritative,” or suggest anything concrete about Byron’s (or Polidori’s) intent as writer, particularly once Byron’s self-conscious mythmaking begins to spiral out of his control. In *Byron’s Romantic Politics*, Peter Cochran offers the somewhat contentious observation that

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<sup>235</sup> Of all the epithets for Byron, this is perhaps the most difficult to trace. It appears here, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, in Peter Cochran’s *Byron’s Romantic Politics*, in a tone that suggests it is already commonplace (and not necessarily agreed with).

these alternative Byrons are myths. Their Byron exists in the same dimension as Ned Ludd, or Robin Hood. Given the enormous (and still increasing) amount of documentation in existence about the historical Byron, the academic propagation of these myths represents a massive *trahison des clercs*. That Byron often thought of himself as a mythical figure, and was himself responsible for his own imagined retreat into meta-history, doesn't mean that we should concur. (8)

Cochran's position is at odds with works such as Ghislaine McDayter's *Byromania and the Birth of Celebrity Culture*—or, at least, it suggests such studies have more to tell us about external aspects of Byron studies—the readership, the historical context, the world of publishing or high society—than they do about the poet himself.

One of the pitfalls of superimposing Byron's life too heavily over his work is that the whole fabric of Byron's life is known to us, providing both the opportunity and the temptation to read him synchronistically, and thus, anachronistically. This approach has provided, for instance, the argument that *The Giaour* can hardly be anything but a transparent self-portrait. We must remember, though, that the Byron who wrote it was the Byron of 1812 and early 1813: a rising star of English aristocracy, who had not yet made his final speech in the House of Lords and was still considering a career in it. He could not have known, then, the extent to which he would retrace exactly *The Giaour's* narrative, first as an exile from his own people, unapologetic for his forbidden love, later a stateless and faithless European, late of Venice, in Ottoman lands, and finally an ally of local Greek rebels against the Turkish occupation. As for the hateful words which condemn the Giaour to vampirism, it is fittingly an estranged Polidori, rather than a nameless Muslim fisherman, whose powerful and bitter words have made a vampire out

of Byron in the public eye.<sup>236</sup> Polidori's Lord Ruthven, like the mythologized Byron and his Giaour, is commonly read as a figure of monstrous appetite and sexual impulse, concealing his horridness behind a pale, emotionless eye and the veneer of not only respectability, but old-world gentility.

This description summarizes some of the most prevailing traits of the modern vampire, and we can reasonably see Polidori's *The Vampyre*, or the vampire-texts situated between Byron and Polidori, as the direct contributor of these trait. The description of Ruthven here suits Varney the Vampire, and Dracula, too (and not just Stoker's Dracula, but many of the film Draculas to follow, who are considerably more Byronic in their appearance and bearing than Stoker may have intended). The similarities throughout these texts work especially well for the broad surface genealogies present in both popular and scholarly works (Melton's *The Vampire Book* and Frayling's *The Vampyre: Lord Ruthven to Count Dracula* respectively) that privilege breadth and aspire to be both encyclopedic and "progressive" in their linear movement from early to late texts.

Connecting these texts through Byron's life makes a certain kind of sense, as it flatters Romantic sensibilities in a powerful and somewhat appropriate way, reversing the flow of the Wordsworthian imperative to convert personal experience into poetry, by reading Romantic texts as encoded (but translatable) accounts of that experience. But there are dangers to this approach, at least in the case of Byron and Polidori, which have to do with the degree to which they have been mythologized. We are never sure which Byron, in the sense of Cochran's tapestry of mythic Byrons, we are capable of analyzing

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<sup>236</sup> Popular 21<sup>st</sup>-century historical fictions on the theme of Byron's alleged vampirism, such as Tom Holland's *The Vampyre: The Secret History of Lord Byron*, speak to the power and longevity of the curse Polidori laid on Byron's popular image.

when we approach *The Giaour*. Further, the continued interest in what appears so strongly in both texts (that is, a certain Byronic essence or presence) draws focus away from what is not present in both—in short, from what has changed between one and the other.

In large part, the obvious differences of form between the poem and short story provide a convenient excuse to explain away difference by those concerned with maintaining similarity: there are naturally different ways of addressing a cohesive narrative through the framework of a fragment-poem, and so on. In many cases these explanations are valid, and I have relied too much on interrogation of form to downplay them here. But here I am most interested in those differences which cannot easily be written off as a function of form or genre, those differences within an otherwise shared subject matter, and the chief of these to me is the completeness and profundity of vampirism's divorce, in *The Vampyre*, from the trappings of religion.

Let us consider, for a moment, the thematic dissonance between *The Vampyre* and *Dracula*, easily the two most influential vampires of nineteenth-century English prose, on the matter of where religion sits in the text. In *The Vampyre*, readers familiar with the vampires of twentieth-century film may be baffled by Lord Ruthven's level of comfort with the traditional banes of the vampire. Although no vampire-figure in English to this point had been completely destroyed in sunlight—that trope was a special-effect invention of Murnau's *Nosferatu* in 1922, a literal case of death by exposure<sup>237</sup>—

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<sup>237</sup> Stacey Abbott's "Nosferatu in the Light of New Technology" describes in detail both the cinematographic and symbolic details of the dissolve effect that destroys Count Orlok. "The emergence of this new convention," she writes, "is strongly linked to the fact that light is the essence of cinema[...]Orlok, a creature of the night, fades away in sunlight in the same manner that a photograph or the image on a strip of celluloid fades into nothingness when overexposed. This suggests that the vampire is made up of similar properties as film itself" (20).

previous vampires were invariably nocturnal beings, typically returning to their graves in the day. Ruthven bears the morning sunlight quite comfortably, explicitly in England and presumably throughout the whole of his travels, even in sunnier Mediterranean climates. More powerfully still, his marriage to Aubrey's sister is a striking participation in holy sacrament, utterly at odds with the vampires of *Dracula*. The crucifix is a ready and repeated weapon against Count Dracula—and as Susannah Clements has noted, Van Helsing even “gets a private indulgence from the Vatican to use the Host in his war against the vampires” (27). The mere suggestion of sacrament is anathema to Dracula, while Ruthven undergoes one without impedance, dutifully marrying his victim before he kills her.

It is reasonable, I think, to suggest that the author's use of sacrament and its icons is both more prevalent and more sophisticated in *Dracula*. That does not mean, however, that we can dismiss Ruthven's marriage as an accidental oversight on Polidori's part, or an arbitrary plot point of a crude writer. Ruthven's marriage is both an anomaly in the English literary history of vampirism and a particularly inscrutable mystery; we have little evidence to help us speculate on what Polidori was thinking, but we can examine the complex effect it has on the text, and what it has to say about the text's relationship to the general consensus—the social imaginary—into which it emerges.

We have already seen, from Ruthven's rape-like slaughter of Ianthe, that holding out for marriage is not a supernatural compulsion. Even in Rome, where his attempt to court another victim is thwarted by Aubrey, he has neither compulsion nor intention towards wedlock: Ruthven, “upon being pressed whether he intended to marry her,

merely laughed” (37).<sup>238</sup> The question of why he marries Aubrey’s sister, and what effect it has on the story, is a difficult one to answer—particularly since the other victims in the story ensure that we are not really asking why he *must* marry her, but simply why he *does*.

The traditional explanation is summarized by Gary Hoppenstand, who suggests that

Polidori’s formulaic reversal of the Christian marriage (which evolves from the Gothic aberration motif complex) is a sociological investigation of the function of religious institutions. Following the proper rituals of the religious institutions (the Christian marriage, for example), the gifts obtained will insure [sic] divine blessings, the blessings of the parents and of the parents’ offspring, thus insuring future social stability. However to consciously or unconsciously defy the power of religious institutions and their rituals[...]promotes chaos and destruction. To deny proper ritual is to adhere to the forces of the Devil, and the Devil symbolizes disorder and moral death. (49-50).

This gives Polidori a lot of credit (and an ambitious aim) for a wedding given relatively short attention in the text: if it is a sociological investigation, it is a very brief one. The marriage and especially the wedding night, where the life-taking act of sexualized vampirism replaces the life-giving one of Church-sanctioned, procreative sex, is quite reasonably a “formulaic reversal.” But the monumental impact Hoppenstand reads into Polidori’s passing and undeveloped theme of the marriage seems heavier than his source should merit. Indeed, part of what is striking about Polidori’s use of the marriage sacrament is how little an impact it has on the shape of the narrative. What makes the

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<sup>238</sup> MacDonald and Scherf’s edition of Polidori’s prose emends Ruthven’s name, as several later editions did, to “Strongmore.” I have preserved the best-known and most popular name here as a nod to the cultural effect of the text over authorial intent. For a detailed look at the early editions and the name-variation among them, the best guide is still Henry R. Viets’s “The London Editions of Polidori’s *The Vampyre*” (*Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 63 (1969): 83-103.

marriage important, ironically, is that it is treated as unimportant, at least in relation to vampirism. Although it happens “off-screen,” out of view of the Aubrey-centered narrator, it is not left ambiguous that Ruthven makes his vows before Miss Aubrey, her guardians, and God, in a morning wedding, and that they depart London immediately thereafter. No aspect of this ceremony appears to interfere with Ruthven’s vampiric nature—and though we cannot infer that this marriage is divinely sanctioned, there comes no sign of protest from on high. God, like Aubrey, is both absent from the wedding and silent in regards to its wickedness.

Joan Perkin’s study, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England*, observes the divides in the marriage ritual that come, we might add, from the shifting attitudes of common belief and the emergence of a social secularity. “Within a broadly religious framework,” she writes,

it was possible for people to take two different viewpoints on marriage: one was to regard it as a contract, and to argue that if one or both partners broke the terms of the contract it was no longer valid; the other was to regard marriage as a sacrament, a contract between a man, a woman and God which could not be broken for any reason. The contractual relationship was based on free choice, voluntary consent, reciprocal duties and obligations; the identities of the partners did not merge; marriage was seen as a vehicle for self-discipline and self-restraint. The sacramental relationship was modelled on the union of Christ and his Church; the mystical union of two souls as one included the absorption of each other’s identity[...]most people did not subscribe wholeheartedly to either of the ideals of marriage; attitudes ran in a continuum between the two models, which allowed for constant debate about the circumstances in which a marriage could be dissolved. (237-8)

The same continuum exists today, of course; the early-21<sup>st</sup>-century gay marriage debate in particular is centered on all sides around the idea that “civil unions” are somehow an

incomplete form of marriage—a legal contract in absence of sacrament, in a sense. The marriage of Ruthven and Miss Aubrey cannot, indeed must not, be endorsed by the invisible God of the text. But neither does Ruthven burst into flame on approaching the altar, nor is he driven from the ceremony by supernatural fear. If the wedding maintains an aspect of sacrament, something of the sort should occur, at least according to what Montague Summers deems the “traits and practice” of the vampire:

The Vampire fears and shrinks from holy things. Holy Water burns him as some biting acid; he flies from the sign of the Cross, from the Crucifix, from Relics, and above all from the Host[...]and other hallowed objects render him powerless. (208)

The stereotypical vampire of Summers (and he is most concerned, I think, with the early modern vampire—the vampires of Calmet and his era especially) is vulnerable, even hypersensitive, to the whole catalogue of Christian icons, symbols, saints, and rituals. He (and Summers is particular about the gender) is a part of an earlier stage of the shift to secularity, a more porous stage, closely associated with earlier (even pre-Reformation) ideas about divine immanence and the supernatural. Consider Charles Taylor’s description of the earlier, “enchanted” social imaginary of the late Middle Ages, a world which in his view was already mutating away from enchantment at the time of Erasmus:<sup>239</sup>

Charged objects have influence and causal power, “holy” objects, emanating from God and his saints, are our bulwark against malicious [sic] beings and things charged with their malevolent power. And so relics of saints have this power of “good magic”; as have candles blessed on Candlemas; crosses made during the reading of the Passion

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<sup>239</sup> Not to be confused with Erasmus Darwin, the Dutch theologian Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) is a key contributor to the early Reformation, and a thinker of special importance for Taylor. It is worth considering that Erasmus, along with a handful of other Dutch Renaissance polymaths (Herman Boerhaave, for instance), may have been part of the inspiration for Stoker’s Van Helsing.

narrative on Palm Sunday; holy water, pieces of bread blessed at Mass (not the Host); [...]church bells whose ringing can drive away thunder; and above all, of course, the Sacrament of the altar itself. (*A Secular Age* 71)

Were Ruthven one of Summers's vampires, one of those "malificent beings" of Taylor's pre-modern, enchanted world, the wedding to Miss Aubrey would be impossible. But its presence in the narrative, to say nothing of the off-handed casualness with which the narrator tells us "the marriage was solemnized, and the bride and bridegroom left London" (Polidori 49), indicates a vampire who is no longer part of this social imaginary. There has been a seismic shift here in the concept of marriage, or in the concept of vampirism—and perhaps in both.

Even though we cannot be certain he *is* a vampire, Byron's Giaour bears out this relationship to sacrament: he "never at our vesper prayer, /Nor e'er before confession chair /Kneels" (ll.802-4). As a Giaour, an infidel with a complex relationship to belief and unbelief, this becomes ambiguous: is he supernaturally banned from these rituals? Or does he simply, in his faithlessness, refuse to participate in them? As a figure of both spiritual and marital infidelity, the Giaour is a powerful anti-marriage force, even doomed to destroy his own marriage, should he have one.<sup>240</sup> That Ruthven stands unaffected and unimpeded by his marriage puts him sharply in contrast with the Giaour, who in spite of his dismissive attitude towards the sacred is nevertheless imprisoned by it, both explicitly (in terms of these sacraments) and metaphorically (through his cloistered afterlife within a church that seems to do his burdened soul little good).

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<sup>240</sup> "There from thy daughter, sister, wife, /At midnight drain the stream of life" (ll.755-6).

One of the hallmarks of the Reformation, Taylor tells us, is “a deep theological objection” (*A Secular Age* 72) to the white magic of the Church, including those sacraments which are “charged” to ward off evil:

a charged object, even the sacrament, and even if its purpose is to make me more holy[...]is in principle wrong. God’s power can’t be confined in things, and thus “aimed” by us in one direction or another. (72)

Taylor goes on to observe that “this rejection of the church’s good magic arises early on” (72), citing a number of pre-Reformation cases (the Waldensians/*Église Vaudoise*, the Lollards, Wycliffe) which suggest that the weakening of sacramental power<sup>241</sup> is not exclusively to be found in a fully realized secular modernity. But it is a contributing force to the momentum of secularization, and the increasingly mundane nature of formerly charged objects and rituals is both gradual and somewhat circumscribed in its development and its “bleed” into other areas of social discourse.

I would suggest that by its very nature, the highly symbolic world of literature (that is, of poetry and narrative fiction) is one of the last aspects of the modern English social imaginary to undergo a sort of “discharge”—and that indeed, while it has increased during the development of the novel genre and its deference to realism, this discharging is never fully realized. At one point, Taylor describes the movement toward the buffered self as “a decisive distancing from age-old fears, of which we all still have some sense, not only from history, and not only from the as yet unenlightened masses, but also because they resonated somehow in our own childhood” (*A Secular Age* 301). By

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<sup>241</sup> See also my comments in 1.2 on “Sir Bertrand” as a secular champion who replaces, in the Doña Teresa folktale tradition, the diminishing supernatural protection inherent in the marriage sacrament. Almanzor, in the same tradition, is a monster who preys on his victim through coerced marriage—and in the medieval Spanish texts, his punishment for violating the marriage sacrament comes without the need of an external, human hero.

painting childhood as a sort of enchanted porous state even for the modern individual, Taylor is allowing that even within the modern individual, the capacity for porousness exists. I venture that if the modern child can be considered porous, on the grounds that he or she believes in the direct agency of symbols and rituals, then so can—and so does—the modern reader.

Literature, both fantastic and otherwise, remains a locus of icons, of charged objects which continue to function within the internal logic of the text the way they might have functioned in the real world to the medieval reader. These need not even be “magical” in the old sense: certainly Excalibur and the Holy Grail remain charged objects—but so, too, are St. Aubert’s secret papers in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, or Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s yellow wall-paper, or even the Nazi party pin in Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List*. It matters little, narratively speaking, when we discover the title statuette of Dashiell Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon* to be metallurgically worthless, because it remains symbolically priceless.<sup>242</sup> These objects are not (and were never) magical, but they are “charged” in the fabric of their narratives in much the same way as relics were charged in daily medieval life. To enter the world of the text is to suspend disbelief and participate in thinking about objects, and places, and acts, in a symbolic way, a porous way that admits to them a catastrophic (or eucatastrophic)<sup>243</sup> agency.

The claim that literature—indeed, all art— is full of “charged things” is almost too obvious to make. That literature contains metaphors and symbols is hardly an

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<sup>242</sup> In Huston’s 1941 film adaptation, Bogart ad-libs the now infamous closing line, “the stuff that dreams are made of.” The spontaneous line echoes Prospero’s comment in Act *The Tempest* that “we are such stuff /As dreams are made on; and our little life /Is rounded with a sleep” (IV.i.56-8). The line frames the film in the context of its Gothic tradition, and underscores the numinous makeup of the secular quest-object in a way that may be useful here.

<sup>243</sup> See Tolkien’s comments on eucatastrophe in “On Fairy-Stories,” especially pp.68-70.

epiphany. But the ongoing presence of these things in the literary landscape, I think, creates in itself a degree of back-pressure against the forces of disenchantment, with the result that disenchantment's general effects—radical re-orderings of cosmology, for instance—occur more slowly in the framework of literature than in the social imaginary at large, even as characters change and evolve as expressions of the increasingly modern people known to their authors. This may even contribute to such unrecognized oddities as the emerging genre of Gothic romance, in which “modern” characters (in that they are psychologically complex and progressive in ideology) find themselves oppressively trapped in a superstitious and dangerous world which is—usually to their misfortune—still an enchanted one. Regardless of whether the supernatural is indulged (as in Walpole) or rebuked (as in Radcliffe), the symbolic “chargedness” of the background into which these characters are immersed forces on them—and by proxy, on the reader—something like the porosity of old.

What we see in these interactions are a growing number and variety of cross-currents of belief, and a rapidly multiplying array of relationships to the supernatural on a number of planes—the plane of the literary characters in the work, the plane of the reading public or audience, and the plane of the author (whether we mean by this an *auteur* in the most expressivist sense, or the larger and more impersonal sense of the whole human and cultural apparatus by whose shape and momentum a text has come to be). These cross-currents of belief are not unlike, and indeed are related to, Taylor's notion of “cross-polemics” (Taylor, *A Secular Age* 299) between new and specific positions of orthodox faith and its alternatives: Deism, orthodox belief, various humanisms of flourishing, emerging Nietzschean nihilism, and so on. Taylor's

terminology of cross-polemics is more appropriate, perhaps, to expression of these positions in the arena of pure philosophy. The very word polemic<sup>244</sup> denotes hostility—a warlike intensity of argument—that is not always present in the literary text. The term “Cross-currents,” I think, suggests a broader dynamic range of the interplay of discursive pressures and counter-pressures. This interplay can be, as the metaphor of ocean currents suggests, alternately mild and stormy: sometimes (as in Aubrey’s transformation as the audience of Ianthe’s folktales) it presents as a subtle, nearly muted impact of one belief system against another, and sometimes (as in *The Giaour*, and especially in Hassan’s clash with the infidel and his Greek rebels) as forceful, direct, and unforgiving. In both texts, the swirling cross-polemical waters are in motion, and the differences, especially between the “chargedness” and “dischargedness” of symbols and rituals, are worth noting.

In the case of *The Giaour*, we are dealing with highly charged rituals. As with the Maltese Falcon, we need not believe in a charged object’s literal power to believe in its symbolic power: does the Giaour avoid the monks’ sacraments because they are spiritually charged, and thus anathema to him, or simply because he has divorced himself from a system of belief in which they are spiritually charged? In the symbolic sense, it does not really matter. The refusal of sacraments performs the same narrative and thematic function whether its cause is supernatural or not.

This is typical, we might say, of other “nearly supernatural” fiction of the period. The “explained supernatural” of Ann Radcliffe operates on the same principle, shrewdly recognizing that the source of one *memento mori* or another—a ghostly wail, a shambling

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<sup>244</sup> Etymologically speaking, “polemics” descends from the Greek *Πόλεμος*, referring either to the lesser god or spirit of battle, or to battle itself.

skeleton—need not be literally magical to fulfil its narrative, thematic, and aesthetic functions as if it were supernaturally charged. This does not necessarily result in, by which I mean it does not force, the freedom of a modern text from its obligations to the supernatural: many supernatural horror films in the inherited Gothic mode (*A Nightmare on Elm Street*, or countless reworkings of the Dracula story) are proof of this. Instead, it opens the possibility of such freedom, and it is this freedom from the rigid requirements of old supernatural horror that other films in the Gothic mode (*The Maltese Falcon*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Rear Window*) enjoy and exploit.

Polidori's story sits at a crossroads of sorts in that it contains the paradox of a flagrantly supernatural being in a fundamentally disenchanted world. We will see in *Dracula* the case of a vampire whose emergence from a porous past brings with him (resurrects along with himself, we might say) the enchantedness of relics and rituals. But in *The Vampyre* the emergence in a modern, buffered society of the supernatural monster does not result in the retroactive empowerment of diminished ritual. There is a definite shift in the early nineteenth century, for instance, in the social and symbolic function of marriage, from the primarily "sacramental relationship[...]the mystical union of two souls" (Perkin 237) toward the growing emphasis on marriage as a legal contract—and although the supernatural monster, brought forward into a porous age, likewise provides an opportunity to correspondingly restore the sacramental power of marriage, this is not the direction Polidori chooses to take us. By walking headlong into such a sacrament with his victim, and not only surviving it but achieving his sinister end on the other side of it, Ruthven is demonstrating (almost with smugness) that the "good magic" of the church has no power over him. This should indicate that the nature of sacrament has changed;

but the supernatural monster has changed as well. Ruthven's brazen disregard for the power of sacred ritual is starkly contrasted by the Giaour, who gainsays religious belief at every opportunity, but nevertheless cloisters himself with monks and hedges his bets when it comes to participating in or refusing their rituals. Taylor writes of the earlier belief that "charged objects, however good their magic, can be dangerous if taken from the wrong side[...]to take communion unworthily was seen as highly perilous, and the church's preaching reinforced this" (*A Secular Age* 73). The Giaour must be aware of this belief, however much stock he puts in it; but I think the degree of self-doubt for which the Byronic hero is known manifests here as a kind of caution. Where Ruthven is sure of himself, from one end of the tale to the other, the Giaour is uncertain. This speaks to one of Taylor's earlier claims—namely, that maintaining a state of unbelief was a much more difficult challenge in a porous world—and strongly indicates that the Giaour's world is in many ways more porous than the world of *The Vampyre*.

Finally, the climactic vampiric horror of *The Giaour* is still, as it was in antiquity, a threat to the soul, as the poem's insistent focus on themes of afterlife suggests. In *The Vampyre*, the ultimate vampiric horror is murder, simply and straightforwardly. That the blood of Ianthe and Miss Aubrey goes to nourish the vampire is the chief concern of the narrative, while the question of whether their soul is also lost is one that no one, not Aubrey nor Ruthven nor the sagely Ianthe, seems to think about too seriously, suggesting that murder, like marriage, has been brought forward into a more quotidian existence in *The Vampyre*—and because the murder occurs by way of vampirism, in a certain sense vampirism itself has come along for the ride.

We can see, for instance, that Polidori keeps to the theoretical model that Joan Perkin has set out in *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England*, in which marriage exists simultaneously as both a sacrament and a contract, a covenant under the laws of both God and humanity, but undergoes a steady pressure toward the latter of these. Polidori still tells us that “the marriage was solemnized” (49), using language inherited from marriages heavier with sacrament; but Taylor reminds us that such terms, like the conceit behind them, can be an archaism, held over to mask “the feeling that the quotidian is empty of deeper resonance” (*A Secular Age* 308), a feeling of emptiness he identifies as a sort of existential malaise. “We can feel this emptiness in the everyday,” he writes,

but also it comes out with particular force in what should be the crucial moments of life: birth, marriage, death. These are the important turning points of our lives, and we want to mark them as such; we want to feel that they are of particular moment, something solemn. So we talk of “solemnizing” a marriage. The way we have always done this is by linking these moments up with the transcendent, the highest, the holy, the sacred. Pre-Axial religions did this. But the enclosure in the immanent leaves a hole here. Many people, who have no other connection or felt affinity with religion, go on using the ritual of the church for these rites de passage. (309)

This seems, in a nutshell, the way in which Polidori uses both the literal and the symbolic language of marriage in *The Vampyre*'s conclusion: Aubrey's sister and her guardians “go on using the ritual of the church,” but it is no longer sufficiently empowered to stand against the vampire.

In spite of this implicit warning against paying “lip service” to sacrament and thereby weakening it, *The Vampyre* is more than a mere morality tale, especially because the punishment for such devaluing of the sacrament—namely, the murder—has been

likewise emptied of its spiritual *gravitas*. If the focus of marriage has transformed from sacrament to contract, we might say the focus of murder has transformed from sin to crime—a small connotative distinction that nevertheless distances the murder from its former status as an act against Nature, a transgression against the whole order of an enchanted cosmos, and places it squarely in the realm of criminal behaviour or even civil tort, an offense against a single buffered human and her immediate family.

In a larger context, the movement away from danger to the soul, moreover, does not even end with the literal murders of the narrative, but continues into the metanarrative surrounding “vampiric” literature.<sup>245</sup> I have tried, for a moment, to separate *The Vampyre* from the context of Byron’s personal celebrity and infamy; but on the matter of moral threats, and especially threats to the soul, it is worth considering *The Vampyre* in this context again, albeit with a slightly more refined focus. Simon Bainbridge has recently sought to refigure the Byronic satire of *The Vampyre*, in a way that will be useful here: he reads Ruthven’s vampirism not as a critique of the power over women attributed to Byron himself, but rather as a critique of the Byronic text, which exerts a similar vampiric hold on its audience. “Polidori uses the trope of vampirism,” he suggests, “to figure the perceived threat of the Byronic text to its readers, a threat to which women readers were seen to be particularly vulnerable” (22). The text itself, for Bainbridge’s version of Polidori, is the serpent; any hypnotic power ascribed to Byron the writer overwhelms, for him, the hypnotic power ascribed to him as a man.

In Bainbridge’s view, the violated women of the text represent not only the victims of Byron’s silver-tongued sexual exploits, but “the victims of Byronism as a

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<sup>245</sup> I mean something different from vampire literature, or literature featuring/about vampires. I am speaking specifically of a literature which has a perceived vampiric relationship with its readership, a body of texts whose threats to the reader, Bainbridge suggests, Polidori is merely literalizing.

phenomenon that was perceived to feed off its female readers” (23-4), a cultural weakness or susceptibility for whom the public is as much to blame as Byron himself. Bainbridge’s reading of Polidori’s critique is somewhat more generous in terms of what it affords his satirical ambitions, and by bringing Polidori into the moralistic debate against the dangers of “bad literature,” he allows us to see that the dangers of the vampiric text, in what he perceives as Polidori’s view, are now—like the dangers of the vampire himself—relegated to quotidian terms. “According to contemporary accounts,” Bainbridge writes,

Byromania also led to an abandoning of the social self, akin to the casting aside of the ‘mask’ described by Polidori. Such behaviour is most often associated with Lady Caroline Lamb, but Fiona MacCarthy<sup>246</sup> (drawing on Samuel Roger’s *Table Talk*) shows it to have been a more widespread phenomenon.” (25)

This threat to the social self is taken seriously not only by *The Vampyre*, but by other Romantic-era critiques of Byromania—and sometimes, as Ghislaine McDayter observes, the social threat of Byromania was as menacing to the figurehead as to its audience.

According to McDayter,

Percy Shelley, Thomas Moore, and others feared just such a fate for Byron, and they read the symptoms of his fall into literary hysteria with alarm. Shelley, believing *Childe Harold* to be a performance of the Byronic myth rather than a great poem[...]revised this assessment after the publication of *Don Juan* since he considered it a work “such as these lispings days could not have expected.” Byron is thus redeemed for Shelley only when he rises above the reading mob that had previously dragged him down. (57)

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<sup>246</sup> See MacCarthy’s *Byron: Life and Legend*. Bainbridge in particular considers MacCarthy’s account of the “stark mad” collective response to Byron’s *Childe Harold* (MacCarthy 161).

The irony of Shelley's praise of *Don Juan* is that Byron's most outraged contemporary reviewers, who savaged this poem more than any other, saw in it the social threats of Byronism fully realized. An 1823 review in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of *Don Juan's* sixth through eleventh cantos finds that

the sixth Canto, without the wit which even to depraved minds can alone render such grossness attractive, is almost throughout, scandalously licentious and obscene, and fit only for the shelves of a brothel... the halo of Genius has been extinguished for its perversion[.] (Hunt 251-2)

The allegations of obscenity here, which extend both outward from the cantos to Byron personally and inward to the character of Don Juan,<sup>247</sup> are typical of a large family of vicious reviews from morally affronted reviewers. An excellent and broad sample of these was collected and reprinted in a 1945 study by Paul Graham Trueblood, whose title, *The Flowering of Byron's Genius*, seems almost tongue-in-cheek in relation to the viciousness of the anthologized attacks. "The adverse criticism," Trueblood writes, "may be resolved into the major charges of: immorality; irreligion; prostitution of genius; deliberate intent to corrupt; lack of poetic value; contempt for social institutions; satire without corrective intent; and revolutionary indoctrination" (72). Of this appraisal, drawn from thirty-two reviews of *Don Juan*, of which "two-thirds...are preponderantly, if not wholly, adverse" (72), immorality, irreligion, and intent to corrupt are of the greatest interest to me, because they are the grounds on which earlier literature vilified for its immorality was considered capable of harming readers both in this life and the next.

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<sup>247</sup> Appropriately, the review's moral judgment of Don Juan finds him "with a vampire thirst for vengeance, that would do justice to the unrelenting malignity of a fiend" (251).

I am thinking especially of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, written less than twenty-five years earlier, whose reviewers frame its immorality not in earthly and surprisingly socially rooted terms, but in terms of real religious fear. Coleridge famously writes that

If [Lewis] be an infidel, he has acted consistently enough with that character, in his endeavours first to influence the fleshly appetites, and then to pour contempt on the only book which would be adequate to the task of recalming them[...]innocent expressions might become the first link the chain of association, when a man's soul had been so poisoned; and we believe it not absolutely impossible that he might extract pollution from the word of purity, and, in a literal sense, *turn the grace of God into wantonness*. (*"The Monk,"* 299, his emphasis)

It is clear from several contexts that *The Monk* shares much in common politically with Byron's scandalous work. Its political, even revolutionary dangers, particularly in a Godwinian sense, are what Robert Miles has in mind when he describes *The Monk* as work fraught with "incendiary perils" ("Effulgence" 53). But the powerfully political connotation of "incendiary" is paired in *The Monk* with the second, more implicit suggestion that reading such a text naïvely risks a different kind of flame—that it is perilous to the soul as well as to "good character" in a humanist sense. The literal risk of perdition in *The Monk*'s narrative, we might say, is implicitly doubled in the metanarrative surrounding its reception. The risk of Byromania, conversely, for which Bainbridge sees Ruthven's murderous vampirism as a sort of secular allegory, is at worst a descent into a depravity of shame and scandal—immorality couched in social rather than spiritual terms.

It is foregone, no doubt, in Coleridge's mind that *The Monk* is socially scandalous; this does not seem to concern him. His criticism, which mirrors (but is more

articulate than) a similar wave of outrage from other contemporary reviewers,<sup>248</sup> centers on the implicit spiritual danger of reading *The Monk*. In *The Vampyre*, Bainbridge sees the disenchanting murder act—murder as secular crime rather than sin against cosmic order—as a metaphor for the final, fatal result of “a fantasy, a means of seduction – the ‘serpent’s art’ – which enables the aristocratic male to subjugate (and literally to kill) the middle-class female” (23).

Bainbridge’s construction of Polidori’s vampirism as a symbol of class subjugation fits with what we see in Victorian vampire novels as well—the serialized *Varney the Vampire*, for instance, as well as Stoker’s *Dracula*. It explains in useful terms one of the reasons the vampire resonates with the earlier Gothic villains, so frequently figured as the old-moneyed oppressors of a progressive bourgeoisie in a much earlier stage of the rise of the “middling classes.” And more tellingly, Bainbridge’s reading of the vampire as class oppression (a reading echoed through the much-more-abundant criticism<sup>249</sup> on *Dracula*) places fulfilment in a literal sense the metaphor first set out in that very first 1732 entry in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*:

a ravenous Minister, in this part of the World, is compared to a Leech or a Bloodsucker, and carries his Oppressions beyond the Grave, by anticipating the *publick Revenues*[...]but nothing less than the power of a *Treasury* can raise up a compleat *Vampyre*. (qtd. in MacDonald 193, orig. author’s emphasis)<sup>250</sup>

<sup>248</sup> A few other good examples of the backlash against *The Monk* appear in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700-1820* (ed. Clery, E.J., and Robert Miles, Manchester UP, 2000). To my knowledge, no specific, dedicated critical anthology of Lewis’s reviewers, in the same vein as *The Flowering of Byron’s Genius*, has yet emerged.

<sup>249</sup> Franco Moretti’s seminal Marxist reading of *Dracula*, beginning with his 1982 essay “The Dialectic of Fear,” is the driving force behind much of this work. Among studies produced in the last ten years, though, see especially Gail Turley Houston’s *From Dickens to Dracula: Gothic, Economics, and Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge UP, 2005).

<sup>250</sup> See also a related pamphlet quoting the *Gentleman’s Magazine* article, published some days later in *The Craftsman*, and collected by Clery and Miles in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook* (pp.24-6).

Here there is a rhetorical cleverness in adapting the supernatural monster, a threat to the whole order of a porous society, to imply that the runaway Whig government of Robert Walpole is, similarly, a carnivalesque force which threatens to overturn society itself. By the time we reach Lord Ruthven—and farther still, the monster-turned-real-estate-speculator Dracula—the discursive divide between vampirism and economy is not so jarringly wide. There is no need to construct such a satirically heavy-handed “figurative vampire,” as the literal vampire now occupies the same ground and fulfils, as part of his growing portfolio, the economic threat as part of all the other threats he is coming to embody: the medical threat, the national threat, the racial threat. The psychoanalytic reading of the Gothic monster as a symbol of crisis still holds water, then, but chiefly in the context of this later vampire, whose new proliferation of embodied concerns does not silence, but certainly displaces with a cacophony of new crises, the old state of crisis into which such a creature once threw the victim’s immortal soul.

From the beginning, there has always been a wide sea of concerns—social, political, economic—behind the device of vampirism. But we can see in *The Vampyre* that the waters have invariably changed: the nature of the vampiric predator is now wholly rooted in the quotidian realm. By the time sensational accounts of Jack the Ripper appear in the 1880s, bearing more than a passing resemblance to the earlier melodrama of Varney the Vampire,<sup>251</sup> it is less a case of a serial killer mythologized to the height of a centuries-old supernatural predator, and more a case of the vampire being debased to the level of the serial killer. As the psychiatric curiosity surrounding issues of mundane

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<sup>251</sup> For a more detailed comparison of the mythos of Jack the Ripper with Varney, see Jane Caputi’s *The Age of Sex Crime* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1987).

criminal deviance (and especially sexual deviance) grows toward the end of the Victorian age, it is small wonder that the same curiosity bleeds into the vampires of the later nineteenth century, leading to the enormous body of psychoanalytic literary criticism that we have on vampires today. All this, in a sense, is a byproduct of the pressures and cross-pressures of secularization, and *The Vampyre*, as the chief influence on the nova of vampire literature that follows, is at the front of the shift that leads us toward a monster the modern reader might, at last, call familiar.

## 7.2 Approaching a Vampiric Nova: Nodier, Planché, and their Ruthvens

By the time of Polidori's death in August of 1821, the signs of *The Vampyre's* runaway success were clear. Polidori must have been aware of some of them, directly involved as he was with the troubled history of *The Vampyre's* misattribution, but he may not have been aware of every new iteration of his explosively popular story. Henry Viets has painstakingly tracked the early textual history of *The Vampyre*, which

became so popular that five London editions were called for in a few months. In addition, the tale was promptly issued in Paris in English, translated into French and Italian, soon became an acceptable play on the stages of both Paris and London, and formed the basis for an opera, produced in German, English, Russian French, and Dutch.  
(84)

In the vast majority of these cases, Polidori received little credit; the consensus on the continent in particular was that the tale belonged to Byron. Polidori's assertion of authorship may have redeemed him in a limited capacity with English audiences, but the

fame of *The Vampyre* reached farther abroad than Polidori's frustrated attempts to rectify the tale's authorship, which targeted its English editions alone.<sup>252</sup> While Polidori was chasing after the London publishers and printers, with whom he would eventually win an unsatisfactory compromise on *The Vampyre*'s attribution,<sup>253</sup> the continental presses were running away with the tale: "three printings were published by Galignani in rapid succession in Paris," Viets finds, "all dated 1819 and all by 'The Right Honourable Lord Byron'" (95). In *Poor Polidori*, D. L. MacDonald relates the anecdote of "a young French writer visiting Byron in 1823 [who] thought of him as 'the author of *The Vampire*,' not of *Don Juan* or even *Childe Harold*" (190). That Goethe considered *The Vampyre* Byron's masterpiece is also well-known,<sup>254</sup> rounding out the picture of just what an extraordinary reach and staying power Byron's image had in connection with the tale, despite even Byron's best efforts to disassociate himself from it.

If it seems only natural that Byron's own self-fashioned mythos spiralled out of its author's control, it should not be surprising that Polidori's tale, which so shrewdly exploited and attached it to that runaway mythos, should follow suit. By this point, Byron had already "gone viral" across most of Europe, and while we now associate this terminology with the Internet generation, the same metaphor was not lost on Byron's contemporaries. In 1820 or early 1821, Thomas Moore declared that "the French had caught the contagion of Byronism to the highest pitch" (Wilkes 11). If the celebrated image of Byron had now succeeded in infecting the nation, it no doubt served as a carrier

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<sup>252</sup> Viets identifies three letters, two of which are now lost, written on 2 April 1819: "one to Henry Colburn, another to Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, the publishers of the book, and a third to the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*" (89).

<sup>253</sup> The second Henry Colburn edition describes *The Vampyre* as "a tale related by Lord Byron to Dr. Polidori" (Viets 93), amounting to a credit as some sort of intermediary but hardly to a statement of Polidori's authorship as such.

<sup>254</sup> See both MacDonald (190) and E.M. Butler's *Byron and Goethe* (55).

for the secondary infection of Polidori's vampire, whose reach and influence became what could only, in the context of the day, be called Byronic in proportion. *The Vampyre* was thus, for French audience as well as its English audience, an astounding new work of Byronism, regardless of whether or not it was a work of Byron himself. To an extent, this remains true even today amidst a much clearer picture of authorship. As an expressivist statement of Polidori's dissatisfaction with his former employer, and as a salacious critique of Byron and his inner circle, *The Vampyre* is a text whose authorship is of real importance; as a cultural touchstone, however, then as now, the text is one whose authorship is a lesser concern, particularly given a history of widespread public misattribution that extends to adaptations and future texts (Bérard's prose adaptation, for instance, was frequently thought written by Nodier himself). It is enough to say that the world responded to *The Vampyre* as if to Byron, at least as far as further developments of the vampire are concerned.

There is a special irony, though, in presenting Byron's mythic image in the model of a rapidly-spreading contagion: though Byron's celebrity and the demand for anything Byronic may have re-infected Europe with an English strain of literary vampirism, it has in turn infected vampirism with a few Byronic traits as well. The vampire has acquired the usually-cited Byronic traits, of course—MacDonald adds Byron's geographic mobility as traveller (196) to the usual list of his aristocracy, his uncanny sexual attractiveness, his moral and sexual transgressiveness, the hypnotic power of his eye. But the post-Ruthven vampire has also inherited from Byron a certain faddishness, a tendency in culture toward repetition and reiteration, much as Byron continues throughout his life (and his afterlife, one could even suggest, citing the many varying portrayals of him) to

write and perform iterations of the Byronic hero or antihero. Before Polidori, there was only one Oneiza, one Geraldine, one Giaour. *The Vampyre* marks, following Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon*, the second of many Lord Ruthvens; while he is the only literally vampiric Ruthven at the time, countless vampiric Ruthvens are soon to follow in close series, first in Cyprien Bérard's *Lord Ruthwen ou les Vampires* in 1820, then in Charles Nodier's theatrical adaptation *Le Vampire* and the iterations that followed it. This multiplicity is perfected in Stoker's *Dracula*: in time, there will come to be more than two hundred Draculas in film alone (Woog 7), with many more in print, even if we stop short of the contentious suggestion that almost every literary vampire today, from Blade to Edward Cullen, has something of Dracula—or Ruthven—in them.

Like Diane Long Hoeveler's *Gothic Riffs*, E. J. Clery's *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* engages extensively with Gothic repetition, finding within it an element of commercialization:

the trade seemed to resemble a chaos of shifting identities, mysterious reduplications and multiple repetitions, inscrutable acts of professional legerdemain. The vogue for supernatural fictions, simply because it was so plainly a response to an overwhelming demand, became a symbol for the general and ongoing commodification of literature. (138)

While Clery's comments on the commodification of the supernatural are rooted in the Gothic effulgence of the 1790s, they seem to anticipate the Victorian vampire boom with equal insight: her remarks on the influx of translations of German *Schaurromane*, and particularly of Schiller (140), should likewise be considered in the channel-jumping and language-jumping of Ruthven, who is transformed into a virulent commodity faster than any other literary vampire up to that point—even faster than Arnold Paole, whose story

swept Europe with such unusual speed and tenacity in the 1730s. Significantly, the viral adaptations of Ruthven take considerable liberties with both the character and the narrative, which is to say that they create nuanced differences not only between different vampires but between different iterations of the same vampire.

The glut of these iterative Ruthvens, pouring onto the stages of Europe throughout the nineteenth century, are well-documented by Montague Summers, whose exhaustive catalogue of this literature has aged better than his criticism. He differentiates well enough between the texts, even when they are all called simply *le Vampire*, and cites a contemporary critic's exasperation with the difficulty of such nomenclature: "there is not a theatre in Paris without its Vampire! At the Porte-Saint-Martin we have *le Vampire*; at the Vaudeville *le Vampire* again; at the Variétés *les trois Vampires ou le clair de la lune*" (*Vampires and Vampirism* 303).

The "Porte-Saint-Martin" production of *le Vampire* was Nodier's famous play, probably the most influential text of the bunch, excepting Polidori's original, and probably the most successful in terms of re-stagings and reproductions. Further, over a succession of several pages, Summers unearths a dizzying array of distinct texts under the title *le Vampire*. There is one, perhaps a romance, by Paul Féval (not to be confused with Féval's related play *le fils Vampire*); a vaudeville comedy by Scribe and Mélesville in 1820; a burlesque published by Martinet in 1820 and attributed to Pierre de la Fosse; a comic operetta by Martin Joseph Mengals in 1826; James Planché's English musical, slightly better-known under its subtitle *The Bride of the Isles*, and finally Alexandre Dumas's *le Vampire*, which appeared as late as 1851 (*Vampires and Vampirism* 302-7). He omits some, which I may briefly mention as I go on here; there have been still others I

will also miss, bibliographically buried by these texts or by translations of them, some of which are textually extant, some merely attested, and others no doubt utterly forgotten. Summers's chapter on "The Vampire in Literature," incomplete as it is, runs 70 pages with notes, and well over half of this space (pp. 290-333) is devoted to the simple cataloguing and summary of the vampire-texts between Polidori's *The Vampyre* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

None of the intervening texts, individually, holds the same influence and power as Stoker's or Polidori's. With a few finely crafted exceptions, such as Gautier's "La Morte Amoureuse" in 1836, most fall short of the quality and depth of these works. Although a few have been reprinted in anthologies, some of them quite recently,<sup>255</sup> none is likely destined for the Western canon on its own merits. At the same time, they collectively form an extremely important force, and exert together (again through a sort of momentum or net movement) a profound influence on the cultural function of the vampire and the changing relationship of this monster to the supernatural background from which it descends.

The challenge posed by the cacophony of nineteenth-century vampire texts to a study concerned with the larger picture of vampires and secularization is a logistical one, a challenge concerning the balance between depth and scope. There are enough texts, and there is enough to say about them individually, to support major in-depth studies on a relatively small window in the history of vampirism. Roxanna Stuart's *Stage Blood: Vampires of the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Stage*, one of the only targeted works of criticism on these

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<sup>255</sup> Gladwell and Havoc's anthology, *Blood and Roses: the Vampire in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Literature*, collects many of the best of these. In general, the same few choices (LeFanu's "Carmilla," Gautier's "La Morte Amoureuse," Poe's "Ligeia," Stoker's aborted early opening for *Dracula*, repackaged as "Dracula's Guest") are relied upon repeatedly to carry the weaker material in dozens of anthologies from the Victorian age to the present.

vampiric melodramas, is an example of depth over scope, clear about its targets and meticulous in its portrait of a very particular theatrical subgenre. On the opposite end of the spectrum, we have Brian Frost's *The Monster with a Thousand Faces*, which attempts a complete historical "inventory" of all things remotely vampiric, from prehistoric man-eating plants to emotionally draining people, and in the process makes only one reference in passing to Cyprien Bérard(39), and none at all to the better-known and more influential Nodier. The material is clearly better served, in its own right, by the former approach; but in a broader study the question becomes one of how to address such a voluminous body of work in passing without granting it short shrift—in essence, how to recognize the contribution of these works in total to the vampire's development, without falling into the trap of mere cataloguing that plagues both Frost and Summers.

Part of the answer lies with Taylor, not necessarily in terms of his secularization narrative, but in terms of his methodology. While the narrative of *A Secular Age* first issues from a relatively simple set of binaries—enchanted/disenchanted, porous/buffered, and so on, Taylor soon finds himself facing down a humanist alternative to orthodox Christianity that is, in fact, made up of innumerable humanist alternatives, spanning the full axis between reformational theism and absolute empirical atheism, and spread across several other discursive axes as well. In an unorthodox, revisionary vein, for instance, in only one tradition, Taylor finds himself contending with

a growing category of people who while unable to accept orthodox Christianity are seeking some alternative spiritual sources: Shaftesbury was an early, one might say proto-member of this class, which includes many of the great Romantic writers. (The relation of some of these to orthodoxy was complex, since there were those who evolved towards it—Wordsworth, Friedrich Schlegel—and those who evolved out of it—Lamartine, Victor Hugo.)

And then there was the milieu of Mme de Staël in the Restoration, Carlyle, Arnold, and so on. (*A Secular Age* 302)

The relation to orthodoxy of any *one* of these, I contend, was complex: focused studies such as Nancy Easterlin's *Wordsworth and the Question of "Romantic Religion"* share the same model of tight focus with Roxana Stuart's vampire-study, and illustrate just how much critical mileage can be had from a single writer on the list. William A. Ulmer's *The Christian Wordsworth, 1798-1805* narrows this focus even further, and addresses Wordsworth in terms of a secularization model which anticipates Taylor: "the indisputable secularization of eighteenth-century intellectual life," Ulmer writes, "did not exhaust faith and enthrone scepticism. As cultural historians have long observed, the impact of secular attitudes appears most decisively in the way religion survived" (4). Already Wordsworth is being considered in the context of larger questions of key importance to Taylor:

a majority of Romantic writers considered themselves theists. Is then the defining enterprise of Romanticism, as Abrams suggests, the effort to adapt revaluated religious motifs to "a world view founded on secular premises?" Or did the Romantics more typically attempt to accommodate secular influences to a world view founded upon religious allegiances? (Ulmer 5)

Ulmer's investment in the second of these views swims not only against the current of Abrams,<sup>256</sup> but of many scholars working today from the problematic perspective that Romanticism remains a rebellious counter-pressure to Augustan orthodoxy. His resulting study of Wordsworth's place in a complex, proto-Taylorian secularization story is thus both thoroughly original and hotly contested by established scholarship: the relationship

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<sup>256</sup> The study most directly opposed by Ulmer's reading is M. H. Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*, which maintains even today its seminal influence on studies of Romanticism.

of Wordsworth to religion, then, remains a critical battleground to Romanticists, of which his relationship to Taylor's secularization narrative might be considered only one dimension.

This exercise of unpacking Wordsworth could be repeated for the other key figures in this passage from Taylor (Shaftesbury, Schlegel, Lamartine, Hugo) with different but equally complex results. When taken out of context—an admittedly unfair reading—Taylor's passage amounts to simple catalogue, without even a summary of the sort that Summers adds to his similar vampire-catalogue. Taylor repeats—he is forced to repeat—the practice elsewhere: such moments of catalogue often end with his humble but self-aware phrase “and so on,” suggesting not only that Taylor recognizes the theoretically limitless range of examples available to him, but encourages readers to seek out the objects of his catalogue and enrich their reading of *A Secular Age* with the work to which it alludes but cannot possibly contain. The background, the potential reading list, behind the book is immense; as a catalogue alone, an extended bibliography of secularization, *A Secular Age* would be valuable. But of course it is more than this: it fulfils a double function of bibliography and theory where Summers's chapter on “The Vampire in Literature” fulfils only one function, that of the catalogue.

An ungenerous reader might claim this is all to which Summers amounts in *Vampires and Vampirism*—a catalogue of folk legends, followed by a catalogue of vampiric traits and practices, followed by a catalogue of literature. *A Secular Age*, similarly, is founded on a degree of cataloguing; but Taylor fully recognizes that a catalogue of secularization's major figures and events in no way amounts to a history of it. His answer is an insightful matrix of theory, superimposed over these individual

landmarks, which draws from them and from the relationships between them a complete narrative. In the large-scale vampire-studies influenced by Montague Summers, then, it is this matrix of theory that has been lacking, with the result that the most thoroughly explored approaches to broad vampire criticism are those which avoid or collapse the kind of historical examination for which Summers provided no foundational theory. When a kind of historicism does, at last, intersect with the vampire study, it comes in a specific way: psychoanalytic readings of the vampire have transformed and evolved, for instance, from early readings which treat the vampire ahistorically as an unchanging constant of the human unconscious<sup>257</sup> toward the later “crisis model” in which the psychoanalyzed vampire is “historicized” by tying it to the cultural anxieties of its time—Dracula to the Irish Question (in Valente)<sup>258</sup> or the Eastern Question (in Gibson or Arata),<sup>259</sup> for instance, or Lestat to a disaffected counterculture. At times, a historicism of influence is embarked upon: in *Dracula*, especially, there has been much speculation on what Stoker’s sources were, where he might have got them, and (in the best cases) what he might have taken from them. But even this kind of detective-work, exceedingly fine in terms of both skill and scale, does not lead to a real sense of how social pressures and counter-pressures formed the broad historical shape, transformed over time, of the literary subgenre at large.

In part there are challenges of scale to be addressed, particularly if we read vampire literature, as we should, perhaps, as emblematic in some ways of a larger and

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<sup>257</sup> Frost’s *The Monster with a Thousand Faces*, for instance, is still mired in this early psychoanalytic tradition.

<sup>258</sup> Joseph Valente’s *Dracula’s Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood* (Urbana, IL: U of Illinois P, 2001).

<sup>259</sup> I refer to Matthew Gibson’s *Dracula and the Eastern Question: British and French Vampire Narratives of the Nineteenth-Century Near East* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), and to Arata’s “The Occidental Tourist,” which I discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.3.

more varied body of supernatural fiction. The challenges of scale are shared by Taylor; his methodological answer, and one that helps to address the problems of historicizing the vampire's development, is the conceit of the nova.

I have given only a brief mention so far<sup>260</sup> of Taylor's nova metaphor, defining it as a sort of "new explosion" in which "the original duality, the positing of a viable humanist alternative[...]spawn[s] an ever-widening variety of moral/spiritual options, across the entire span of the thinkable and perhaps even beyond" (*A Secular Age* 299). So for Taylor the nova effect is a very specific image, used in reference to the range of belief systems surrounding God, religion, and the supernatural. Really, though, Taylor is talking not just about the possibilities of religion or belief, but the possibilities of whole social imaginaries. Social imaginaries, for Taylor, play a central part in religion, spirituality, and our relationship to the quotidian world. But social imaginaries are also about more than just religion, more than a relationship to the divine. Our mundane interactions with each other, and with literary texts, are influenced by social imaginaries as well—by the common understandings and common practices which inform what, and how, we read. And so there is an untapped potential in Taylor's nova metaphor, particularly when we consider the central aspect of the nova, exponentially explosive pluralism over time, and observe just how many important shifts in literature itself follow this pattern of accelerating expansion.

It is not too much, I think, to suggest that the present state of the vampire is in a similar nova state. There is certainly a "galloping pluralism" to *Dracula* in the twentieth century, whose revisionary transformations into the film *Draculas* of Béla Lugosi,

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<sup>260</sup> Initially on pp.21-2.

Christopher Lee, Frank Langella, Gary Oldman, and Leslie Nielsen are accompanied by increasingly unrecognizable adaptations—*Sesame Street*'s Count von Count, the Japanese-inflected Dracula of the *Castlevania* video games and Alucard<sup>261</sup> of the *Hellsing* manga, debased pop culture variants Count Chocula, Blacula, Duckula—and, as Taylor says, so on.

From Ruthven onward, as in Taylor's model of paradigms of belief, the plurality of vampires and vampire-stories has accelerated, intensified as it is by the new possibility of "belonging to larger ensembles" (Taylor, *A Secular Age* 300) at the same time as it exists in the distinct space of vampirism. Much has been made of the aristocracy of Polidori's Ruthven, who is a symbol not only of general monster-kind, and all we usually expect that to embody (the repressed *id*, or the anxieties of its author, for instance), but also of a decadent and morally bankrupt landed class. In the old Gothic sense, the animated corpse is reductive; it is a *memento mori* of sorts, pointing to a medieval tradition (as in Dunbar's "Lament for the Makaris") of death as the great equalizer—early vampirism, much like more ordinary death in the same period, supplants the earthly concerns of class and station. As late as *The Giaour*, the vampiric curse supplants the hero's ability to belong to anything, violently replacing every apparatus of station, socialization, and family—even the potential apparatus of family with other monsters, who "shrink away /From spectre more accursed than they!" (ll.784-6). To become a vampire within this system is to face a threat to identity itself: while the corpse may resemble the person in life, the sense that the Giaour may be lost within his vampirism is typical of early traditions.

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<sup>261</sup> The manga's reverse-spelling of Dracula's name evokes the playful anagrams in LeFanu's *Carmilla*.

In *The Vampyre*, of course, Ruthven's participation in a ruling, exploitative aristocracy is not merely maintained, but seemingly intensified by his vampirism. The modern vampire-myth accommodates such external possibilities, allowing the vampire, in Taylor's sense, to belong to an "ensemble" other than mere monster-kind. At the twentieth-century extreme, this leads us to Lestat the vampire/rock-star, and to vampire/detectives such as Franklin Mott in *True Blood* or Nick Knight in *Forever Knight*, with all the intersections of genre suggested by the pairing. It leads us, as well, to vampires as lovers, as political manipulators, as high school students—and in serving all of these ends, the vampirism of a character or text becomes a single dimension among many. We can figure this either as a weakening of vampirism as a definitive character trait—what I talked about much earlier as a “de-fanging” of sorts—or as an explosive expansion of potential functions and meanings of vampirism in literature. More likely both of these shifts are operating at once, with interdependent effects.

This expansion had not yet reached the same fever pitch in the nineteenth century, in spite of the wave of Ruthvens plaguing the theatres of London and Paris. But we can still see in this period the expanding possibilities for meaning, as well as some of the cross-pressures at work. The dimension of class in nineteenth-century vampire stories, inspired by Polidori, can now rise to the forefront, but its treatment in these stories undergoes significant revision throughout a period in which new ways of thinking about class and economy are continually emerging (the writings of Karl Marx, for instance).

Erik Butler has approached this important distinction of identity in a different way, but in essence agrees with it: “Enlightenment works that employed the word

‘vampire’,” he writes, “did not present a creature with much personality” (85), while the nineteenth-century vampire, especially after Ruthven,

possesses an identity chiefly to the extent that his victims invest him with one. Ruthven and his kind are ambitious monsters who exploit gaps in a destabilized social order. As such, their appearance refracts the uncertainties of the world “open to talents,” that is, the world of Napoleon’s reformed military in France, the newly industrialized economy in England, and the increasingly autonomous force of markets (including, as we will see, literary ones) throughout Western Europe. (86)

So we have again in Butler the growing sense of belonging, especially to exploitative ensembles, intertwined with the usual language of vampirism as crisis. This is not, or should not be, profound: if vampire stories are going to continue to offer something like terror, they must continue to reflect things of which we are afraid. Worth noting instead is that the old crisis, the peril of the immortal soul suggested as late as *Christabel*, is sometimes being joined and sometimes utterly supplanted by new crises from outside genres and discourses— according both to Butler, who offers us a fairly broad sampling of them, and to critics such as Christopher Craft, who each select a favourite anxiety (economic, racial, psychosexual) to explore in the newly manifold stories. In the case of *Dracula*, the most influential critical articles are those which have brought the text under the magnifying lens of one new school of anxiety or another. Craft’s “Kiss Me with Those Red Lips” raises the spectre of (trans)gender anxiety, for instance, while Franco Moretti’s “The Dialectic of Fear” sees in *Dracula* the “fear of bourgeois civilization” (67). Such readings abound because, by and large, the vampire is chiefly treated as a figure of terror.

It is a worthwhile pursuit to ask what terrifies us, or what terrified Stoker, or what terrified the Victorians, and to see these things reflected in our supernatural fiction. At the same time, however, terror and anxiety can no longer form the whole of our readings, and must now give way to other concerns. Baldick and Mighall find it an extremely “doubtful assumption,” for instance, “that the Gothic writings of the period [late nineteenth-century Gothic] offer an index to supposedly widespread and deeply felt “fears” which troubled the middle classes at this time” (279). Much of their iconoclastic work in “Gothic Criticism” is to take apart a crisis-based school of thought that is “tautologically simplistic” (280) when it comes to horror fiction—and even then, they are working from the assumption that the late-nineteenth century Gothic, like the late-eighteenth century Gothic, is uniformly a literature of terror, or of horror, or both. While it may turn out that English vampire literature universally belongs to these schools (or, after Derrida, universally *participates* in them), this should not be taken for granted, particularly as we move forward from *The Giaour* and *The Vampyre* into revisionist (or even the first parodic) iterations of the English vampire. Even if we accept that the vampire is, or was, a figure of terror (or “of something like it,” the sublime for instance), this is not the only thing it can be, the only way it can operate, within an explosively pluralistic vampiric nova.

What I want to recognize about the vampiric nova—why, indeed, I call it that, rather than some other title denoting both volume and popularity (the “vampiric effulgence” after Robert Miles, or “vampiric craze” after Terry Castle, for instance)<sup>262</sup>—is that it is intimately connected with Taylor’s nova effect. If I am sharing (or less

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<sup>262</sup> See my comments on p.27, referring also to Miles and Castle, on “the effulgence of Gothic”/“the Gothic craze.”

generously, appropriating) Taylor's terminology and/or methodology for dealing with a sudden and dizzying plurality, it is not only because I have in vampirism a plurality of my own that needs sorting, but because it is tied in effect to Taylor's nova of faith and intertwined with it. There is a shared multiplicity, a "galloping pluralism," in Taylor's words, between the vampiric nova and Taylor's "multiplicity of faiths" (304); but these bodies are not united simply by similarities of quantity or sudden proliferation. They are united by a shared nova of attitudes toward the supernatural, and it is through this common conduit that the study of one can reveal more about the other.

Taylor's model of the nova, then, allows us to approach a different kind of historicization than we get when Stephen Arata reconnects *Dracula* to the anxieties about race and the Orient. Within the nova of attitudes toward the supernatural lies an accelerating number of collisions between sometimes-opposed perspectives and paradigms, many of which Taylor has made it his overall purpose to chart and interconnect. A primary cause of these accelerated collisions, he finds, is a collapsing of distance between these paradigms and the entities (people, societies, systems) who share them. For Taylor, the interpersonal or inter-system barriers

have vanished. If there were at least greater stability across generations, and little inter-marriage, at least the Xs and Ys would grow different, would add more and more distances to the original divergence in faith. But this is impossible in modern society. Homogeneity and instability work together to bring the fragilizing effect of pluralism to a maximum.  
(*A Secular Age* 304)

The term "buffered," as it refers to barriers between the modern self and the supernatural or transcendent, is still appropriate. But such buffering against the forces of enchantment, as we see here, does not amount to a universal raising of barriers against all outside

influence: while we remain well-armoured against the extra-human forces, as Taylor means to suggest, the barriers between competing systems of belief have eroded in turn. The buffered mind and its systems of operation are invulnerable to attack from outside, but they are not proof against an erosive attack from within the bulwarks, nor from “inter-marriage” with other buffered systems.

In a literary sense, the distance between the Paris and London of 1820 has also been collapsed. Calmet’s dissertation on vampires, published in 1751 and extremely popular in France, took nearly a decade to appear in an English translation, and its real popularity came not with the M. Cooper edition of 1759, but with the “rediscovery” of the text through Henry Christmas’s translation nearly a century later. By the end of the Romantic era, on the other hand, the transmission of both texts and ideas was occurring with striking immediacy. In the sixteen months between 1 April 1819, when *The Vampyre* first appeared in Henry Colburn’s *New Monthly Magazine*,<sup>263</sup> and the 9 August 1820 premiere in London of J.R. Planché’s *The Vampire, or The Bride of the Isles*, the story of Ruthven (at least a story substantially resembling Polidori’s original) moved across the Channel to Cyprien Bérard’s prose version, to Nodier’s more famous play, and back again to Planché’s version, which owes more to Nodier and surprisingly little, at least directly, to Polidori. These iterative retellings count only the self-contained derivative works, not even including direct translations such as H. Faber’s French translation in the *Journal des Débats*—a translation that was savagely reviewed by Nodier and may have prompted his encouragement of Bérard’s retelling (Oliver 126). I have also omitted or passed over several other Ruthvens and *The Vampyres*, particularly

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<sup>263</sup> This is the commonly accepted date for *The Vampyre*’s first wide release. D. L. MacDonald records a slightly earlier date of 27 March, when the story was “also printed in book form for Colburn by Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, and entered at Stationers’ Hall” (177).

in Germany<sup>264</sup>—but an exhaustive catalogue is not really my intent. A cursory awareness of these interlinked narratives is enough to suggest the virulence of the nineteenth-century vampire-story, and to give a sense of the kind of parallel nova effect that is happening within vampire literature.

For some time, it has been the way of criticism to frame the repetition of vampire literature as vampiric in its own right: Judith Halberstam's description of the Gothic mode as "cannibalistic[...]an essentially consumptive genre which feeds parasitically upon other literary texts" (36) is not an uncommon position. This approach usefully highlights the almost parasitic relationship of opportunistic writers to Polidori's groundbreaking originality, while also reminding us that much of Polidori's "original" Ruthven is borrowed and synthesized from Lamb's Ruthven, or from Byron's Augustus Darvell, or perhaps even from Byron's nemesis Southey and his retelling of Arnold Paole story in *Thalaba's* footnotes—itself an appropriation). The classic image of the "head vampire" siring a new breed, like Dracula with his Brides, is paralleled in Halberstam's reading, which nevertheless calls into question the idea of a single origin. For Halberstam, the genre itself is monstrous: this narrative of repetition reaches backwards to an originality, a single source, but that source is appropriately elusive, or may not exist at all.

Turning to a surprising family of underexplored Gothic descendants, Diane Long Hoeveler's *Gothic Riffs* likewise observes a narrative of repetition within the "performative Gothic imaginary" (11), a generic family which could easily include the

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<sup>264</sup> Among the later iterations east of France, the *Grove Book of Operas* details H. L. Ritter's *Der Vampyr, oder Die Todten-Braut*, premiering in Karlsruhe on 1 March 1821; two unnamed works (one from Naples and one from Ghent); the more famous 1828 Marschner/Wohlbrück opera *Der Vampyr*; and an entirely different 1828 work, also titled *Der Vampyr*, by Lindpaintner and Heigel, performed in Stuttgart (Sadie 630).

French dramas and German operas of what I would call “Late Ruthvenism.” Departing somewhat from Halberstam’s cannibalistic imagery, however, Hoeveler’s Taylor-inflected reading complicates the narrative of repetition and juxtaposes the static forces—the repetitions or “riffs” across a wide scale of Gothic modalities—against the dynamic background shift of secularization. What we see in these riffs, then, is not just a repetition but a sort of Darwinian repetition, a gradual transformation based on imperfect recapitulation. To carry forward her musical metaphor, we have variations on a theme; then, we have variations on variations. In the end we are left with nothing *but* variations, and this is the phenomenon that has frustrated “origin-stories” of the vampire for as long as critics have attempted them.

I have this kind of forward-leaning, transformative movement in mind when I describe the Ruthvens of Bérard, Nodier, Planché, and others as “iterations.” Each Ruthven, or each vampire-text, constitutes its own endpoint, but simultaneously provides a new starting-point for the next: collectively, they constitute a “tradition” which is not really linear or chronological (the way that Frayling’s table in *The Vampyre: Lord Ruthven to Count Dracula* makes it out to be, for instance) so much as it is an agreed-upon narrative imaginary in which each text finds a broad literary background, even as it contributes to the literary background of its neighbours. There remains within the genre an element of evolution or progress, even in the intervening years between *The Vampyre* and *Dracula*; but such progress occurs almost in spite of the genre’s cannibalistic predilections. Iterative transformation occurs, in a sense, in spite of the desire for repetition, and originality in spite of a desire to copy.

Descending into the finer details of the nineteenth-century vampiric nova, then, is potentially a one-way trip, leading to many volumes of minutiae but little meaningful progress. Taylor faces the same challenge in *A Secular Age* with the cacophony of backgrounds and iterative cosmologies which he is ultimately compelled to collapse back into the “nova effect.” The sheer size of his study hints at the real volume of this nova, as do his later comments that “the book could have been—in a sense, should have been—longer[...]describing regions and times that I have left relatively neglected” (“Afterword” 301). Taylor wisely avoided this route, which might have resulted in an exhaustive variorum of secular humanisms without really accomplishing the work that *A Secular Age* set out to do.

The challenge for Taylor, then, has been to determine what sort of things are happening on the small scale, within the nova of modern faith, but to focus on these in relation to how these things provoke what’s happening on the larger scale, which is really where his narrative is situated. In part, this situation occurs within vampire literature as well, and has driven my choices here as far as small-scale shifts go: the new possibilities for identity in *Christabel* have thus occupied more space here than, for example, the anti-Jacobinist subtext recently theorized by James Mulvihill.<sup>265</sup> The specific symbolic and thematic tie we might unearth in *Christabel* between vampirism, especially vampiric seduction, and the threat of Jacobin invasion and penetration into England, is worthy of study and has much to tell us of what vampirism meant to Coleridge—but it has little covalent resonance with Calmet, or *The Giaour*, or the larger tradition of vampirism. As a vampiric trait, a new possibility within the palette of what a vampire might be or signify,

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<sup>265</sup> See especially Mulvihill’s “‘Like a Lady of a Far Countrée’: Coleridge’s ‘Christabel’ and Fear of Invasion” (in *Papers on Language & Literature* 44.3 [Summer 2008]: 250-75).

it is somewhat specific to Coleridge's political moment, and accordingly peripheral to the larger narrative at work here.

In the case of the more densely populated vampiric nova of the 1820s, scant treatment must be given to whole texts as well as whole thematic aspects: the significant and resonant changes within Nodier's *Le Vampire* and Planché's *The Vampire or, The Bride of the Isles*, for instance, must be addressed at the expense of depth where their idiosyncratic, self-contained differences are concerned. To carry forward the musical metaphor of Hoeveler's *Gothic Riffs*, there is only so much space for these small-scale variations on the exposition, and it is the variations that serve to further develop the main theme of vampirism on the larger scale that should command our attention most urgently.

Aside from the transmission from prose to drama, which on its own is noteworthy, *Le Vampire* and *Bride of the Isles* introduce only a handful of small-scale variations that are worthy of note. Drawn from a theatrical tradition, these variations seem opposed to the movement in Polidori's *The Vampyre* toward a more secularized monster, and might be called cross-pressures or even counter-pressures; on the other hand, we might consider them accepted conventions of the English and French stages and, by so doing, ask ourselves whether certain literary forms or genres are more resistant than others to the pressures and momentum of secular modernity.

Both Nodier's play and Planché's open with a dialogue between two spirits—Ariel and Unda in Planché's, Ituriel and Oscar<sup>266</sup> in Nodier's—who watch over the dreaming form of each play's "Miss Aubrey" and spell out Ruthven's vampirism in explicit terms. Within their speeches, we have not only the premature exposure of

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<sup>266</sup> Oscar's nature as some sort of supernatural Bard is never made perfectly transparent. It is enough to call him a spirit, for he serves the same basic function as Unda.

vampirism, but a new set of definitions for what a vampire is and where it fits in the cosmology of the plays. In Planché, for instance, the flood-spirit Unda declares

that wicked souls  
Are, for wise purposes, permitted oft  
To enter the dead forms of other men;  
Assume their speech, their habits, and their knowledge,  
And thus roam o'er the earth. (6)

In Nodier's *Le Vampire*, too, the whole business of souls, given such a minimalistic treatment in Polidori, is subject to literal and figurative resurrection. Nodier's spirit, Oscar, goes into considerably more detail (my translation follows the original):

Ces monstres s'appellent les *Vampires*. Une puissance, dont il ne nous est pas permis de scruter les arrêts irrévocables, a permis que certaines ames funestes, dévouées à des tourmens que leurs crimes se sont attirés sur la terre, jouissent de ce droit épouvantable qu'elles exercent de preference sur la couche virginale et sur le berceau. Tantôt elles y descendent, formidables, avec la figure hideuse que la mort leur a donnée. Tantôt, plus privilégiées, parce que leur carrière est plus courte et leur avenir plus effrayant, elles obtiennent de revêtir des forms perdues dans la tombe, et de reparaître à la lumière des vivans sous l'aspect du corps qu'elles ont animé. (5)

[These monsters are called *Vampires*. A power whose irrevocable decisions we are not permitted to scrutinize, has permitted that certain funereal souls, consigned to the torments that their crimes on Earth have drawn, enjoy the dreadful rights they exercise in the virginal bed and in the cradle. Sometimes they descend there marvellously, with the hideous mien that death has given them. Sometimes, more privileged because their career is shorter and their future more frightening, they retain and dress themselves in the forms they lost in the tomb, and to reappear in the light of the living under the aspect of the corpse they animate.]

The throwbacks to Calmet, and to folklore in general, abound here. The device of the vampiric exposition, the description of their nature and powers, later forms an important trope of the vampire-story: it is regularly delivered in iterations of the *Dracula*-story by

Van Helsing, for instance, in whom the usually-opposed knowledge systems of ancient, porous folklore and modern medicine reach the needed synthesis. In part, the vampiric nova necessitates this plot point: the growing number of iterative vampire cosmologies frustrates the internal logic of supernatural fiction unless we know the precise nature of what vampire we are dealing with, and the rules by which it must abide. It is unconventional for Nodier to place this set-piece in the prologue to his work, but it remains a landmark of the genre, appearing in future vampire narratives with increasing regularity as their proliferation makes it more necessary.

In Polidori, the same expository function is performed by Ianthe, who is well-acquainted with the rural Greek folklore concerning vampirism, which the prefatory advertisement to *The Bride of the Isles* still identifies as a “Levantic Superstition” (Planché 3). But Polidori’s more ambiguous placement of the exposition leaves it open to doubt: only at the tale’s end is Ianthe’s superstition proved, as we have both the general existence of vampirism and Ruthven’s vampirism in particular handed to us as fact. By placing the exposition in the mouths of benevolent spirits, Nodier (like Planché after him) sets a supernatural tone; that spirits so casually introduce the play further cements its setting in an animistic, porous world. More strikingly, it is the direct interference of the spirits that destroys Ruthven in the end—a strange moment of porous providence that strives to rise above *deus ex machina*, but never really approaches the narrative consistency or internal logic of eucatastrophe:<sup>267</sup>

(A terrific Peal of Thunder is heard; Unda and Ariel appear;  
a Thunder Bolt strikes Ruthven to the ground, who  
immediately vanishes. General Picture.)  
THE CURTAIN FALLS. (Planché 36)

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<sup>267</sup> See Tolkien’s comments on eucatastrophe in “On Fairy-Stories,” esp. pp.68-70.

There is a temptation to imagine the text as a closet drama, in the tradition of Byron's *Cain*, perhaps. But the play was written to be produced and performed—and if one wonders at how this climax might have been staged with the technology of the 1820s, the sudden and violent ending of Nodier's version paints no less strange a picture:

RUTWEN: Le néant! Le néant!  
 (Il laisse tomber son poignard et cherche à s'enfuir, des ombres sortent de la terre et l'entraînent avec elles; l'Ange exterminateur paraît dans un nuage, la foudre éclate et les Ombres s'engloutissent avec Rutwen. Pluie de feu.)  
 TABLEAU GÉNÉRAL. (56)

[RUTHVEN: Nothingness! Nothingness!<sup>268</sup>  
 (he drops his dagger and tries to escape; the shadows issue up from the ground and draw him down with them; the Angel of Death appears in a cloud, the lightning flashes and the shadows are swallowed up along with Ruthven. Rain of fire.)  
 GENERAL PICTURE.]

The pyrotechnic, almost Faustian endings twist Polidori's story on its head in several ways. The most obvious of these is that they invert the ultimate fate of the vampire, from freedom to destruction. At first glance, they seem to do it through the reintroduction of "white magic," through effectively reducing the human agency and directly opposing the forward secular movement of Polidori's tale. But worth noting in this revisionary telling is that the oathbound protector (brother Aubray in Nodier; father Ronald in Planché) does not seem supernaturally compelled to silence, or at least not as forcefully. The supporting cast and peripheral dramas of both texts depart from Polidori on the small scale, but it is the weakness of the binding oath that characterizes the most

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<sup>268</sup> The word "néant" is, in French, a critically loaded one and difficult to translate fully, connoting not merely "nothing," but a sense of void or oblivion as well. "Nothingness" seems best, as it both captures a small sense of this meaning, and alludes to *Being and Nothingness*, the most common translated title of Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant*.

significant departure from Polidori's narrative. Marriage is now a prerequisite to vampirism: Ruthven "must wed some fair and virtuous maiden" (Planché 6)—not merely seduce her—to draw nourishment from her blood. And so where Polidori leaves hanging the question of whether the ceremony itself is strictly necessary to Ruthven's feeding—he did not, after all, need to marry Ianthe—Nodier and Planché ascribe to their protagonists the ability to defeat the vampire merely by interrupting the ceremony. Both do so by breaking their oath, in spite of the power of the vampire's transfixing glare, which persists from Polidori (and indeed, from *Glenarvon*, from *The Giaour*, from *Christabel*):

Death binds them not—from form to form they fleet,  
 And though the cheek be pale, and glaz'd the eye,  
 Such is their wond'rous art, the hapless victim  
 Blindly adores, and drops into their grasp,  
 Like birds when gaz'd on by the basilisk. (Planché 7)

Although the serpentine gaze surfaces again, and has an expanded power not only to transfix, whether by terror or hypnotism, but to inspire adoration, it has at the same time lost the power to supernaturally enforce the oath. As the protagonist's words ring true, the seduction is shattered; Ruthven is forced to pull his dagger and take his bride by force. In Nodier, it is here that Ruthven's appointed fate claims him as the hour sounds: he is too late, we presume, in taking the blood of his bride (one wonders why he did not schedule the wedding a day early). In Planché, the vampire is easily and uneventfully disarmed by Robert, Lord Ronald's lowly attendant (36), in a somewhat bathetic end to his conflict with the heroes. In both cases, while the vampire is destroyed by outside supernatural forces, the Miss Aubrey character (Lady Malvina/Margaret) is actually preserved by the human agency of the oathbreaker. The only weapon of value ascribed to the vampire (the poignard in both texts is a completely ineffectual gesture) is the secrecy of his identity

and intent. That this secrecy is inviolable in Polidori's story prevents us from seeing whether Polidori's Ruthven, too, had something else up his sleeve. But by deflating the power of secrecy in both Nodier and Planché, we are left with a vampire who has reached, in essence, the first really powerless incarnation of vampirism in literature, a de-fanged<sup>269</sup> predator separated from an ordinary murderer only by dint of the terrible fate—*le néant*—that lies in store for him.

In modern criticism, these texts are frequently cited by name, but rarely subjected, even more rarely than Polidori's *The Vampyre*, to serious criticism. Despite being mentioned frequently enough in the "catalogues"—Montague Summers mentions them, as does Frayling—the literature, where it exists, seldom ventures below the surface of plot summary. This may owe to a dearth of critical editions from this century,<sup>270</sup> or to the quality and merit of the works themselves, whose reputation sits well below even Polidori's troubled relationship with critics. Roxana Stuart's *Stage Blood* stands nearly alone as a deep study of Nodier and Planché, and offers not only a catalogue of the period, but some telling comments on the changing relationship of the human protagonists—and the human audience—to these stage vampires. "Of course, all these stage vampires end in the fiery pit," she writes,

satisfying the demands of poetic justice, but they experience a lot of pleasure on the way, and the adventure of the play is to experience vicariously the working out of the vampire's designs on his victims (as in *Richard III*, for example). We are allied, not with the luscious victim, but the predator. Feminist critics argue that every spectator perforce identifies

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<sup>269</sup> The image of the vampire "de-fanged," reduced to opening veins with a mundane weapon, is an appropriate symbolic statement regarding just how far the modern hero has come from "porosity"—that is, vulnerability to supernatural piercing or puncturing.

<sup>270</sup> Melton's *Vampire Book* finds only one critical edition of Planché's play, in Donald Roy's collected *Plays of Planché* (467), and one of Nodier's, a 1990 critical edition by Ginette Picat-Guinoiseau's and published in Geneva (435).

with the male subject, through whose eyes we gaze at the female characters as objects of possession. The gaze appropriates—the action of any play or film is that we either “get” the woman or she gets away. Vampires merely put the action on a more primitive level. (105)

Stuart’s comments are especially suited to the specific vampire-texts of this “generation,” beginning from Polidori’s *Ruthven* and extending through much of the nineteenth century, perhaps even (with some caveats) to *Dracula*. We might easily divide the majority of texts from this period into two types of “predator stories,” some of which end (as Polidori’s does) with the vampire’s escape, and some of which end (as in these two plays, and indeed most stage productions) with the vampire’s discovery and destruction. The stories center on seduction, and the ties between vampirism and sex, once merely thematically similar (a shared blood symbolism, for instance, or a shared relationship to a “penetrative” figuring of supernatural porosity), now become more explicitly (more simplistically) allegorical. In this system, the vampirism that once shared a symbolic richness with the sex act, is now simply an accepted euphemism for it. Why, for Stuart, *must* *Ruthven* marry before destroying his victim? It has nothing to do with the old sacramental symbolism of marriage, and everything to do with clarifying, in no uncertain terms, the kind of behaviour that the vampiric murder is meant to represent. We need not take the renewed importance of marriage as a step backward to ritual and sacrament: on the contrary, its currency as a secular denominator is what brings it to the forefront on the stages of England and France.

On the matter of *Ruthven*’s victims, Stuart draws a distinction between the passive, asexual female victims of the male vampires in the 1820s, and the “wanton”

victims of late Victorian England. The victim “does not as yet ‘deserve her fate’,” she writes,

and, indeed, is saved at the last moment in every example except Dorset’s.<sup>271</sup> These are good girls, whose virtue consists of obedience (so there is no need to punish them, as in *Dracula*). If any Malvina or Margaret were *defying* her brother or father for the forbidden love of a vampire, we would have another, and perhaps better, story. The basic action, as it stands, is that an innocent girl is placed in temporary jeopardy by her careless guardian, but escapes unharmed due to the fortunate arrival of her sweetheart, confirming one of melodrama’s most cherished tenets: that providence will come to the rescue. Any more ambiguous handling of the moral issues would have been unsatisfactory to the patrons of these theatres, who demanded simple, easy-to-follow schematic characterization, a plot structure that followed a familiar formula, and a denouement that satisfied the demands of poetic justice, with violated social norms restored, virtue rescued, and evil banished to the infernal regions beneath the stage. (105)

Now, there are a great many things we might do with this passage. The first is to observe what the feminist threads of Stuart’s criticism have made abundantly clear: somewhere in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, vampirism has become not only a sexual business, but a gendered business. There is, and continues to be, an implied impossibility of male-male seduction in these tales—an irony given that the transgressive appetites of Ruthven owe much to Byron, whose bisexuality was, if not avowed, at least publically speculated in a variety of circles. From *The Giaour* forward, and for at least a few decades, the “daughter, sister, wife” (Byron l. 755) is the exclusive target of the male vampire; after that, when a little play finally creeps into the gender dynamic, its function is to invert the binary entirely (as in Gautier’s “*La Morte Amoureuse*”) or to represent

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<sup>271</sup> Stuart refers here to yet another text called *The Vampire*, a neoclassic tragedy by Hugo John Belfour under the pseudonym “St. John Dorset,” published in 1821 in response to Planché’s play (Stuart 97).

both of Stuart's stage archetypes, the innocent girl and the wanton woman, as opposing sides of the predatory relationship (as in *Carmilla*). There is no male-on-male vampirism again for some time; even in *Dracula* there are three "brides," female-bodied stand-ins for the Count, to tempt Harker. When Dracula is figured as a predator of Harker directly, as in Christopher Craft's "Kiss Me with Those Red Lips," it is a transgendered act: even in Craft's eyes, Dracula must now be somehow feminine to take a masculine target. When Craft writes that "vampirism both expresses and distorts an originally sexual energy" (107), he cannot possibly have in mind the earliest vampires of Slavic tradition. He is thinking first of *Dracula*, and secondarily of those texts which feed into it—including, most prominently, the vampire stories of the post-Polidori vampiric nova (and perhaps Polidori, too). Craft's Freudian argument is reasonable in the context of these texts, as are Stuart's comments on the simplicity to which the gendered operation of vampirism has been reduced. But we should recognize that these, themselves are new inventions—the inventions not only of a modern populace, but a modern theatregoing populace—and while the archetype of the vampire may be in some sense universal or primordial, this universality does not extend to criticism rooted in the formal structure of nineteenth century vampire narratives.

The other thing we might gain from Stuart's important passage is a sense of the relationship between what she tellingly calls "providence" and her idea of "formula," specifically as it relates to English and French melodrama. Her image of "evil banished to the infernal regions beneath the stage" (105) was so prevalent in the drama of the time that entire stages were devised to enable the sort of effect described at the end of *The Bride of the Isles*. According to Melton, the original staging of Planché's play

was most remembered[...]for the trap door though [sic] which the vampire, Lord Ruthven (played by Thomas Potter Cooke), could disappear. It became known in the theater as the “vampire trap.” (466-7)

What starts to arise from Stuart’s picture of the 1820 stage, then, is a sense of conventionality, of tropes and narrative devices slavishly adhered to by all but the most avant-garde playwrights—and by and large, those interested in sharing *The Vampyre*’s success by adapting it to the stage were not of this ilk. In Paris, especially, the conventions of the stage were so restrictive that Victor Hugo parodied the state of affairs in his 1838 tragedy *Ruy Blas*. In a targeted study of these restrictive conventions, Susan McCready finds in *Ruy Blas* “an examination of the prison of social convention through the medium and the metaphor of stage convention” (65-6). That social conventions were oppressive, then, was Hugo’s grim punchline; that theatrical conventions were oppressive was already well-known.

By bringing our attention to the formulaic scaffolding at work in the 1820s melodramas of England and France, Stuart thus saves us from misreading applied conventions of the stage, in the case of the Ruthven adaptations, as spontaneous counter-pressures against the momentum of secularization that we saw in Polidori’s prose narrative. It is fair to say that these counter-pressures have crept in, for a time, from theatre, and that vampires have never again fully divorced themselves from the elements of performativity and theatricality gained during this period. There is a relatively powerful connection, for instance, between Planché’s adaptation of Nodier’s adaptation of *The Vampyre* on one hand, and Tod Browning’s 1931 film adaptation of Hamilton Deane’s stage play of *Dracula*. But the inexplicable elements that would otherwise baffle us—the return to expository guardian spirits and monsters suddenly swallowed up by the

pyrotechnic stage wizardry of Providence, for example—can be seen as unchanging elements of their dramatic form, rather than anomalous and inexplicable markers of porous belief at a stage where they should not recur. Their presence in the plays of Nodier and Planché should remind us that there are no absolutes, and especially no absolute vanishings, in the development of the vampire: like Planché’s Ruthven, slithering through a cleverly hinged “vampire trap” under cover of smoke, many of the traditions we perceive to have vanished from the supernatural novel live on in the stage, though we cannot see them.

Examination of the texts to follow—*Dracula* especially, but the prose works of the nineteenth century as well—will bear out the continued thrust of the vampire’s development, inflected but relatively unslowed by the effects of the late-Romantic stage. Gautier’s “La Morte Amoureuse” and Stoker’s *Dracula* both lead toward a fully secularized realization of the modern vampire, in spite of the surviving background of counter-pressures that continue to operate within the archetype and its audience.

## Chapter 8: The Modern Vampire

### 8.1 The Amorous Dead: Self and Seduction in “La Morte Amoureuse”

The Britain of the mid-nineteenth century is marked by several “nova effects” within its prevailing social imaginaries, birthing innumerable new possibilities within religion, literature, science, and so on. The period could be defined, in essence, as a supernova, an explosive expansion across the whole fabric of the British consciousness, in which several instances of Taylor’s “galloping pluralism” may have suddenly erupted, though they were not all suddenly catalyzed: many of them, roughly speaking, were a long time coming.

This expansion is already well-known to Victorian literary scholars, who observe the variance (sometimes nuanced, sometimes extreme) between Dickens and the Pre-Raphaelites, between Rudyard Kipling and Bram Stoker, between the Brontë sisters’ revisionary treatments of the Gothic mode and James Malcolm Rymer’s. We can take for granted, now, that the galloping pluralism of the Victorian era is well-known in criticism, though not, perhaps, in those terms; but this has not always been the case, and so a few words about the (re)discovery of this pluralism are in order before we dive into it.

Contrasted with this pluralism is the perceived singularity, or the artificial semblance of singularity, within the Romantic era (or at least, among those considered to be important within it). We must not forget the seeming tautology that “The Romantics” are defined in relation to one another by a shared relationship to Romanticism: what

Romanticism is, precisely, remains a matter of some contention. Michael Ferber's *Very Short Introduction* for Oxford University Press, a key volume in a series which places a high editorial value on concise answers, opens with a tantalizingly ambiguous sentence fragment: "What is Romanticism? A difficult question, as we shall see in Chapter 1" (xiii). The double meaning implied is that, on one hand, the question itself is a difficult one to answer; on the other hand, the phrase "a difficult question" *is* the answer. The ambiguity here summarizes the complex state of affairs in Romantic scholarship; Ferber goes on to explore the history of how we arrived at this difficult place, and along the way toys briefly with the idea of multiple Romanticisms, but ultimately shies away from confronting the notion of plurality, and stops short of suggesting (or backtracks from the idea of) a Romantic nova.

In his classic essay of 1924, 'On the Discrimination of Romanticisms', the intellectual historian A. O. Lovejoy claimed the word 'Romanticism' had come to mean so many things that it now meant nothing at all, and he urged us to give it up, or at least to use it, as he does in his title, only in the plural[...]however, Lovejoy attracted more replies than followers, and the word remains stubbornly ensconced in common speech no less than in schools and universities[...]we were now to count Romanticisms, but how do we know what counts as a Romanticism? Perhaps, many felt, we had better learn to live with the word, in the singular. (1-2)

While Lovejoy flirts briefly with the possibility of a sort of ill-defined plurality, scholarship (Ferber believes) has settled back into its perennial search for a single Romanticism;<sup>272</sup> but always this Romanticism is thought of as something like a literary or

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<sup>272</sup> Ferber himself, bound by the requirements of the *Very Short Introductions* to offer us something solid and tangible, does arrive at a workable but very long single-sentence definition of Romanticism. One of its clauses defines Romanticism as "a European cultural movement[...]which 'detranscendentalized' religion by taking God or the divine as inherent in nature or in the soul and replaced theological doctrine with metaphor and feeling" (10); this partial definition begs comparison with the place and role of Romanticism in Taylor's secularization narrative.

intellectual movement; Ferber himself calls it a “cultural movement” (10). This may be an inexact definition, and it is certainly an incomplete one, but it serves to show one of the key contrasts between popular conceptions of the Romantic and Victorian eras.

There is no such thing as a Victorian movement, at least not without further qualification. The label by which the Romantic era is delineated descends from an idea, or a set of ideas, rather than a monarch. Shelley and Byron are virtually never described as Georgian or Hanoverian poets. When “Georgian” appears at all as a marker of literary period, it commonly refers to an earlier eighteenth-century window: Clive Bloom describes the timing of Gothic Romanticism’s arrival on the stage as fortuitous, “as the intimate Georgian theatres were closing and large play houses were opening” (117). Even here, it has become fashionable to jettison “Georgian” as a denotation of period, and to prefer various forms of reference to “the Enlightenment”—again, the definition of the period is tied not to the shorthand of a monarch’s reign, but to the idea that a shared ideology, or a shared movement, is a better referent for the age.

That the Victorians remain “the Victorians” in spite of this is a testament to the impossibility of unifying, under the heading of a single movement, the social imaginary of the period. We get the sense from Ferber that to do this in the case of Romanticism is an inaccurate shorthand, but that for whatever reason, it has remained an ultimately acceptable one. The plurality of Romanticisms identified (with some ultimate futility) by A. O. Lovejoy is felt, but it can be collapsed; Victorianism does not operate the same way, at least in practice, and we are left to pepper the period with alternate, more focused descriptors (“Dickensian,” “Pre-Raphaelite,” “Sensational,” “Sage,”<sup>273</sup> “Decadent”) if we

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<sup>273</sup> As a subgenre or movement, “sage writing” is perhaps less known than the rest of these. I mention it specifically because of its debt to Thomas Carlyle’s *Past and Present* and *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, and

want to indicate anything like a unified literary or cultural movement. Compared to the visible overlap between the Romantic period and its chronological bookends (the end of the Enlightenment era and the Age of Sensibility on one side, the first cluster of “Victorian” movements on the other), the movements of the Victorian age are a perpetual conglomerate of often-interwoven (and certainly coeval) social imaginaries.

From this complicated and manifold backdrop, overarching narratives of literary history emerge; indeed, it might be said that constructing narratives is how we make sense of the tumult. Isobel Armstrong, for instance, finds in Victorian poetry “the gradual assent to self-reflexive art and the struggle against such an assent” (8); her critical history remains faithful to this subject, and the assent to self-reflexivity (or more precisely, one attitude or another to it) permeates the works she takes as key to Victorian poetry’s development. But even within this relatively focus, we can see a veiled pluralism, and what Taylor would call “the cross-pressures in the buffered identity” (*A Secular Age* 304) are contributing in manifold ways to the shape and nature of self-reflexive assent. Even on this single theme, and within the constraints of Victorian poetry (the Victorian novel is an altogether different beast), there is a latticework of discursive currents and counter-currents at work, and it is with this complexity in mind that I consider the Victorian era as a kind of supernova, a period in which multiple instances of Taylor’s “nova effect” are in full bloom at once.

Three of these, as I mentioned, are especially relevant here. The first is the nova of belief with which Taylor is concerned, and which he has detailed to great extent in *A Secular Age*. The second of these is the “vampiric nova,” or the specialized (but not

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because of Carlyle’s importance to Taylor. George Landow’s *Elegant Jeremiahs: The Sage from Carlyle to Mailer* is the keystone text on the tradition, but Linda H. Peterson’s “Sage Writing” in *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture* is probably the best concise introduction.

localized) nova in vampire-literature I have been charting primarily through the stages of London and Paris. What relates these two novas, what descends from the former and catalyzes the latter, is a third nova of changing attitudes toward the supernatural, operating in the same shape and connecting what seem, at first, to be disparate traditions. The centrality of specific figures or even specific ideas is not covalent between the novas of secularization and vampirism, or at least its covalence is not readily apparent. At the same time, there is more to connect these novas than pluralism alone—or, at least, pluralism means something more than mere quantity. As Taylor notes, “pluralism in the sense meant here doesn’t just mean the co-existence of many faiths in the same society” (*A Secular Age* 304); for him, it has to do with an interconnectedness, or the potential not only for cross-pressure, but for a dynamic and immediate kind of cross-pressure. What Taylor calls “mutual fragilization[... ]the instability in the buffered identity” (*A Secular Age* 304) is the key here, introducing to social imaginaries the ability to engage in what I have been calling a kind of intermarriage.

To carry the metaphor forward, such intermarriage between systems distorts what might be deemed the purity of the original systems within a certain traditionalist cosmology. This kind of intermarriage, in one example, feeds equally into the correctness of A.H. Nethercot’s assertion that Geraldine is a vampire, and the correctness of John Adlard’s dogged insistence that she is instead a fairy of Somerset folk tradition. The respective folkloric traditions at work here, which are themselves systems of belief, have already begun a complex interaction by which each is transformed by their coexistence with the other. What Taylor means by “pluralism” then, and what we can take from religious systems into vampire-literature, supernatural fiction, and so on, is not just a

mere multiplicity, but the mutually frangible nature of participants in that multiplicity, and their potential to transform—to *deform*—one another in the course of their interactions.

These need not even be, as I have laid out here, interactions of “like” systems. We can read *Christabel* as a site of interaction for the Slavic vampire tradition and the Celtic “unseelie fairy” tradition, or as an example of one after it has been marred or coloured by the other; but intermarriage of less parallel systems are also possible. E.J. Clery, for instance, identifies such a pairing in *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*: “if eighteenth-century Britain saw the growing commercialisation of spirits,” she writes, “it also saw a spiritualisation of commerce” (7). In the mid-nineteenth century, at the height of the Victorian age, this interaction reaches a kind of peak with *A Christmas Carol*: the haunting figure of Jacob Marley, even above the other Christmas spirits, is the quintessential love-child of this particular intermarriage of systems, at once a spirit inflected by commerce and a figure of commerce transformed by spirituality.

The persistent image of infection or contagion, so heavily associated with vampires in the Victorian age, seems another appropriate metaphor for the explosive spread of various beliefs and relationships to beliefs, carrying a different metaphoric flavour from Taylor’s “nova effect,” but operating in much the same way. In addition to capturing, in essence, the way that ideas move and are carried, it serves as a reminder that these movements were sometimes threatening, and that a degree of upheaval, not all of it comfortable, was the result. For Taylor, the pandemic spread of secularization is a “top-down” affair, originating with an élite intelligentsia and gravitating—sometimes trickling down, sometimes crashing—toward the masses:

All this is happening among social élites, sometimes—when it comes to the development of new forms of unbelief—only among the intelligentsia. And this process of élite pluralisation continues throughout the nineteenth century[...]but somehow, in the intervening two centuries, the predicament of the then upper strata has become that of whole societies. Not only has the palette of options (religious and areligious) widened, but the very locus of the religious, or the spiritual, in social life has shifted. (*A Secular Age* 423)

This is a somewhat surprising binary for Taylor to adopt, particularly coming from a sociological background. What are the qualifications of the élite, or even more problematically, an élite? Is Lord Byron socially élite, either as a writer in general, or as the most popular writer in the world during parts of his lifetime; or does his status as an outcast throw an impenetrable pall over this possibility? Is the operating binary between the élite or the intelligentsia and the rest of society a simplification, and if so, what is it meant to stand in for? Taylor leaves so few questions unanswered that this stands out as an anomaly. He also places the “trickle-down” effect of the nova of secularization quite late, if we read the “intervening two centuries” to mean the whole of the twentieth century and the first and last bits, respectively, of the twenty-first and nineteenth. In the populist iterations of the Ruthven stories—and even the Ruthven tradition’s seminal work, *The Vampyre*, is hard to juxtapose alongside a tradition of intellectual élitism—we can see some of these pluralisms already at work. Whether we take these as signs of an early advent of the trickle-down, the secular infection of society at large, or whether we hold to Taylor’s timeline and instead define them as “precursors” of this effect, is relatively immaterial. Taylor in any case does not mean to suggest that this change happens all at once, as if throwing a switch: if he places it late in the secularization

narrative, he is placing the catalytic center of its activity late, but anticipating (I imagine) a great deal of related activity on either side of the most dynamic period of change.

Gautier's "La Morte Amoureuse," published in 1836, is a critical text at this juncture, and a product of many of these systems and traditions of belief. The short story is fundamentally a product of "mutual fragilization," an early meeting-place of once-disparate attitudes to the supernatural; Gautier himself accordingly stands as a key link between what Taylor might term an *élite intelligentsia* and the "whole society," standing somewhat directly between a number of key French Romantics—Hugo and Nerval, among others—and a *fin-de-siècle* tradition that spans both Britain and France (Verlaine, Baudelaire, Oscar Wilde). The descriptors of literary schools that abound in this family alone—symbolism, decadence, modernism or proto-modernism, *la Parnasse*—are again a sign of the inadequacy of "Victorian" as a descriptor of the era or the movements happening within it, particularly where British literature intersects more closely with the complex (and rather un-Victorian) politics of France's Bourbon Restoration and the *monarchie de Juillet* which followed it.

An important effect of the Bourbon Restoration is what Ralph Gibson calls "the alliance of throne and altar" (219), denoting not only a return to the old authority of the Roman Catholic Church, but a distinctly new intermarriage, of sorts, between the Church and the sphere of temporal, quotidian politics. Taylor invests in the popular stance that "the apogee of Catholic practice in France comes around 1870" (*A Secular Age* 424), placing it the shadow of the Restoration, whose chief religious goal was "to prevent the diffusion of the fractured metaphysical-religious culture of the upper crust and intelligentsia, for whom unbelief was a real option" (*A Secular Age* 425). But this had

political goals as well, and it is important to note that the intermarriage of systems within the Church allowed for, after Clery's construction, a new politicisation of religion, and a partially restored, partially new religiosity within Ultra-royalist politics. At the same time, the French working classes, Gibson tells us, "saw their interests as best served by a republican form of government, and that was probably one of the main reasons why they could not accept catholicism" (219).

Gibson's small-c "catholicism" should not escape our notice here. The religious identities of those living under the Bourbon Restoration were probably, in any case, predominantly Catholic; but intertwined with this is the question of whether the working classes could accept "political catholicism" as an intermarried function of their religion. Gibson finds they could not, and in so doing suggests that in spite of any institutionalized effort to prevent the trickle-down effect of certain kinds of unbelief, France's revolutionary history (1789, of course, but eventually the Revolution of 1848 as well) already guaranteed a number of open channels between the *élite*, or the intelligentsia, and the working class.

Finally, the enforcement of Catholicism as the state religion under the House of Bourbon may have succeeded politically, but the political causes of Taylor's "apogee" of Catholic *practice* in 1870 do not necessarily correspond to, nor do they force, an apogee of Catholic *faith*. The momentum of secularization was not so easily put back in its box, however easily the acts of sacrament, or former acts of sacrament, might be enforced. Like the sacrament of marriage in Polidori's *The Vampyre*, the whole business of worship has to it a civic dimension that overshadows the sacramental among both the objectors to the Bourbon loyalists and (somewhat ironically) the loyalists themselves.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Gautier's "La Morte Amoureuse," which emerges at the center of this civic transformation of worship and illustrates the growing frictions between its religious and political systems. Clarimonde, like Ruthven, feels quite at home within the consecrated space of the sacramental ritual. Instead of a highly secularized wedding, however,<sup>274</sup> we have Romuald's ordination as a priest within a Catholic church; yet Clarimonde's powers are in full bloom, while the "white magic" of the Church is little more than a series of motions, emptied of transcendence:

her look was actually sonorous, and the utterances of her eyes were re-echoed in the depths of my heart as though living lips breathed them into my life. I felt myself willing to renounce God, and yet my tongue mechanically fulfilled all the formalities of the ceremony[...]I had become a priest.(51)<sup>275</sup>

The mechanical formalities of ordination, for Romuald, are all that is necessary for whatever transformation takes place here. The candid and confessional nature of Romuald's narration can leave no doubt; indeed, it stands in stark contrast to the "confession" of Byron's *Giaour*, who leaves so many questions unanswered. The uncomplicated admission that Romuald "had become a priest" by only the most insincere and unwilling of vows strongly implies that religious sincerity—indeed, religiousness of any sort—is hardly necessary to fulfill the duties of a modern priest.

Gautier's language, consciously or otherwise, reflects the long change in ritual traditions as ordination—which is essentially an epiphanic ritual in the context of belief. In the context of unbelief, or even of Romuald's insincerity, the ritual is still a ritual, but

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<sup>274</sup> Polidori makes no mention of a church and strongly implies the wedding is solemnized on secular soil.

<sup>275</sup> The translation I use throughout, Lafcadio Hearn's, has been the standard English translation for most of the story's lifespan, taken here from Gladwell & Havoc's *Blood and Roses*, under the title "The Beautiful Dead." It appears elsewhere under a variety of titles, most commonly "Loving Lady Death" or the archaic "The Dead Leman."

it is a political, bureaucratic, or civic one. The duties to which Romuald resigns himself as a priest are not clerical in the old sense (i.e. those of a cleric); they are clerical in the modern sense (i.e. those of a clerk). Finally, Gautier's ingenious use of the word "formalities" here (his word in the original French, *formalités*, is semantically identical) has undergone the same transformation that Church ritual itself has undergone: where once it signified propriety and (in this case, spiritually) important protocol, it now more properly signifies the inessential trappings of ritual. In its most modern sense, the word implies what we would call hoops to be jumped through, rather than traditions to be observed. It is possible that by using *formalités* here, Gautier is slyly alluding to both of these senses at once.

Gautier's modern audience understood, to an extent, the wide-ranging discursive pluralities in which it lived. His readers may have been variably agreed or disagreed with (and separately, approved or disapproved of) Romuald's insincerity; but in any case they would have been capable of recognizing that insincerity as a choice, even if they understood it as devout modern Christians, as a choice that should be resisted. In the same sense that medieval atheism was to many "unimaginable"—in a much stronger epistemological sense of the word than in our modern usage connoting shock or scandal—the idea here that one could "become a priest" founded on insincere, "mechanical" vows before God, whether or not it was considered blasphemous, is a thoroughly modern idea, and imaginable only in the context of that modernity. The *possibility* of Romuald's false priesthood could not be erased by the Catholic resurgence of the Bourbon Restoration, whose politicized insistence on reinstating the "formalities" of the Church without real spiritual influence over the souls of the working class may in

fact have helped such practical falseness flourish. “In the Bourbon Restoration,” writes Richard F. Costigan, “the older clergy thought that the sacral order was restored, but in that era some of the younger clergy and others began to sense that it had been irretrievably undermined by the events set in motion in 1789” (9).

Romuald, freshly ordained at twenty-four, is one of the “younger clergy” in Costigan’s example, not only in terms of his own youth, but in terms of the Church by whom he is, in a vulgar sense, employed. The inversions created by this relationship are many, and their intersections with the expanding pluralisms of vampire literature, supernatural fiction in general, and religious belief and practice are a fine example of the cross-pollination that occurs within a nova effect (or within several).

Among the more obvious of these is the reversal of the vampire’s gender and of the power relationship with it: in spite of her parallels with Matilda, Clarimonde is not a simple regression to the single-minded succubus whose medieval tradition Lewis was consciously revising in the eighteenth century. Here, she is a transgendered Byron, rendered with a characteristically Byronic complexity that provides much of her allure by the same mechanisms. The flash of her eyes—so like the eyes of *Glenarvon*’s Ruthven!—betray Clarimonde as “either an angel or a demon, perhaps both” (49); the duality at work in her character, as in the Byronic hero, is unresolved but genuine. This holds true in the case of Byron’s heroes and in the popular image of Byron himself:

Andrew Elfenbein observes, for instance, that

reviewers of Moore’s biography saw in Byron an archetypal embodiment of man’s duality, perhaps applying his own description of Napoleon as “antithetically mixt.” For example, Lockhard noted that Byron’s comment on

Burns, “What a strange compound of dirt and deity!”<sup>276</sup>  
might better have been applied to himself. (107)

Of Byron’s play *Heaven and Earth*, Alan Richardson likewise notes that “Byron’s angels are not demonic tempters like Lucifer but fall instead at the same moment as their lovers. They sin by transgressing the borders between heaven and earth, immortal and mortal, and at the same time they objectify the supernatural cravings of Cain’s fated descendants” (89). The precision with which Richardson has distilled Clarimonde’s essence here, quite by accident, speaks to the surprising center of the tragedy in “La Morte Amoureuse.” We cannot forget that Gautier’s “angel” falls with her lover; while she is successful in her seduction, she is also its only fatal victim. As in Byron’s *Don Juan*, seduction itself is inverted here: the sexual predator is herself ensorcelled, and pays a dear price for falling.

There is an element of this dualism in *The Giaour*, but not in *The Vampyre*—nor in any of the Ruthven iterations to follow it. Polidori’s vampire is exploitative of his power over the sexual desires of others, but does not directly invest in them himself. However the vampiric encounter is eroticized, and whether or not we read it as an extended sexual metaphor where the audience is concerned, it functions to the vampire only as a tool, a new avenue, by which he satisfies the bloodthirst that remains his overwhelming and definitive desire. Clarimonde, on the other hand, is a creature with two desires; whether we truly believe that one of these is love, it runs counter to the logical sense of her vampiric feeding, and the conflict between these competing desires is what imperils her. “I will do thee no harm,” she confesses to a half-sleeping Romuald;

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<sup>276</sup> Byron later reworked the sentiment to greater notoriety in *Manfred*, whose title character views humanity itself as “half dust, half deity, alike unfit /To sink or soar” (I.ii.40-1).

I will only take of thy life what I must to keep my own  
 from being for ever extinguished. But that I love thee so  
 much, I could well resolve to have other lovers whose veins  
 I would drain; but since I have known thee all other men  
 have become hateful to me...(68)

There are reasons to be sceptical of Clarimonde, particularly since her survival depends on Romuald's continued affection: she may, as we colloquially say, tell this to all the boys. But fidelity—rather than the infidelity of *The Giaour*—is a key theme of “La Morte Amoureuse,” and in the visible narrative, at least, Clarimonde both directly alludes to and resists the promiscuity that is now common to both the vampire and the Byronic hero. It is taken for granted that a vampire pursues multiple victims, and not simply because the vampire is male: even Geraldine, having had her will with Christabel, proceeds to begin a similar seduction (to Christabel's dismay) of Sir Leoline. That Clarimonde chooses one perpetual victim alone, though it endangers her life to do so, breaks from a tradition of which she herself seems aware.

We can read Clarimonde's falling in love with her own victim as a fatal emotional weakness, a failure to live up to the ideals of a vampiric stereotype which is still informed by the eighteenth-century rake. But this may miss the point. Clarimonde's “failure” is not just a failure to seduce: her seductive powers turn the unassuming Romuald, not herself, into the fatal rake, awakening by night the predator that sleeps in him by day. Her subsequent falling in love with him is likewise a deliberate inversion of the usual seduction, and while the commonly seen inversion of monstrosity is here (the one in which Clarimonde is depicted as benevolent victim and Serapion as monstrous predator), this may be a deliberate distortion, a representation to the reader of the vampire's power to charm: even we, it seems, are not immune. But the other inversion here is between

Romuald and Clarimonde: each is the source, the target, and the fatal overturning of the other's seductive power. The darkness of this tale, as I will argue here, comes from the disease-like sharing of these roles. Everyone involved is a predator; everyone involved is a victim.

Consider, for a moment, Gautier's debt to *The Monk*, which is in a tradition altogether different from *The Giaour* or *The Vampyre*, but is nevertheless referenced—and inverted—by the somewhat Byronic mode of Gautier's temptress. The epiphanic revelation of Clarimonde's beauty offers several echoes of Lewis's Matilda, painting her (almost literally) as a secular, sexual temptress, but as a spiritual temptress as well:

how beautiful she was! The greatest painters, who followed ideal beauty into Heaven itself, and thence brought back to earth the true portrait of the Madonna, never in their delineations even approached that wildly beautiful reality which I saw before me. (49)

Clarimonde's comparison not just to the Madonna, but very specifically to her painted portrait, echoes the device by which Satan "observed [Ambrosio's] blind idolatry of the Madona's picture [and] had a subordinate but crafty spirit assume a similar form" (Lewis 440), thematically connecting Gautier's vampire not just to the sexual allure of the Byronic vampire, but to an older succubus tradition. Like Matilda, Clarimonde is a shape-shifter of sorts: to have her, Romuald observes,

was to have twenty mistresses; aye, to possess all women: so mobile, so varied of aspect, so fresh in her charms was she all in herself—a very chameleon of a woman, in sooth. She made you commit with her the infidelity you would have committed with another, by donning to perfection the character, the attraction, the style of beauty of the woman who appeared to please you. (66)

Where Clarimonde departs from Matilda is the purpose of that seduction, and the manner in which shape-shifting serves it. A temptress capable of being “all women,” here figured as a way of ensuring Romuald’s fidelity in the same way she offers her own, would arrest Ambrosio’s fall: it is only by his passing interest in his seducer that Ambrosio goes on to greater transgressions against his sister Antonia, whose growing allure “every day increased his coldness for Matilda” (257). Both supernaturally and ideologically, “*La Morte Amoureuse*,” though it does not shy away from licentiousness, is a text that nevertheless combats and ultimately overcomes promiscuity.

The vision Romuald laments from his cloistered window is not a raskish one, or even the image of “a gallant” (53), as he fancies himself; instead, he is hateful and jealous of a nuclear family, the domestic tableau of a loving mother and child at play while the father “standing at a little distance smiled gently upon the charming group, and with folded arms seemed to hug his joy to his heart” (53). The Church and its celibacy stand between him and the dangers of sexual sin, but interpose themselves between the fruits of sex as well—in this case, fatherhood. To be a priest, in Romuald’s increasingly entrapped worldview, is to be a false father; more tellingly, it is to forgo the popular understanding of “human flourishing” that centers around secular life; and while we cannot really reconcile Clarimonde’s vampiric seduction with the humanist successes of a stable family and an “ordinary” life (in many senses of the word), these forces are nevertheless allied against the old abbot Sérapion and the oppressive limitations of the holy orders.

The moral and problem against which “*La Morte Amoureuse*” butts heads in this conflict is outlined briefly in a chapter of *A Secular Age* that Taylor calls, appropriately, “Dilemmas.” The fundamental issue approaching the young priest, though it seems to

trouble the Sérapion not at all, is this: “if the good that God wills for us doesn’t just include, but consists entirely in human flourishing, what sense does it make to sacrifice some part of this in order to serve God? This link between sacrifice and religion is broken” (Taylor, *A Secular Age* 649). In “La Morte Amoureuse” the issue is not so cut-and-dried; there are obvious differences between Romuald’s vision of the flourishing secular family and his romanticized night-life with Clarimonde. But that is precisely the issue: we can recognize a degree of hypocrisy in Romuald’s fantasies because we can see a difference between these extremes, while the restrictions of the Church operate under the principle that no such difference exists. The positive and genuine human flourishing with which the text teases us must be denied as surely as the empty embrace of the succubus. Just as Romuald’s vampire is, in a sense, “all women,” romance with any woman at all, however legitimate its social or cultural frame, is tantamount to carnal knowledge with a vampire. By this principle, the text confronts a system of belief which is morally, politically, culturally out of step with an audience that remains predominantly Christian, but addresses both God and goodness through increasingly secularized terms. Clarimonde’s invitation to a Romantic ideal is described transcendently, while the (enforced) holiness of the Church is blackwashed with the brush of Gothic terror.

Again there are parallels with *The Monk*, and again there is a gender-inversion: Romuald fills the role of the masculinized nun imprisoned in the convent, and describes his holy orders in appropriately sepulchral terms. “But one hour passed before an altar,” he laments, “a few hastily articulated words, had for ever cut me off from the number of the living, and I had myself sealed down the stone of my own tomb; I had with my own hand bolted the gate of my own prison!” (53). In spite of the strong language used,

however, Romuald's vision of Catholic imprisonment is more critique than caricature: where Lewis sees, perhaps, an irredeemable system, Gautier presents a quite unromantic one—in tasteful contrast, perhaps, to the romantic excess of the vampire and Romuald's night-life—of a Church that is less corrupt than it is simply incompatible with the modern man. There is something vaguely vampiric about Sérapion, who is a living relic of pre-modern belief; he is the antithesis of Clarimonde not especially as a figure of good against evil, but as a figure who pulls Romuald backward into the antiquity of the Church just as Clarimonde pulls him toward an uncomfortably licentious modernity.<sup>277</sup>

What does the complex predicament of Romuald have to tell us about the nova of belief? It suggests that writers of Gautier's sensibilities felt the effects of such a nova, and considered them worth writing about. It suggests that he considered the formula of *The Vampyre* an appropriate vehicle for his concerns, and that it welcomed the influence of Lewis, and also of Byron's scandalous life of celebrity, if not his writings themselves. If we read "La Morte Amoureuse" allegorically, it tells the story of a sort of everyman caught up between conflicting models of belief, and suggests by this means some of the confusions that living at the centre of such a nova might inspire. The "gallant" figure at the centre of Romuald's affair is not a ravished, withered victim like Ianthe, Aubrey's sister, or even Lucy Westenra, but a living symbol of secular flourishing—surrounded by wealth, love, the *belles artes*, the company of others—and a living challenge to the demands of a system whose valuation of modern success is out of step with it.

Not even in *Dracula* is the victim of vampirism so invigorated by the experience. The picture of Lucy Westenra in fading health as the victim of an ongoing vampirism is

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<sup>277</sup> There is, in this arrangement, an interesting parallel of roles to Keats's *Lamia*, in which Sérapion stands in for Appollonius and Romuald for Lycius, which bears further exploration.

at odds with the “young Lord” Romuald. The bloodletting seems to have done him good—Clarimonde, in a telling sense, has “Byronized” him with her bite, and in so doing, she has radically re-ordered the moral discourse by which he finds fulfilment. Even her semantically loaded name suggests this role: to the French reader, Clarimonde suggests not only a “clear world” but a “bright world,” such as the one she shows to Romuald in contrast to the dark cloistered existence of the priesthood. In its original German, though, we have not only a bright world but a “bright protector” (we have the same root suffix in the English Edmund), suggesting something almost angelic—though in a seeming paradox, secularly angelic—about Romuald’s “protector” and her inverted vampiric martyrdom at the fount of his blood.

If there is a parallel to Lucy Westenra at all here, it is in the predator rather than the victim. The image that most echoes her fading health is that the bedridden Clarimonde—again an inversion of the usual image, since her strength fades not because of feeding, but rather when the feeding stops (it shares a resonance, perhaps, with the waning of the thirsting Laura in Rossetti’s “Goblin Market”). The scene excites pathos, and the cure, of course—more blood—is the same in both cases. In both cases, where the doomed lady—Lucy or Clarimonde—is subject to harsh judgment on account of her wantonness, she is not considered irredeemable for it, save in the eyes of those who remain attached, as Sérapion does, to systems of belief that are jarringly inconsistent with the increasingly secularized currents of the text.

What this should prompt us to ask, I think, is whether the recurrence of this situation reduces the Victorian vampire story to the old, familiar Gothic formula whose

recurring “riff” is the clash between progressive young heroes and an oppressive past.

According to Robert Mighall’s summary of this tradition,

The modern heroine or hero (the reader’s counterpart who is equipped with an appropriate sensibility and liberal principles) is located in the Gothic past, forced to contend with the supposed delusions and iniquities of its political and religious regime. It is the conflict between the civilized and the barbaric, the modern and the archaic, the progressive and the reactionary which provides the terrifying pleasures of these texts. (9)

Reading “La Morte Amoreuse” as a repetition of this riff, a dredging up of the same Gothic tradition, isn’t hard to do. Mighall pairs this formula with an inherently Whiggish notion of history as progressive and as a “site of conflict” (9), which takes as its heroes progressive figures—“The Magna Carta Barons, Luther, Cranmer, Cromwell” (10)—and villainizes figures who slow the engines of such progress.

Mighall is speaking of “classic” Gothic texts here—that is, texts belonging not only to the Gothic *mode*, but the formal Gothic *kind*. His chief examples are the works of Ann Radcliffe, which enact “a confrontation between the heroine of Richardson and a villain taken from the Jacobean stage” (9). We can easily imagine these heroes and villains being updated to correspond with the times, and we can apply the template to “La Morte Amoreuse” as well, leaving us with Romuald as a tragic figure, not only a libertine but a libertarian, who has fought and lost his battle with Sérapion and the vestiges of the *ancien regime* enshrined in his version of the Church. In this sense the “Whiggishness” of the Gothic holds true even in France, where the specific political currents giving rise to the English Gothic (especially those descending from the English Reformation) do not necessarily apply.

It is only natural, I think, to suggest this kind of formula is inherent in literature that calls itself Gothic, whatever century it may appear in. The term itself is derived, after all, from a pejorative and somewhat dismissive relationship with the archaic: Walpole's enthusiastic embrace of old *kinds* of storytelling does not equate to an atonement with old values, and this troubled relationship with the past continues throughout the Gothic mode. On the other hand, the nova effect lets us out of this box, to an extent, and allows the Gothic (particular this later, revisionary Gothic) to treat with greater nuance its relationship with the past. At the heart of "La Morte Amoureuse," ultimately, is a sense of moralistic confusion that results from the violent collision of several value systems, with results that are finally uncertain. Is the ending of "La Morte Amoureuse" a "happy" one? The Gothic monster of the vampire has been resisted and destroyed, but in achieving this happy ending, Romuald has made the fatal choice of allowing the Gothic institution to swallow him up with no further hope of escape. Even here, the road to pathos, whether it appears as terror or as the pity of "sensibility" for Romuald's plight, is denied to us until we form a complex judgment as to how this fate compares with the alternatives. What price might there have been to pay for Romuald's life of dissipation, had it continued? Without an answer, it is difficult to determine what the text wants from us—more difficult, for example, than the end of *The Monk* or *The Italian*, which have their own complications but are far clearer about what should please us and what should not.

Rather than stating that Mighall's Gothic formula *is* inherent in the text, then, it may be more useful to state that it may be *found* there, by those eager to search for it. But an approach which hinges upon the old Gothic approach to clashes between the

progressive and the archaic does not address, not completely, the mutated Gothic texts inflected by the growing supernova of discursive pluralisms. In many ways, Taylor is concerned with the same binaries as Mighall, though his treatment of them is less “Whiggish,” to use a politicized term; in fact it may be less politicized in general. Taylor’s binary of “modern and pre-modern” may be superimposed over the progressive and the reactionary (or, in loaded terms, “regressive”) of Gothic criticism, and the complexity with which Taylor has treated interactions between his terms should speak to the need for a corresponding complexity in how we treat these more popular terms in Gothic criticism.

What does it really mean, to say that the progressive and reactionary “clash” in Gothic fiction? Baldick and Mighall’s analogy of the Gothic as a “battleground for the conflict between progressive individuals and the agents of reaction” (283) only carries us so far before the metaphor breaks down—or offers tempting possibilities for further thought. Who wins this battle? Are there “casualties” on either or both sides? If Gothic fiction, the battleground itself, champions the progressive, then is the archaic or reactionary vanquished in it, or at least driven into retreat? Finally, there is the question raised by Diane Long Hoeveler’s *Gothic Riffs*: if these progressive victories over the past are so decisive, why must the same battle be fought again and attain?

Hoeveler’s answer is too complex to summarize in brief, but hinges on the idea that the idea of a “neat progression in the gothic” (30) is somewhat contradicted by its repetition. It is hard to remember that she does not specifically have “La Morte Amoureuse” in mind when she observes that

the gothic became a powerful and popular discourse system because it spoke in the voice of the protosecularist,

humanist, white bourgeois rational voice that advocated modernism, rationality, and immanence. But it also spoke in a more anxious, conflicted, ambiguous voice, a register that whispered and sometimes shouted that all attempts at rational self-possession were doomed to failure. (30)

As far as the “protosecularist” voice in “La Morte Amoureuse,” we might say it has developed into a more fully secularist one than could have been supported in the time of Radcliffe or Lewis. But as far as the tension between the “self-possession” associated with modern human flourishing and the impossibility of that self-possession, we have Romuald as a figure whose only escape from one Gothic threat is into the arms of another: to flee from the Gothic monster, he must shore himself up in the Gothic prison, and to escape the Gothic prison, he must entrust his fate to the Gothic monster. If terror of the past is the enemy of the Gothic tradition, the effect of the nova has been to disseminate the menacing past all throughout the forms and voices of the present: there is no tradition, however “progressive,” to which Romuald can turn in which no trace of the threatening past remains.

At last, then, Romuald exists in a state of permanent contact with some aspect of that past, whether as the subject of the Gothic vampire or the Gothic church—and also in a permanent state of nostalgia, for by throwing his lot with one, he denies himself the other. Certain aspects of both Gothic pasts remain alluring to him: on one hand, his porous vulnerability to the vampire is a consuming memory ever after, and on the other, while he is with her, he demonstrates an inverse nostalgia for a porous relationship with God—a nostalgia sufficiently strong, it seems, that in the end he is willing to brave the nightmarish fate of the Church to achieve it.

Ultimately, Romuald's relationship to the supernatural is fraught with confusion. It resists any attempt to resolve it—and in essence, that may be what renders it such an accurate reflection of the nova effect at work. What begins as a relationship typical of the vampire story—that of an innocent mortal and his supernatural corruptor—is complicated by a cacophony of intertwining and inter-reflecting voices. In Hoeveler's words, these are “anxious, conflicted, ambiguous” voices; they come from multiple backgrounds of wildly varying social, political, and philosophical origin; and they come with increasing quickness and suddenness from one place to the next—from philosophy to fiction, from political pamphlet to ghost-story, from Byromaniac gossip to post-Romantic critique. Romuald's troubled relationship with old Catholicism is a clear product of “secularization”—but the real secularization narrative, as Taylor intends it, encompasses all these things, these relationships, these transformations—and finds in them something richer and more nuanced than a perpetual clash, progressive yet somehow static, between the old and the new.

## **8.2 Beyond Anxiety: The Modernities of *Dracula***

It is with some surprise, and a sense of relief, that I note the growing volume of historicist readings of *Dracula* which treat it in the terms we have been discussing—terms which move beyond the clash between old and new, or at least break down that clash into its component parts, and thus finding a complex interlinking between them. At one time, Freudian analysts worked by isolating the psychosexual threat of *Dracula*;

postcolonialists isolated the Count as a symbol of the invader; Marxists took the moment of Dracula's "financial wounding" to suggest that the count was a purely economic apparition, and so on. The more recent critics at the forefront of these schools—or, after Derrida, *participating* in these schools—have at least constructed the text as a mutually inflected network of possible readings, in which the sexual, political, economic, and folkloric identities of the Count are fatefully twined.

This is not to say that *Dracula* criticism of the old sort does not still go on: like the criticism of *Beowulf*, or of Shakespeare—and rather unlike the prevailing work on Gautier's "La Morte Amoreuse" or Planché's *Bride of the Isles*, for instance—enough is going on all at once on the subject of *Dracula* that we might safely claim that work of every imaginable kind is still being done, somewhere. The enduring popularity of *Dracula*, its centrality to Western literature, and its perennial reintroduction to successive generations through iterative films—the film *Draculas* are, transparently, the direct descendants of the stage *Ruthvens*—have all ensured that the spotlight of critical attention has favoured it more than all the rest of modern Western Europe's vampire-texts combined.

The sheer volume of *Dracula* criticism provides a mixed blessing: the best vampire criticism, and the broadest range of vampire criticism, has been centered on *Dracula* at least since Montague Summers privileged it so heavily in the 1920s. Where scholarship has had less to say on the vampires of Planché or Nodier, we return to (and soon surpass) the centrality of "Christabel" to the development of vampire-fiction, and there is no shortage of previous scholarship to consult. But the appetite has been surfeited, so to speak, by the glut of material that comes on the subject of Stoker;

addressing the important criticism of *Dracula* without becoming mired in it is a difficult challenge, and one that relies in large part on a summary knowledge of the field<sup>278</sup> whose details I cannot long dwell on here.

Unlike most of its antecedents, with the possible exception of “Christabel,”<sup>279</sup> *Dracula* has firmly entered the Western literary canon, for better or worse. Even Harold Bloom, who considers *Dracula* uninteresting “in itself, given Stoker’s inferior gifts as a writer” (2), has grudgingly included it among the hallowed ranks of his Modern Critical Interpretations series—a body of work that, if not quite immovable, seldom strays far from the traditional canon and its characteristically anti-Gothic notions of probability and propriety. But in spite of this primacy within criticism, and in spite of how long that primacy has endured, much of the ink spilt on *Dracula* is in the same vein, so to speak: the predominant “vein” of *Dracula* criticism was, and perhaps still is, an inescapably psychosexual one. This former state of affairs was perhaps best summarized at its critical *volta* by Robert Mighall, who observed in 1999 that

*Dracula* criticism dominates academic interest in fictional vampires, with the majority of critics focused on the supposed sexual meanings of vampirism[...]a number of tendencies and assumptions can be identified: that vampirism is erotic; that it embodies some form of sexual threat or ‘subversive’ sexuality; and that the (male) characters in the text, being ‘typical’ Victorians, fear vampires because of the threat they pose to orthodox

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<sup>278</sup> I have relied throughout, where Gothic criticism is concerned, on Baldick and Mighall’s article detailing the present state of the field. To an extent Mighall’s monograph, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, spends some time summarizing the present state of *Dracula* criticism in the same way. In addition, Margaret L. Carter’s *The Vampire in Literature: A Critical Bibliography* provides another invaluable guide for navigating the vastness of available material. But Carter’s guide was published in 1989, and Mighall’s book in 1999, leaving at least a decade (and, significantly, the most recent decade) of uncharted critical waters. I have explored these, I hope, as well as I can here; but there will invariably be dark places on the map and criticism left unaddressed. To cover it all would take a book in itself.

<sup>279</sup> Even “The Giaour” is sometimes treated as a “minor work” of Byron, given extensive treatment in the specialist context of vampire-literature, but short critical shrift otherwise, relative to *Don Juan*, *Childe Harold*, or even certain other of Byron’s Turkish Tales.

sexuality[...]vampirism is only the ‘ostensible’ subject of the text. The vampire is monstrous not because it is a supernatural being which threatens to suck the protagonists’ blood and drain their souls, but because at some ‘deeper level’ it symbolizes an erotic threat. A tautology operates which insists that the vampire is erotic, and because it is monstrous this testifies to sexual anxieties which the critic then identifies. Vampirism is used to demonstrate what the critic already knows about Victorian ‘sexuality’. (210-11)

It would be unfair to suggest that this status quo has not appreciably changed in fifteen years, or that critics (particularly Mighall and those after him) have failed to offer challenging alternatives to this profoundly dominant model of *Dracula*. But here is a realm in which there has been no great pluralism to speak of: the majority opinion of Stoker’s novel, whether we are speaking of an “élite intelligentsia” or of popular readership in general, continues to follow these lines and traverse the novel by the same well-worn critical paths. There are, naturally, a few trail-blazing exceptions; among the stronger recent examples is Attila Viragh’s reversal, in early 2013, of the cultural crises of a monstrous *Dracula*, in which the beaten path of psychosexual analysis is ignored and the colonial anxiety-model of Stephen D. Arata<sup>280</sup> is completely inverted. But while Mighall’s summary of *Dracula* criticism does not dictate the emergence of critical surprises such as this (though it both predicts and points to a need for them), it does provide the warning that such surprises are likely to be drowned out by the ghosts of Freud if we cannot escape the equation of vampirism with repressed, “unmentionable” Victorian sexuality.

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<sup>280</sup> In “Can the Vampire Speak? *Dracula* as Discourse on Cultural Extinction,” Viragh inverts the story of “reverse colonization” that descends from Stephen D. Arata’s “The Occidental Tourist” to reveal that for all the perceived endangerment of the “cultural, political, and racial selves” (Arata 630) of *Dracula*’s victims, he himself is the politically endangered “subaltern struggling against cultural loss[...]the sole heir of a disappearing civilization” (Viragh 232).

This “drowning out” effect, if anything, is the key danger of the persistent psychosexual reading, whose threat is not any substantial inaccuracy, but rather a tendency toward critical limitation. Further, because so much of the last century’s literary criticism on vampires is centered on *Dracula*, the way we construct Stoker’s vampire, even if it is the only vampire we mean to talk about, has a powerful revisionary effect on the way we consider vampirism itself. The tendency to read back *Dracula*’s fin-de-siècle attitudes to sex, medicine, identity, and so on, has lead several critics to read these themes anachronistically back onto earlier vampires, with sometimes disastrous results. As the “single most influential of all stories of the living and the undead” (Waller 29), *Dracula* is no less influential as a site of criticism than as an analogue to other stories. It is not only the key battleground for vampire criticism, but a site of strategic and tactical importance to all other battlegrounds—the bottleneck, to extend the metaphor, through which all vampire scholarship must ultimately pass. Limiting ourselves critically on *Dracula* is doubly dangerous because it limits us by proxy on all vampire literature.

An example of this limitation at work might be made of Carol Senf’s *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism*, which appeared more or less concurrently with Mighall’s *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* and was one of the earliest major texts to answer the need Mighall articulates for an alternative to the Freudian model of *Dracula*. The study was not, in its day, as well-roundedly received as it might be now: in a review for *English Literature in Transition*, Rosemary Jann offers high praise for Senf’s “good use of Elaine Showalter’s insight that cultural instability in times of change often registers itself in anxieties over conventional gender roles” (323), while simultaneously criticizing as mere overreaching “digressions” (324) Senf’s numerous explorations which

move away from this frontier. “Victorians’ attitudes toward animals and their fascination with history, for instance,” writes Jann, “do not seem central enough to the novel to justify their inclusion” (324).

Within critical discourses rooted in the universal homogeneity of the human psyche (even through the ages), the importance of history is understandably collapsed. But even so, the idea that *Dracula* has nothing “central” to say about the relationship of Victorians to history has not aged well—or perhaps it has always sounded suspect, even when it was new.<sup>281</sup> But the critical mass of distaste for movements away from *Dracula*’s gender anxieties—and Jann’s distaste for it here is far better articulated and less hostile than it has been in other reviews—has endured for some time. When Amanda Guilinger returned to repeat Mighall’s summary of the critical field in 2012, her description was much the same as his: “interest in the novel has increased over the past twenty-five years,” she writes, “but it has mainly been confined to Freudian interpretations of one sort or another.”<sup>282</sup> In the most common type of critical reading, the character of Dracula is seen as a psychologically constructed figure of repressed sexual desire” (513).

It is not difficult—and it is still less difficult now than in 1999—to name exceptions to this general statement. My example of *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism* is only one of many. But these exceptions do not refute the general trend; and they are still catching up with the runaway momentum of the Freudian model, which has

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<sup>281</sup> The remark is especially jarring given Jann’s previous study, *The Art and Science of Victorian History* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 1986), which demonstrates a lucid understanding of the Victorians’ relationships to history and suggests that such themes, in Stoker, should be immediately perceptible to her.

<sup>282</sup> The laissez-faire connotations of the phrase “one sort or another” are not far off the mark here, as even mutually exclusive psychosexual readings are fair game as long as they come from the appropriate school. Compare Freud’s student Ernest Jones, who finds in *Dracula* repressed incestuous desire, with John Allen Stevenson’s “A Vampire in the Mirror: A Sexuality of *Dracula*,” which reads into the novel anxieties of exogamy, of intercourse with figures from too far away rather than too near.

continued to drive the sexualisation of Dracula, and through him of vampires in general, especially within popular culture. Since the late 1950s, when Maurice Richardson's seminal essay "The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories" first reduced Stoker's novel to "a kind of incestuous, necrophilious, oral-anal-sadistic all-in wrestling match" (427), nearly all of Dracula's film portrayals have projected—and, in so projecting, adopted—an obsession with vampiric sexuality that turned Hammer Studios' first and best Dracula, Christopher Lee, into an "instant sex symbol" in a role that lasted only seven minutes and contained only thirteen speaking lines (Russo 40).

The momentum of Richardson's model has been hard to break; and in the monotonous din it has inspired, the nuanced voices of alternative lines of inquiry, such as Senf's, are out-shouted; in terms of influence, they never carry quite as far as they should. Critics, polarized by the success of the psychosexual model, spend much time (perhaps too much) voicing the specifics of either their agreement or their disagreement with it, and less time engaged in the various other cross-talks that have populated and enriched, for instance, the study of *Hamlet*—a text which lends itself equally well (or better) to explicitly Freudian readings, yet has been spared the one-sided dominance that these readings exert, or have in the past exerted, over *Dracula*. What might have been, in *Dracula* scholarship, a galloping pluralism of cross-talk has been slowed to a trot by the leaden baggage of the sex-anxiety school; as a result, these ambitious studies have not been fully unpacked, and it remains worthwhile today to turn back to Senf and even to Stephen D. Arata, situated as they were on the edge of critical frontiers too seldom explored, and reconsider what new ground they were looking over and why.

Even in its title, *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism* not only echoes but reshapes *Dracula*'s relationship with oldness and newness. It anticipates Mighall's call for critical newness by laying a complicated tapestry over a narrative that might easily be read as a simple Oedipal conflict. Whatever we might say about Dracula as a sexual figure, the simplistic notion of him as a surrogate father to be defeated does not address the complicated questions about the total apparatus of his defeat. Senf is deeply concerned with the heteroglossic makeup of these forces, seeing discursive interactions well beyond and beneath what Jamieson Ridenhour terms a "surface heteroglossia" (111)—that is, the obvious "babble of disparate but equal voices" (111) contained in the hodgepodge of found documents that make up the text of *Dracula* and give it its formal characteristics. "It is a truism to acknowledge that history is written by the victors," Senf writes, "but *Dracula* is the history of those who conquer the vampire, a history that celebrates the collective power of present law, science, scholarship, religion, technology, and capital against the lonely primitive who is finally tracked back to his lair and destroyed" (33).

It is not the first "history of the victors" in vampire literature: the same fate befalls Clarimonde, as it befalls LeFanu's Carmilla after her, and most of the stage Ruthvens besides. But it is the first time that all of modernity, in a sense, has united to achieve this victory through a series of figureheads symbolizing each of its discursive facets in turn. Even for Rosemary Jann, Senf "positions the characters in terms of the social types they represent and celebrates the ability of the composite manuscript to defeat the vampire by its figuratively conjoined forces" (323). Like Gautier's "La Morte Amoureuse," then,

*Dracula* the novel—far more, perhaps, than even Dracula the character—is a site of radical discursive intersection, a product of and sign of the nova effect at work.

If modern medicine, technology, economy, and religion are all part of the mosaic raised to defeat the vampire, then why shouldn't modern sexuality be invited into the same discursive mosaic? Even outside of a specifically Freudian model, sexuality and gender are major components in the novel: the claim that *Dracula* lacks a central relationship to *eros* is every bit as misguided as the claim that it lacks a central relationship to history. But the erotic *Dracula* is one aspect among many; just as tracking down and undoing the Count requires the combined efforts of the Crew of Light<sup>283</sup> (a psychiatrist, a philosopher/occultist, a schoolmistress, a lawyer, a nobleman, and a knife-wielding Texan), unpacking *Dracula* and making sense of it require a multifaceted approach. Both Dr. Seward and Dr. Freud, we might say, have an important place in confronting the vampire; neither one, however, is up to the challenge alone.

By detailing the mosaic nature of the Crew of Light, Senf highlights a parallel mosaic within the text itself, depicting a modernity whose teamwork comes from the easy intermarriage of disparate threads. If the threat of Dracula is chiefly or primarily an erotic one, as earlier critics have argued,<sup>284</sup> then it is no wonder he is overwhelmed in the end. Ancient sexuality ceases to be a match for a modern sexuality when the latter brings with it the allied discourses of modernity—capitalism, nationalism, medicine, technology, and

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<sup>283</sup> The term, which has become quite popular for the protagonists of the final chase, originates in Christopher Craft's "Kiss Me with Those Red Lips" (109). Interestingly, given the way the article challenges *Dracula*'s gender norms, Craft omits Mina from the list. I have included her here, both for completeness and because her research and education play a stronger role in the Count's capture than Craft seems to indicate.

<sup>284</sup> These "earlier critics" include Senf herself, whose work from twenty years prior to *Dracula: Tradition and Modernism* (especially her 1979 article "*Dracula*: The Unseen Face in the Mirror") forms a relatively typical example of the school of *Dracula* criticism from whose conventional constraints she has later broken.

so on. A psychoanalytic model applied to these discourses may still find the mechanics of repression at work: the shape nationalism takes, for instance, depends highly on which social values are repressed or shunted out of the spotlight of consciousness, and which are centralized. So there remains a validity to examinations of repression, especially in relation to a wider range of subjects. But the text can no longer be figured as a simplistic psychological morality play in which Dracula is a threat from the Transylvanian unconscious, come to attack a “civilized” society in which social order is entirely structured through repression.

In some ways, adopting this more basic model of repression—a model which heavily draws from Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents*, and perhaps also from Foucauldian relationships between repression and social order—requires us to believe that Dracula (and through him, the vampire) is a specific kind of uncanny construct. We must read Dracula’s journey from Transylvania—“across the woods,” through a buffer from one realm to another—as a manifestation, a journey from the repressed unconscious. This, in turn, leads us to a version of events in which Dracula has no place in the conscious world until he jars it by setting foot there. But neither Dracula nor the sexuality he represents is as utterly foreign to Victorian consciousness as we have been led to believe, even under a shorthand that collapses many different kinds of nineteenth-century consciousness under the Victorian banner. The work of Ernest Jones and Maurice Richardson, so central to establishing this particular construction of Dracula, hinges on the miscalculation, or perhaps the feigned impression, that the novel’s contemporary readership did not already have a sense of what (we are told) is invisible to the casual reader, but clear to the psychoanalyst. By constructing *Dracula*’s sexual tapestry as a

repressed or buried force in the text, the psychoanalyst turns it into be something unearthed or discovered—though it is, in such arguments, the psychoanalyst who buried it in the first place.

Mighall, at least, is unconvinced that *Dracula*'s sexual politics is not taking place, at least partially, in the full light of day even for casual readers. "According to Robert Tracy," he writes,

sex 'could not be talked about at all, except by combining it with death and so disguising it', hence vampire fiction[...]Tracy refers to 'Necrophilism' in his title, disregarding the fact that if the Victorians had really been unable to talk about sex such a term would have been unavailable for his knowing critique of Victorian disguise and hypocrisy. (226)

The sexual dimensions of *Dracula* are, for Mighall, immediately recognizable both to twentieth-century critics and to its original audience. For him, they are less repressed than they are codified, wrapped into a common symbolic language that works not as a veil, but as a knowingly euphemistic carrier for familiar rather than uncanny sexual forces. What is truly uncanny for the Crew of Light—what challenges their cosmology and upsets their social imaginary to the highest degree— is not the sexual but the supernatural aspect of the Count.

Considering E.J. Clery's reminder, in *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction*, that *The Castle of Otranto* was launched into a London readership weaned three years earlier on accounts of the Cock-Lane Ghost,<sup>285</sup> we must remember that *Dracula*'s readership was weaned on accounts of the Whitechapel (Jack the Ripper) murders of 1888, and on the

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<sup>285</sup> See Clery's entire first chapter on the Cock-Lane ghosts and contemporary accounts of it. Douglas Grant's 1965 work *The Cock Lane Ghost* is another valuable resource, but less so in a literary context.

rise of the serial psychopath in general.<sup>286</sup> It is not a challenge for the protagonists, or for the readers, to believe that Lucy has been preyed on, or that her physical and mental symptoms have been caused by malice rather than malaise. What challenges the belief of all except Van Helsing, however, is the supernatural nature of this predator, a nature underplayed not only by the protagonists' initial disbelief, but by the circumstances in which they choose to interact with him. As Mighall observes, the protagonists

do not attempt to arrest the count, or capture him for medical science so that he can appear in the next edition of Krafft-Ebing, or Lombroso, with all the other 'modern vampires'. Instead, he is dispatched according to folkloric dictates seconds before the sun sets when he would regain his powers of metamorphosis and invisibility, making all scientific taxonomies redundant. (242-3)

The bathos of the Count's ignoble defeat—more of an execution than a defeat, really—has not been lost on critics. The novel delivers a powerful climax, of sorts, but it does not deliver a “showdown,” in the classic sense, between the allied forces of modernity and the ancient vampire at his full strength. In spite of the “folkloric dictates” Mighall sees in the death, the execution comes by stabbing and throat-cutting with ordinary weapons. None of the usual rituals—staking, beheading, burning—are necessary here: because Dracula is not at full strength, incapable of turning to mist or other such “improbabilities,” he can be killed as a common criminal is killed.

It is this “commonness” I want to consider in relation to Taylor—in relation to his original definition of a social imaginary as a “common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy” (*Modern Social Imaginaries* 23). What Ridenhour calls the “surface heteroglossia” of the novel—the formal makeup

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<sup>286</sup> Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, a key text for Mighall's chapter on vampirism (that is, on *Dracula*), is also responsible in no small part for providing the English public with a common language on murderers.

of its narration—reflects a patchwork of discursive pressures and counter-pressures, all of which are invested in determining the shape of the social imaginary shared between the novel’s protagonists and its readers. One of these counter-pressures involves treating the Count as a “common criminal” in every sense of the word—the sexual psychopath, a criminal who has entered the common understanding of the dominant social imaginary for both the heroes and the readers of the novel.

Mighall’s chapter on vampirism is especially interested in refiguring Dracula as a product of this criminological tradition, rather than the product of repressed *eros*, for instance. Of special interest to him are three *fin-de-siècle* criminologists<sup>287</sup> whose work is responsible for the growing understanding of the vampire as a metaphoric label for a certain kind of psychopathic predator. It is this kind of sensational predator with whom the novel’s criminological counter-pressures seek to align the Count. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century Italian hæmophage Vincenzo Verzeni is one such killer, studied by Cesare Lombroso and later by Krafft-Ebing, who refers to him a “modern vampire” (64) in *Psychopathia Sexualis* and provides Van Helsing with the modern explanation he must tactfully overcome to bring the Crew of Light into the necessary social imaginary of belief. As Mighall notes,

It is very likely that Lombroso and [Max] Nordau *would* classify Dracula as a criminal type, but that would be somewhat inappropriate given his supernatural status. One suspects that this is really a shrewd attempt by Van Helsing to get Seward to join the hunt, knowing that he would be much happier pursuing an object of modern criminology than a four-hundred-year-old supernatural beast. (243)

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<sup>287</sup> In no particular order, Cesare Lombroso, Max Nordau, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing. Van Helsing himself cites Lombroso and Nordau by name (Stoker 342).

By “selling” Dracula as a supernatural being in terms that are palatable to Seward’s modern social imaginary, Mighall suggests, Van Helsing is “simultaneously the counterpart and the opposite” (243) of the Victorian criminologist, advancing as needed whichever version of Dracula is most likely to secure the help of the other, widely various protagonists.

Van Helsing can negotiate this divide because he is a discursive nova unto himself, a “renaissance man” versed not just in a binary background of ancient and modern knowledge, but in a complex tapestry of such knowledges. As Erik Butler has noted,

Van Helsing has so many degrees (“M.D., D.PH., D.LIT. ETC., ETC.”) and areas of expertise that even his pupil cannot keep track. When Seward fears that Van Helsing, because he comes from abroad, “might not be aware of English legal requirements,” the Dutchman reminds him of the reach of his knowledge: “You forget that I am a lawyer as well as a doctor.” (118)<sup>288</sup>

In many ways Van Helsing is the full realization of Taylor’s nova effect, a walking embodiment of discourses whose whole history exists with some degree of synchronicity. His citation of Lombroso and Nordau—both cutting-edge criminologists when *Dracula* was published—indicates an academic invested in the most current research; his frequent identification with Paracelsus or as an occultist in the Paracelsian tradition (Butler 118), on the other hand, simultaneously marks him as a product of hybridized ancient and modern thought, not unlike Shelley’s Victor Frankenstein. Van Helsing’s Dutchness implicitly associates him with a Protestant and largely Calvinist tradition; yet his

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<sup>288</sup> To avoid confusion here, I have removed the page-references given by Butler from a different edition of *Dracula*. In the edition I cite, Butler’s quotations appear on pp. 112 and 163 respectively.

possession of both the Eucharistic Host and an “Indulgence” (210) to abuse it<sup>289</sup> (one of Stoker’s more unlikely contrivances) sets him in a Catholic tradition as well. His reconciliation of this background with the extensive patchwork of his scientific training complicates his faith in a way that his pre-modern analogues—the “old men” of folklore cited by Ianthe in *The Vampyre*, for instance—did not have to contend with.

In a biography of horror director Terrence Fisher, Paul Leggett described Peter Cushing’s Van Helsing as “a modern Christian[...]far from being anti-scientific” (49). The description could apply to Stoker’s original Van Helsing in an even broader sense: this “modern Christian” complicates even the idea of re-enchantment which sees the old men of porous tradition—as in *The Vampyre*—pulling the progressive protagonists back downwards into belief. Only within the vampire’s own (under)world of porous belief, such stories suggest, can the vampire be confronted and defeated. It is an old and standard system in which, for instance, the good magic of the Church is stronger than the black magic of the spirit animating the body.

That such a confrontation is not really necessary in *Dracula* is inherently tied to its sense of modernity. Van Helsing must be aware of the occult dimensions of vampirism, and he must communicate them to the protagonists and the readers; but this dimension is one among many. The corresponding weapon of faith, symbolized (if awkwardly) by the Host, is similarly one tool among many: where the Body of Christ is weaponized against Dracula, so too is the garlic of Slavic folklore, and the transfusion (literally, and perhaps suggestively, the “pouring across”) of modern medicine. Harker’s characteristically old-world weapon, the kukri described as a “great Ghoorka knife”

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<sup>289</sup> Van Helsing’s use of the Host constitutes a profanation of Catholic doctrine, which prohibits the body of Christ from touching the earth (Tichelaar 238). It is also extremely unlikely, as Maud Ellman notes in this edition of *Dracula*, that an indulgence from the Vatican—usually in terms of past transgressions—would be

(Stoker 336), is steeped in an Orientalism that renders it a symbol of all that is ancient about the East; here it joins forces with the Quincey's Bowie knife, the iconic signature tool of the American West, and of frontiersmen in general. When we further add to the mix the commonly-discussed trappings of technology—trains and their schedules, phonographs, typewriters that produce in triplicate—we find an exponentially broadening variety of inter-related weaponry, in which faith plays a significant but much reduced part.

This is not to say that faith can be entirely subtracted from the equation: as Mina writes in her diary, she and her companions “are truly in the hands of God” (360), and the holy circle in which she sleeps during the final pursuit has much more than a cosmetic function. But the role of faith is nevertheless diminished in such a large arsenal; furthermore, the agency of that faith has been shifted from God's hand to human hands. By (sacrilegiously) salting the earth with the Host, Van Helsing is presenting religious faith as a weapon to be wielded in hand, rather than invoked from afar. The “charged relics” he carries—the crucifix from which the Count recoils is another—appear identical, iconographically speaking, to the charged objects of the old enchanted world. Here, however, they are paradoxically humanistic symbols, putting that power back into human hands.

What we have in Van Helsing's use of the Host, in one way, is a largely secular anti-supernatural “gadgetry,” a tool masquerading as a charged relic in the pre-modern sense. In time this effect will become even more pronounced: the ultraviolet bullets of Len Wiseman's *Underworld* films offer the twenty-first century a similarly secularized weapon, reducing the supernatural significance of sunlight in Murnau's *Nosferatu* to a

purely scientific level (one wonders, then, how modern vampires survive in the perpetually blacklit environments of Goth nightclubs). We have not quite come to this point yet in *Dracula*: even Dr. Seward, a less ambiguous man of science than Van Helsing, reports feeling “a mighty power fly along [his] arm” (306) when he confronts the Count with wafer and crucifix in hand. Although this feeling of power is never addressed, it clearly has more than a placebo effect on the Count: even in its modern form, both diluted by and allied with the myriad concerns of modernity, faith maintains a potent function.

For Eleanor Bourg Nicholson, Van Helsing’s defense of his desecration of the Host (“I have an Indulgence” [Stoker 210], he states simply) is indecipherable behind a barrier of both “garbled theology and garbled English” (xxi). But Van Helsing’s garbled theology, though it may be confused, is characteristically modern: in Taylor’s terminology, it is a system of belief cobbled together from multiple “mutually frangible” systems. As Taylor argues, “this mutual fragilization of all the different views in presence, the undermining sense that others think differently, is certainly one of the main features of the world of 2000, in contrast to the world of 1500” (*A Secular Age* 303-4). The discursive systems meeting within Van Helsing—occult, scientific, medico-legal—are vampiric in themselves, mutually cannibalizing one another to power their own transformation. We see shades of this in a clearly Protestant Harker’s meditations on the crucifix as well:

bless that good, good woman who hung the crucifix around my neck! for it is a comfort and a strength to me whenever I touch it. It is odd that a thing which I have been taught to regard with disfavour and as idolatrous should in a time of loneliness and trouble be of help. Is it that there is something in the essence of the thing itself, or that it is a

medium, a tangible help, in conveying memories of sympathy and comfort? (28)

Harker's own belief, even "as an English Churchman" (5), is frangible to other systems, and perhaps (with good reason) his thoughts on the crucifix have changed by the novel's end. This kind of frangibility is characteristic, for Taylor, of modernity. Van Helsing is a fully realized amalgam of the same sort; like Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, we can easily imagine that all of Europe (and perhaps a few more distant, exoticized places as well) have gone into his making. That they exist at the same time in him is what marks him as a figure of modernity: although Van Helsing is frequently figured in a similar role to the "old men" in *The Vampyre*—that is, as a connection between the progressive protagonist and the necessary lore from a porous past—he is paradoxically the opposite of this, a disruptive force to the buffered belief systems of the protagonists, who through this disruptive transformation brings them not backward into a porous state, but forward into a more fully realized modernity. What Carol Senf might consider the characteristic heteroglossia of *Dracula* is in fact a thoroughly modern addition to the vampire-tale, a final important step in the form's evolution.

If any of Freud's models continues to hold currency within this reading of *Dracula*, it is not the usual Oedipal model advanced between *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*; instead, it is his vision of the modern, "civilized" mind as a sort of "Eternal City" from the much later *Civilization and its Discontents*:

Let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a physical entity with a similarly long and copious past—an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to

exist alongside the latest one. This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars and the Septizonium of Septimus Severus would still be rising to their old height[...]but more than this. In the place occupied by the Palazzo Caffarelli would once more stand—without the Palazzo having to be removed—the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus; and this not only in its latest shape, as the Romans of the Empire saw it, but also in its earliest one, when it still showed Etruscan forms[...]and the observer would perhaps only have to change the direction of his glance or his position in order to call up the one view or the other. (18)

The conclusion to which Freud comes at the end of this architectural speculation is that “only in the mind is such a preservation of all the earlier stages alongside of the final form possible” (18); in short, it is an image of simultaneously existing iterations. If we read this model culturally, or take as its subject the larger “self” instead of Freud’s subject of the individual mind, it is directly allied with Taylor’s narrative in a number of ways. It resists the subtraction-story, for one; and for another it recognizes in the modern city, the modern mind, and the modern subject the enduring totality of all the architectural, or psychic, or discursive iterations that went into its making.

Metaphorically speaking, Van Helsing is such an Eternal City. Harker, to a less exhaustive extent, is one; so is Mina. When Charles Prescott and Grace Giorgio examine Mina’s complicated relationship to Henry James’s model of the “New Woman,” they uncover the same sort of frangibility, of coexistent discursive systems from various sources and times. “Although nothing seems more natural to Mina,” they write, “than her desire to help her husband in the public sphere while maintaining an intimate friendship with Lucy Westenra in the private, these familiar roles become estranged by the new taxonomies of deviancy popularized during the late nineteenth century” (487). Prescott and Giorgio find in Mina’s ambivalence to the “New Woman” the roots of a gender-

performance that “troubles any simple definition of normative femininity” (487)—perhaps because it is informed by multiple, often conflicting, definitions. That Mina’s femininity cannot resolve to a single definition is perhaps to be expected: as a schoolteacher and especially as a typist versed in shorthand, Mina is a quintessential New Woman, yet at the same time, as David Glover writes, Mina is “an unmoored sign of change as well as a firm attempt to hold the line *against* the New Woman” (96-97, my emphasis). Glover may also have in mind the idealized construction of Mina in Harker’s early letters to her; this, too, is an important side of her character in the narrative, even if it arises only from Harker’s perception of her. Like Freud’s imaginary model of Rome, there are many Minas existing all at once, and we need only shift the direction of our glance to see one over another.

The “New Woman,” as it is called here, is but one aspect of “modern” femininity within the social imaginary of *Dracula*’s early readers. Prescott & Giorgio establish the easy fragility of Mina’s relationship to this ideal, especially under the influence of Harker’s competing “Victorian” ideal of femininity. “There is only one exception to Mina’s commitment to careful journalism,” they write, “and it comes at a time when her commitment to traditional wifely femininity is heavily overdetermined[...]Mina not only agrees to share Harker’s ignorance, but, as Talia Schaffer describes, turns her ignorance into a fetish object of their relationship” (491). By sealing away Harker’s journal within ritual trappings of her own (all secularized rituals—wrapping the book, tying it round with ribbon, sealing it with her wedding ring and a kiss), Mina makes a powerful statement toward Harker’s model of femininity. But when she “tears open the journal and reads it at the first hint of trouble” (Prescott & Giorgio 492), Mina makes a second

opposing statement about her relationship and her womanhood without erasing the first. “Not only does she tear up her fetish of ignorance,” Prescott and Giorgio write; “she soon types it in triplicate” (492), privileging, in a sense, her relationship with Harker’s writing, and with writing in general, over her relationship with Harker himself. When Van Helsing characterizes her as having “man’s brain[...]and woman’s heart” (Stoker 234), he is tacitly acknowledging this complex relationship; furthermore, it is a complexity that refuses to privilege one clear definition of femininity over another, a complexity that baffles the men of the text, even Van Helsing himself. When Van Helsing remarks with dismay that “Mina, our poor, dear Madam Mina, is changing” (323), he references at once her vampiric transformation and her ever-changing nature as modern woman, a woman unconfined by the static expectations of Harker and others: even the “poor, dear Madam Mina” of which he speaks is one facet among many.

Mina’s resistance to the expected stasis of the men places her at odds with the vampire (an eternal, undecaying, static thing), but also in line with it as a shape-changing creature that likewise defies easy categorization in terms of life and death, human and animal, soulless body and (in its mist form) disembodied soul. She shares with the Count a resistance to definition in terms of her relationship to discourse; Van Helsing falls into this too. Do we call him a doctor? A professor? A scientist? An occultist? As we have discussed, he is all of these things at once; the frangible identities of the vampire that we first observed in Coleridge’s *Geraldine* have now spread to the progressive mortal characters of the vampire-tale as well.

Even the oft-caricatured promiscuity of Lucy is characteristic of a frangible identity; although we know her most clearly through her relationship to her three suitors

(she, like Mina, commits her most significant work in triplicate), each of the suitors suggests a different aspect of her, indicating a woman who is not a one-dimensional placeholder, a device to facilitate the complex admixture of masculine heroes, but a multifaceted woman in her own right. If we take up Prescott and Giorgio's reading of *Dracula* as a text that problematically measures its women by the degree to which they satisfy the competing feminine ideals of competing ideologies, Lucy is a foil to Mina simply because she separately and simultaneously satisfies the feminine ideals of Holmwood, Seward, and Morris. Where Mina struggles with Harker's Victorian ideal, and with the ideal of the New Woman, Lucy's relationship to the ideals of her living suitors is successful unto her death—and even after that, she continues onward to satisfy the perverted feminine ideal of Dracula himself.

Femininity itself, it would seem, shows signs of having undergone its own nova effect: Lucy, like Van Helsing, is in many ways the fully realized product of competing systems of belief and practice. Typically, these clashes have led to moral judgment: Lucy has been classified from the start as a wanton woman, or an “easy” woman—and the idea of “easiness” in all its forms continues to define her. John Twining, for instance, notes that “Lucy's easy succumbing to Dracula's seductions[...]has underwritten many a representation of her as morally weak if not somehow complicit and hypersexual” (215). But Lucy's easiness, in spite of its connotations, is more than mere sexual wantonness or complicity. It is a multifaceted facility, an openness to the satisfaction of external ideals which does not take on a sexual character until sexual expectations are foisted on her from without. The same principle is at work earlier in the novel, with Mr. Swales and the old men at Whitby, even when their interest in Lucy is purely asexual. Lucy “is so sweet

with old people,” Mina writes; “I think they all fell in love with her on the spot” (64). This, too, is a seduction—not a sexual one, but an easiness with their grandfatherly expectations of her. Lucy’s facility with social expectations takes on its famously sexual dimension only when the lust she mirrors so freely is introduced upon her by others—first by her suitors, to a degree that pushes teasingly at the boundaries of what is socially acceptable, and finally by Dracula, whose introduction of a disruptive feminine ideal—the ideal embodied by his Transylvanian brides, perhaps—abuses Lucy’s frangible femininity by twisting her into the transgressive figure that dominates later critical perceptions of her.

When Suzanne Dixon suggests that *Dracula*’s women (Mina, Lucy, and the brides) “oscillate between the pious, pure and docile women they ‘ought’ to be, and the rapacious voluptuous sirens they become under the Count’s influence” (48), she summarizes the characteristic binary that critics such as Anne Cranny-Francis<sup>290</sup> see in the novel’s problematic depiction of women. This binary, too, is rooted in a Freudian model (that of the Madonna-whore complex),<sup>291</sup> and it does not offer a complete picture of the women’s “oscillations.” It may capture quite fully the succubus routine of Matilda in *The Monk*, but it no longer adequately contains the femininities of *Dracula*—or even, I would suggest, of Clarimonde in “La Morte Amoureuse,” who has herself moved into a greater complexity. Lucy’s feminine identity, like Mina’s, oscillates not between two poles but among several. Suggesting that the women are foils simply because Lucy is wanton and Mina is chaste, as has been common in the past, is as much an

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<sup>290</sup> See especially Cranny-Francis’s article “Sexual Politics and Political Repression in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,” from *Nineteenth-Century Suspense*.

<sup>291</sup> The original source of the complex is Freud’s “Über die allgemeinste Erniedrigung des Liebeslebens” [The most prevalent form of degradation in erotic life], published in 1912, though it has seen wide circulation and currency in criticism ever since.

oversimplification as suggesting that Seward is the physician and Van Helsing the occultist. They are themselves heteroglossic sites of modern femininity, in which several discursive voices vie constantly for prominence. This occurs, too, in the fragments they leave, and in the whole patchwork milieu of the novel.

It is not quite right to call this unprecedented. In the early nineteenth-century Gothic chapbooks of Sarah Scudgell Wilkinson and others, Diane Long Hoeveler finds a “confused and at times frantic heteroglossia[...]grasping after every known gothic mode in the attempt to produce yet another new and marketable genre” (215). In the personal case of Wilkinson, continually plagued by poverty, this marketability is key; but the confused, frantic nineteenth-century Gothic heteroglossia is at times in the background of Stoker’s novel. On the other hand, *Dracula*’s heteroglossia has taken on a comfortable maturity, subtly permeating the characters themselves while taking root more obviously in the novel’s epistolary form.

In spite of Polidori’s influential story, and in spite of mid-century efforts such as *Varney the Vampire* and LeFanu’s *Carmilla*, many critics cast their vote (with cautiously precise language) for *Dracula* as “the first modern vampire novel” (Palmer xiii). Their definitions of modernity, perhaps, are widely varied and collectively offer a family of interlinked modernities, of which *Dracula* is somehow emblematic. But by putting Taylor’s model of modernity at the forefront of these, we can see in *Dracula* not a text defined by its crisis or anxiety (though it plays at these, and with these, being both a Gothic novel and a horror-story), but rather a text defined by its own easy relationship to the supernovic environment into which it emerges.

This is not to say it is a text without complex or even conflicted relationships to modernity: the looming shadow of modernism brings in itself a change in the ways modernity is conceived and defined, and its early roots are already clutching at the text: the fine art of the Romantic fragment, perfected here in *Dracula*'s unrelentingly piecemeal form, is "a heap of broken images" (Eliot i.22) if ever there was one. The nascence of modernist thought and the sunset of what Carol Senf calls "High Victorianism" (6) have a disruptive effect on the kind of stable relationship *Dracula* has with its own modernity; in this, as far as he is a counter-pressure against the stability of High Victorian modernity, the Count is as much a threat from the future as from the past. When Senf describes the High Victorian near-past of *Dracula* as "a period that they believed contained a clear synthesis of moral, religious, artistic, political, and social thought" (6), she is essentially speaking of a Taylolean supernova in which all these systems are within easy reach—or, we might say, within striking distance—of one another.

This world of modernity is very much Van Helsing's world, an interdisciplinary one in which the dialogue between coexistent discursive systems is complementary rather than adversarial. The text is a discursive labyrinth, yet it is populated by characters who know how to navigate it, who are ultimately at home within their own modernity in a way that the previous protagonists of vampire-tales have never fully achieved. Anomalously, at the center of this modern labyrinth sits *Dracula* himself, a seeming anachronism, bedecked in the trappings of the ancient, Gothic, porous world, a supernatural being threatening to punch through the buffers of modernity with his primordial fangs. What I want to consider with *Dracula* himself is the idea that these *are* trappings—in short, that

there is a degree of Gothic costuming and performativity to this monster which merely gives him the appearance of ancient porosity. For all the centuries of his unlife, Dracula is a product of *chronos* rather than *kairos*—of an inordinately long period of secular time, but of secular time nonetheless. The idea that Dracula himself is a carefully veiled symbol of the modern, rather than an unabashed symbol of the ancient, has somehow escaped critical attention; the performance and disguise of this modernity, then, is the veil that Taylor's model ultimately allows us to finally turn aside.

### 8.3 The Personal Modernities of Count Dracula

The popular appeal of *Dracula* owes much to its paradox as a modern novel centered on a symbol of the ancient, and it is in this context that Dracula is commonly understood. He is a literary descendant of Ambrosio, of Schedoni, of the Gothic patriarchs that represented the retrograde perils of medieval belief, and it is second nature to apply to him those models developed to understand these antecedents. On a surface level, the usual Gothic dance is played out, its steps familiar and thoroughly known, between the progressive heroes and the dead hand of an oppressive past. Baldick and Mighall find, in *Dracula* criticism as well as *Dracula* itself, the “Whiggish melodrama of modernity in conflict with the dark age of repressive Victorianism” (283). Here the troublesome definition of “Victorian” again muddies the waters: Baldick and Mighall see rigid repression as the defining feature of Victorianism among a body of criticism they do not necessarily agree with, while for Carol Senf Victorianism is the default state of

comfort, not of discomfort, in *Dracula*. The easy coexistence of intermarried systems of religion, morality, science, and so on, is something Senf identifies as a characteristically Victorian advancement. For her, the Victorian age has been an age of progress rather than repression: the technologies of *Dracula* are the fruits of these long years of modernization, and the Count himself, as usual, is the force that threatens to reach forward from the pre-modern world and unravel all of that progress. If he is a figure of repression, he is older than Victorian repression. He is an emblem of the medieval, the superstitious, the pre-modern. His fangs threaten to punch through the buffers of modernity and render them, once again, porous.

So it is easy in this context to come by a reading of *Dracula* that sounds Tayloresque—a reading that recycles the body of criticism that Baldick and Mighall critique, arriving at the same old conclusions with only a little word-substitution from *A Secular Age* to mark its difference. The work, in this view, is still a triumph of the progressive over the ancient, or of the secular over the superstitious. If we are feeling ambitious, we might further tie *Dracula*'s presence and threat to the idea that the pre-modern world never really goes away, that it survives into the modern world, inflecting and transforming it; this explains his own iterations in twentieth-century film, answers the question of why the “riff” of *Dracula*-killing and vampire-slaying does nothing to keep *Dracula* or vampires dead. It also brings us a little closer to an application of Taylor which adds something to the critical dialogue rather than simply restating what already exists. But something is still missing here, some dimension of the Count that has not been successfully charted by the Gothic apparatus, which continues to elude the critical understanding of the text. This missing piece of the puzzle, I will argue, is the active

acknowledgment that within Dracula, for all his period clothing and Gothic gimmickry, for all his castles and his playing at the trappings of the past, lies the shadow of modernity as well as antiquity.

Perhaps this uncanny modernity is even predominant in him, a defining characteristic. What has changed in the Count, and changed forever in the vampire, is that he no longer menaces modernity from without, but from within. He is a citizen, capable of owning property, navigating the city streets, even having friends. If he is the dark reverse of Van Helsing, it is not because he opposes Van Helsing's cosmopolitan, heteroglossic power, but because he echoes it. Dracula, like many vampires after him, *is* modernity, perpetually misrecognized as the icon of pre-modern folklore whose iconography he has adopted and transformed.

This is not something critics have heretofore made sense of. Consider the words of Paul Foster, who puzzles over Coppola's film adaptation of the novel, in which the centrepiece of a cinematograph is introduced: "it could be argued," he suggests,

that its addition is in tune with the modern technological thrust of the novel: the emphasis on advances like the telegraph, the typewriter and the phonograph[...]the problem with this argument is that these devices are used by the vampire hunters and facilitate Dracula's defeat, whereas the cinematograph is linked with the vampire, a curious association in one way given his primeval nature. (63-4)

The scene in the film is well-conceived and full of nice resonances: Coppola's Dracula, who must be more sympathetic to the audience than Stoker's, is figured himself as a moviegoer. The cinematograph is a nod also to Coppola's production company,<sup>292</sup> and to

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<sup>292</sup> The name of Coppola's company is American Zoetrope, derived from an early picture machine, and curiously derived from the Greek *ζωή τροπή*, a wheel (or a turning) of life. The film itself, then, as an illusory imitation of life, offers another dimension of mirroring to the vampire.

the magnified importance of Dracula's gaze as we move from novel to film. But it is indeed out of place, and does not exist in the book. Foster eventually concludes that it "chimes with the vampire's paradoxical yearning to be modern" (64).

Dracula certainly takes few pains in either the book or the film to hide his yearning to be cosmopolitan, "to go through the streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is" (20). But the yearning to be cosmopolitan is not quite the same thing as a yearning to be modern; to possess these cosmopolitan desires at all, in fact, requires a mindset characteristic of a certain kind of modernity, and especially of what the High Victorians considered modernity. As Sally Mitchell observes, urbanization as both a prevalent personal and social desire

was the most striking phenomenon of the Victorian age. Cities grew chiefly through migration. Entire families left their village for better jobs in factories; rural girls came into domestic service; younger sons of the gentry looked for opportunities in urban professions[...]in country towns it was still usual for shopkeepers and even bankers to live on the premises where they worked, but in cities the commercial centers were virtually deserted at night. (29)

Mitchell's study extends through several diverse Victorian demographics and depicts a pandemic desire for urbanization rather than one localized within occupation, class, gender, or even nationality.

The "yearning" Foster identifies in the film *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, which the novel bears out on a subtler but larger scale, suggests that this modern desire has reached Dracula with little difficulty even in his remote Transylvanian castle. He is even, in accordance with Mitchell's model of a modern Londoner, attempting to set himself up as a commuter of sorts: the acquisition of Carfax Abbey ensures he will not prey on

Londoners in passing, as an itinerant wanderer like Ruthven, but will venture into populated areas to menace them by night, returning home to sleep when his “graveyard shift” is over. In the few examples we see of Dracula’s feeding within Transylvania, he has already adopted this model: he goes into town for a “half-smothered child” (39) as if for groceries, and the pass leading to his castle is not much farther removed from the nearest commerce and rail services than is the vampiric Miss Havisham’s estate of Satis House in *Great Expectations*.

Indeed, whatever its geographic remoteness from England, the castle itself is not so discursively isolated as it might once have been: while Harker describes it as “one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe” (1), it has been better reached—at least in Stoker’s construction—by certain aspects of modernity than it has by English imperialist “knowledge,” which is not in any case a prerequisite to European modernity. Harker’s journey from London to the Borgo Pass, Stoker’s farthest real-world geographical point of reference,<sup>293</sup> runs (then as now) about 1,400 miles; of these, only the last thirty are conducted in the ancient manner, i.e. without the aid of the railway. Stoker correctly identifies the town of Bistritz as a both a major railway stop and a “post town” (1-2) where some semblance of a mail service was available. Dracula has learned his “thorough” English primarily through books, suggesting the availability of such materials. Indeed, Harker observes in his library

a vast number of English books, whole shelves of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers[...]the books were of the most varied kind – history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law[...]even such books of reference as the London Directory, the ‘Red’

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<sup>293</sup> The pass is generally known today, except by devoted tourists, as the Tihuta pass in Romania’s Bârgău mountains.

and ‘Blue’ books, Whitaker’s Almanack, the Army and Navy Lists, and—it somehow gladdened my heart to see it—the Law List.(19)<sup>294</sup>

Much is made of Mina’s typewriter, Jonathan’s shorthand, and Seward’s phonograph; but the Count’s reading materials (especially the periodicals) and the manner in which he receives them are an indication that the devices of modernity are not the province of mortals alone. His interests, like Van Helsing’s, are truly wide-ranging—and if anything, they are more typical of secular modernity. Perhaps, whether as a vampire or simply as an Old Man of the Orient, folklore and the occult are in Dracula’s blood and he has no need to study them. But although they are seldom interrogated except as tools of “reverse colonization,” as per Arata’s famous model, Dracula’s readings are suspiciously modern both in their subject matter and their secular (and only secular) pluralism.

All this suggests that modernity has come even unto Transylvania, and that the discursive remoteness of the place has collapsed. If Baldick and Mighall’s familiar claim about Gothic time-travel<sup>295</sup> still stands, one does not get quite so far “back in time” on the trip in 1897 as could have been achieved in 1797. As Taylor writes, “through increased contact, interchange, perhaps even intermarriage, the distances have vanished” (*A Secular Age* 304). This has not happened completely, not in the rather extreme case of Dracula and Transylvania—but the effect is now significant enough that Stoker had to rethink his

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<sup>294</sup> Dracula is later caught reading, “of all things in the world, an English Bradshaw’s Guide” (22) detailing the train schedules. Much is made, too, of the Crew of Light’s reliance on the locomotive to defeat the ancient monster; but this also was a technological system the “ancient monster” was in the process of internalizing.

<sup>295</sup> Baldick and Mighall write that “Italy, Spain, and southern France were as much temporal as geographic realms...thus the English tourist, like the one who features in the first pages of Radcliffe’s *The Italian* (1797), could encounter “Gothic” institutions merely by visiting Catholic countries, traveling in time as well as space.” (279). The model could no doubt be extended to farther countries, indicating a still greater temporal remoteness from London, the perceived epicenter of “civilized” modernity.

original placement of the count's castle outside Munich<sup>296</sup> as not nearly remote enough to set up the appropriate tensions between the ancient and modern aspects of Dracula's horror.

In short, Dracula is on the frontier of what late-Victorian England might consider "geographic modernity," but not so far beyond that frontier as some criticism would suggest. Joseph Valente observes the potentially dual definition encrypted within *Transylvania*: it can be parsed as "*across* the forest," he writes—rather than simply on the far side of it—"athwart rather than beyond the Pale" (72). The forest itself is a permeable membrane in both directions, not so much in the sense of medieval porosity (between the ordinary and the supernatural world, for instance) as in the sense of modern "inter-marriageability" of disparate systems that characterizes the nova effect. "We are in Transylvania," Dracula states; "and Transylvania is not England" (21). But he nevertheless treats Harker as a cultural delivery-boy of sorts, bringing him not only the tangible documents of real estate, but the intangible cargo of his culture, which Dracula sucks up as eagerly as blood:

I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me[...]rest here with me a while, so that by our talking I may learn the English intonation; and I would that you tell me when I make error, even of the smallest, in my speaking. (20)

Even if Dracula adopts these mannerisms disingenuously, with the sole intent of better disguising himself, this reveals in him the belief that such a disguise is achievable. Given Dracula's rigid sense of cultural identity in describing the ethnic history of

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<sup>296</sup> Robert Eighteen-Bisang and Elizabeth Miller have edited a facsimile edition of Stoker's handwritten notes for *Dracula*: in notes dating to 8 March 1890, Stoker indicates Munich, not Bistritz or the Borgo Pass, as Harker's last stop before the "old castle" (17).

Transylvania,<sup>297</sup> it comes as a surprise that he seeks to disguise himself as an Englishman with any chance of success. If we take *Dracula* at his impassioned word that he is a Szekely (Vlad Țepeș, an ethnic Vlach or Wallachian, was not), we must imagine this more difficult than passing as a Hungarian or even a German in England. To treat Englishness as an acquirable disguise presupposes certain manners of speaking, dressing, acting, and perhaps thinking that can likewise be acquired, leading to a “performative” nationality that seems at odds with the racial determinism *Dracula* expresses in the defense of Szekely conquest (28-9).

In this dimension, at least, we can even read *Dracula* as a sort of “passing novel”—or, if we decide that this term refers only to a very specific formal genre of early twentieth-century American literature, as a novel whose possibilities for ethnic ambiguity foreshadow and resonate with the American genre. Typified by examples such as James Weldon Johnson’s *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) and Nella Larsen’s *Passing* (1928), from which the genre derives its name, the American novel is chiefly concerned with calling into question the legal and social definitions of “blackness” and “whiteness,” and with them, the binary racial identity that has shaped so much of American history. This seems at first a long way from *Dracula*, whose cast is uniformly white and European (with the exception of Quincey, a white American). But the tension between old models of race or ethnicity and modern ways of understanding racial ambiguity is the same in both cases. As Neil Brooks writes,

historically, when it came to issues of racial authenticity, the guiding principle was that individuals could only belong to one group. Hence, the laws passed were often

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<sup>297</sup> See especially his impassioned rant, “we Szekelys have a right to be proud,” on pp. 28-9, distinguishing with some precision between the Ugric races, the Huns, the Magyars, the Lombards, the Avars, the Bulgars, the Wallachs, the Serbs, the Turks, the Szagny, and so on.

quite at odds with how race actually functioned as an unstable, shifting signifier[...]to even define the genre, an implicit assumption about the characters' "true race" is demanded—the characters are one race and they are pretending to be another. What I would like to suggest is that these novels are not about exposing "imposters" but rather about exposing flaws in America's very concept of "racial purity." (177)

Turn-of-the-century America's concept of race is naturally distinct from Britain's, and the two cannot be read synonymously. But *Dracula* stands as an indication of what Taylor would have us believe—that across multiple regions and multiple separate sites within Latin Christendom, the same ambiguities of the self are taking place. The Count's efforts to perform Englishness, to "move and speak" (20) as Englishmen do and thereby pass for one, point to his own view of modern ethnicity not only as an unstable, shifting signifier, but as a striking contrast to the rigid racial divisions of the antiquity from which he hails. In the ancient background of Transylvania, as Dracula tells it, "in the whirlpool of European races" (28), there was no mistaking a Vlach for a Magyar; but in the cosmopolitan world, a world of collapsed cultural distances, it is only a matter of intonation, accent, manner of dress (and perhaps, going by his library, what one reads).

Even within Stephen D. Arata's reading of Dracula's identity, there are signs of shifting signifiers of race and nation. Like most *Dracula* critics of the 1980s, Arata sees "psychic and sexual boundaries" (626) as the major vampiric transgressions; but he observes that "for Stoker [as distinct from his Gothic antecedents] the collapse of boundaries resonates culturally and politically as well[...]by problematizing those boundaries, Stoker probes the heart of the culture's sense of itself, its ways of defining and distinguishing itself from other people, other cultures, in its hour of perceived decline" (626-7).

This weakening of the usual apparatus of ethnic identity is what makes Dracula's passing possible; it is not directly related to the African-American experience of passing, perhaps, but it is catalyzed by the same forces and takes a similar shape. If, as Senf suggests, the novel's High Victorian near past contained a "clear synthesis," the problematized boundaries of Dracula—of which racial ambiguity is but one facet—are muddying the clarity by exposing flaws and weaknesses in the concept that give rise to it. If the threat of Dracula is the threat of discursive vulnerability, then, it is not the traditional threat of porosity returning to attack the order of secular modernity: rather, it is the threat that modern instability poses to these "modern" systems. The threat comes from ahead, not behind—from modern discursive systems that are vulnerable to transformation and even obliteration at each other's hands—and not from a single monolithic unravelling of modernity from out of a repressed past.

Perhaps Dracula remains part of the latter, usual model too: if adopting the clothes and mannerisms of an Englishman allows the Count to participate in Englishness, then his continued occupation of Gothic surroundings and mannerisms may correspondingly amount to a continued participation in the Gothic model, with all the results that normally entails. But Dracula is not *just* a Gothic monster; in a sense he is, as Van Helsing says of himself, "a lawyer as well" (118).

Dracula's pluralism, however, extends well beyond Van Helsing's role as a Renaissance man and polymath. If Coleridge's Geraldine was remarkable for her web of shifting identities, then the matrix of identities brought to Dracula by modern criticism is truly dizzying: at various times and in various places, the vampire has been described as a "devolved rapist" (Skal 52), a "colonizer" (Arata 623), a "foreign investor" (Houston

117), an “incubus” (Leatherdale 164), a “criminal type” (Mighall 243), a “symbol of Eastern infection” (Hunter 143), a “parasite” (McNally, “Irish Gothic” 20), a “blatant demonstration of the Oedipus complex” (Richardson 427), and so on. Behind each of these simple descriptors lies a different schema, methodology, discursive focus, and a substantial degree of evidence in favour of the approach that led to it. Curiously, even those descriptors founded in what we might consider “modern” discourses—those that class Dracula as a sociopath or a viral parasite, for instance—have little to say on the subject of his own newness. Nina Auerbach’s *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, as its title suggests, is one of the few to mark Dracula’s newness (though not exactly his modernity): Dracula is “so encrusted with the corruption of ages,” she writes,

that it sounds perverse to call him “new.” The up-to-date young people who hunt him dread his ancientness. To them, Dracula is not simply evil; he is an eruption from an evil antiquity that refuses to rest in its grave[...]but within the vampire tradition, his very antiquity makes him new, detaching him from the progressive characters who track him. Ruthven was in some threatening sense a mirror of his schoolfellow Aubrey; Varney reflected his predatory society; Carmilla mirrored Laura’s own lonely face[...]Dracula’s disjunction from earlier, friendlier vampires makes him less a specter of an undead past than a harbinger of a world to come, a world that is our own. (63)

Auerbach’s study dwells on Dracula’s non-appearance in Harker’s mirror, suggesting (aside from the folkloric connotations of this) that Dracula “has no more face than Dickens’s *Spirit of Christmas Future*” (63). In short, he refuses to (or cannot) appear as Harker’s dark reflection, throwing off the pattern of doubling that the earlier, “friendlier” vampires exhibit with their victims or their victims’ lovers. What Dracula is doubling, in essence, is secular modernity itself: where Ruthven is both a copy and an opposite of Aubrey, where Geraldine is both the twin and the antithesis of Christabel, Dracula

embodies both the pressures and counter-pressures of modernity, offering, to paraphrase Auerbach, the terrors of Christmas Future as well as Christmas Past. If Auerbach would add one more anxiety-model to Stoker's vampire, it is the same model we might judiciously apply to his contemporary, Kurtz from *Heart of Darkness*: their shared horror is a characteristically modern one in which the protective gulf between the primordial and the contemporary is collapsed. This is not a case, as in the Gothic tradition, of obsolete terrors reaching forward to menace the safely buffered heroes. The terrors of Dracula are not the obsolete sort; they have never fallen out of contemporary discourse, a phenomenon that perhaps explains some of the vampire's continued ubiquity, well above and beyond the success of its antecedents.

So why continue with the Gothic costume-play, the elaborate cosmetic veneer of the past? Vampires were not, in the pre-modern legends, particularly old creatures. They mostly returned from the grave within living memory, as the stories preserved in Calmet attest, to suck the blood of family members who had wronged them before or after death: their very familiarity is what made them so terrifying. Mistreat your loved ones in this life, the legends said, and you invite their wrath in the next. There was once an immediacy to the vampire's retaliation that is lost in *Dracula*, even among those who view the tale as a parable of long-deserved comeuppance for a large-scale social, or classist, or imperialist wrongdoing. Byron's *Giaour* at least preserves the family connection and the typical time-frame of folklore: our loved ones die, return for a while as vampires, and then (through our interference or otherwise) go on to their proper rest.

Completely lost in modern vampire-stories is the grim idea (of course I mean to suggest the Grimms' penchant for harsh lessons here) that the victims of the vampire

really had it coming. Even Byron does not preserve this: the Giaour's victims are specifically innocents—hence the real tragedy of the curse, since the guilty, deserving Giaour can provoke no such pathos alone. Lucy's social or sexual impropriety may single her out as a target of Victorian moralization, but her misbehaviour is not a personal “affront” to the Count (indeed, he enjoys it); she is a far cry from that relative who through negligence or malice denies the loved one his final rest. Between the rise of Peter Plogojowitz and the rise of Dracula, the model of vampirism has changed utterly; it is only recognizable at all because both are bloodsucking revenants, and both are costumed in the clothing (clothing native to Plogojowitz alone) of a late-porous, pre-disenchantment Easterner from beyond the forest.

Why, then, does the modern monster deck himself in such Gothic trappings? Dracula is one of the few true “elders” of vampire literature, yet even for him the performance of modernity is no real obstacle to him: he arrives in England fashionably dressed. He speaks English with far greater facility than his modesty to Harker would suggest—and we should note, too, that his English is the modern English of Harker and company, not the pre-vowel-shifted English of Henry VI and Edward IV, very nearly Chaucer's English, that would have been spoken in his mortal lifetime. He even knows the train schedules; and if he does not make use of them in his return flight to Transylvania, as is frequently noted, it may be simply because he knows the rail service to be notoriously unreliable on the critical last leg of the journey—a fact not unnoticed by Harker himself at the novel's beginning (1-2).

Even the Gothic castle, that last classic architectural symbol of the true Gothic tradition by which Dracula is tied to *The Castle of Otranto*, to Strawberry-Hill, to the

edifice of the medieval, pre-modern Church and through that to the immanence of the enchanted world, is a disposable symbol for the Count. He returns to the ruined castle only because he is driven out of his preferential dwelling at Carfax Abbey—a once-religious building which, like England's many other ancestral abbey estates (real and fictional) from Austen's Northanger to Byron's Newstead—have been secularized, emptied of enchantment.

In light of this, and in light of the ease with which all the material garments of Dracula's ancient past, from cloak to castle, are so easily shed, his continued adherence to the stylistic garments of Gothic monstrosity is remarkable, and must be central to the vampire's present function as a device which connects the reader to porousness and enchantment. This function is what differentiates Dracula (and indeed, the English vampire) from the medieval monster whose appearance and familial traits he has usurped.

There is no question that, in the beginning, the vampire was a creature of the enchanted world. The "true histories" of vampirism that Calmet gathered from folktales, villagers' accounts, and other sources, were gathered, in essence, from porous social imaginaries and delivered into buffered ones. This change in readership is what prompted a perceived change in genre: Robert Southey's story of Arnold Paole in the footnotes to *Thalaba* is the same story as military surgeon Johan Flückinger's account, relayed by way of Calmet. Little has changed between the military report and the chilling tale, except for a shift in genre; and this shift inheres less in the text than in the context—that is, the social imaginary of its audience.

Maud Ellman's Introduction to *Dracula* collects and effectively summarizes in one place the many classic theoretical standpoints on the vampire. Moretti finds, she tells

us, that “the vampire stands for capital run riot” (xxi); Ernest Jones sees “a way of imagining sex while simultaneously denying it” (xxiv), while James Twitchell sees “the primal father” (xxv). Although I have tried to distance myself from these models here, they could all provide reasonably sound surface readings of Count Dracula. None of them, however, could hold water when applied to Arnold Paole. And I think that is the point: in roughly chronological order here, I have laid out here a selection of English literary vampires in which these classic theoretical models become, if not more verifiably true, at least more feasible.

On March 11, 1732, the vampire was first invoked in English print: “nothing less than the power of a *Treasury* can raise up a compleat *Vampyre*,” reads the *Gentleman’s Magazine* (MacDonald 193). From its first appearance in English, then, its function was already changed into something potentially symbolic—changed here, I would suggest, in line with Moretti’s version of the vampire, the same version famously invoked by Marx in *Capital*. The possibility of functioning on a symbolic order—whether as a potential referent for capital, sex, history itself, neurosis, cultural anxiety of any sort—indicates the invention of a vampire that has not previously existed, in spite of the threads of mythic connection between there and here. The question of what vampirism might *mean* is a legitimate one today, but it could not have been answered or even asked in a pre-modern context, any more than we might ask today what the “meaning” of serial murder is. All this should suggest to us the legitimacy of treating the vampire of English literature as child of secular modernity or the shift toward it, rather than a “pure” descendant from the medieval Slavic creatures of that name.

This leaves us, as *Dracula* does, on the cusp of a dizzying new landscape of vampires and vampirism, branching quickly into film, television, role-playing games, and other new media—into the thick of Fred Botting’s “tech noir” (78) and his ubiquitous, commodified cultural Gothic. Here, within the most current (but probably not to be the last) stage of Taylor’s ongoing secularization narrative, the vampire’s debt to secular modernity, not only in the present, but in the whole history of its afterlife in modern English literature, can be seen as part of a larger picture, reflecting and inflecting a fuller narrative of changing attitudes to the supernatural.

## Epilogue: After *Dracula*: Vampire “Culture” in a Secular Age

Things accelerate after Stoker’s *Dracula*, and again after Tod Browning’s 1931 film version. They accelerate after Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* in 1976, and after White Wolf’s *Vampire: The Masquerade* in 1991, and most recently after Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* saga. In every instance the vampire seems to spring across more media; therein lies one of the central problems of confronting its cultural capital. In one manner of thinking, the art of literary studies is now a matured art, whereas the frontier of “cultural studies” now confronting literary critics is still in its infancy. In spite of recent claims by William B. Warner and Clifford Siskin that it’s already time to think about “stopping cultural studies,”<sup>298</sup> from another point of view the whole practice of cultural studies is too new to consign it stillborn to the grave on account of the very limited obsolescence of a few early attempts to practice it.

In context, it’s clearer to me that what Warner and Siskin refer to as “cultural studies” is merely one particular family of approaches to material beyond the literary: for them, the terminology is politicized and specific, a poststructurally-inflected way of thinking *within* a larger world of texts beyond received “literary” genres.<sup>299</sup> “Cultural studies” may be a poor term for what is now being embarked on (though the first alternate that now springs to mind, the awkward term “social imaginary studies,” would

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<sup>298</sup> See especially Warner & Siskin’s “Stopping Cultural Studies” in *Profession* (2008: 94-107).

<sup>299</sup> I’m reminded here, tangentially, of Lex Luthor’s cultural-studies boast from Richard Donner’s *Superman: The Movie* (1978): “Some people can read War and Peace and come away thinking that it’s a simple adventure story. Others can read the ingredients on a chewing gum wrapper and unlock the secrets of the universe.” This version of Luthor (he is, like Dracula or the saints, a figure of *kairos* reiterated in a never-ending sequence of present-days) is perhaps, for Warner and Siskin, a symbol of what’s wrong with “cultural studies” as such. Luthor is a supervillain whose iconoclasm is not simply anarchistic, but gleefully poststructuralist: he is clearly a Gothic monster on the cusp of Baudrillard’s generation, a reimagined shadow of the social imaginary into which he is rewritten.

be no better). It may be that the specific school critiqued by Warner and Siskin has run its course, in the same way that New Criticism is no longer new criticism. But discarding what is called “cultural studies” is now impossible without first establishing some form of addressing its subject—that mosaic of texts across which the “literary” vampire has found many of its new homes.

When I say this whole business is in its infancy, what I mean is that we are still developing the critical toolbox necessary to confront such unusual texts. A brief survey of the emerging scholarly work on the “cultural” vampire, for instance, reveals a collective confusion: this is sometimes punctuated by lucid and intelligent single works, but the field as a whole is still inchoate, lacking what Taylor would call the keys to a social imaginary (that is, common belief and common practice). This should not really be surprising. It took some six decades or more after the invention of the medium for film criticism to hit its academic stride with writers of Pauline Kael and François Truffaut’s generation. What, then, are we to do with the goth-rock song, the cereal mascot, the role-playing or computer game?

There has been, for a time, the sense throughout that aesthetic judgment must hold some sway, that some contemporary vampire-texts are “good” and others “bad.” That criticism should be reduced to such basic judgments at all suggests the scarcity and bluntness of the tools at hand. Now, though, it is no longer even the inherent merit of the text at hand that makes it worthy of study. A forthcoming critical volume by Maria Lindgren Leavenworth and Malin Isaksson on *Fanged Fan Fiction: Variations on Twilight, True Blood and The Vampire Diaries*, takes this to an extreme. These texts have something to tell us about “culture,” the argument goes: they reveal as much about

ourselves as *The Tempest* did of Shakespeare's audience. Such arguments must leave Harold Bloom, for whom even *Dracula* barely makes the canonical cut, shifting uneasily, in part because they wreak havoc on the idea of an ordered canon, of an established hierarchy of Western literature or the rationale of exclusion that has built it. The ways in which we transform, perform, and re-mediate things change rapidly and radically, but then turn back on themselves and repeat as well. These repetitions—these riffs, to borrow Hoeveler's terminology—have overrun, for many, all possibility of an original melody. Endless repetition and reiteration form the uneasy and eternal afterlife of such originality, which is consigned to the echoes of its own cultural ripples almost from the moment of its first impact.

My work here emerges into a social imaginary which is already saturated with vampires, yet continues to generate them. If we take from *Dracula* the idea that the vampire we've arrived at is a modern way of engaging with a kind of porousness, then there must be, in this fully modern context, as many ways of re-engaging with enchantedness as there are vampires—more, in fact, since the vampire is certainly not the only device that does this. What remains unique about the vampire, however, is that it arrives at this porousness through whatever symbolic language is superimposed onto it. If the vampire is read as an economic symbol, the discourse of economy becomes “charged” or re-enchanted through it. In a Freudian reading, the suggested sex act becomes re-enchanted, and its erotic charge, ostensibly the key feature of vampirism, becomes secondary to the charge of re-enchancement it conceals and transfigures. The vampire analogy provides a nice rhetorical tool for Karl Marx in *Capital*; but if capitalism is vampiric, as Marx suggests, then the exploited worker who suffers under the

exclusively quotidian oppression of capitalism—a secular antithesis, in Marx’s model, to human flourishing—must know and experience, on some level, what it is like to be preyed upon by the hostile forces of an enchanted world from which he is otherwise excluded. The economic experience is harnessed, in a sense, to power the turn backward.

There is room in this reading, then, to invite back in many of the “cultural crisis” models of reading the vampire, and to consider why they are important *within* as opposed to alongside this understanding of the vampire. As Robert Mighall has already noted,<sup>300</sup> the audience is never ignorant to the crises and anxieties which keep it awake at night: the vampire does not need to re-mediate those crises to its audience to make them intelligible. They are familiar and well understood; the “repressed” sexual dimension of *Dracula*, for example, was not some invisible secret kept from its Victorian audience until “discovered” by psychoanalytical critics several decades later. Rather than re-mediating these already-known models of crisis, the vampire makes use of their very familiarity to re-mediate the enchanted world into modernity. The Victorians knew already of transgressive sexualities; their clinical literature is full of such things. But through a vampiric lens, such things came to mean something more.

Even the Freudian uncanny or something very like it, if we are intent on saving it, is salvageable within this model once all the facts are in place. We can see, for instance, the ways in which the vampire-story takes the familiar crises of modernity and reconnects them to an inaccessible porosity as a creation of the uncanny, especially in the connotative shadow of Freud’s original word *Unheimlich* or “unhomely.” Anxieties about money, about sex, about the new foreign neighbours, about parents and children, are all

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<sup>300</sup> See especially his remarks on the self-evidence of vampiric sexuality (210-11) and his reading of Robert Tracy’s commentary on Victorian knowledge of necrophilia (226).

*heimlich* or “familiar” anxieties: they are all keenly felt, indeed *by* families, within the modern home. The religious terror, the fear of monsters, the sense of ritual, the call to various lost forms of exalted practice and belief, are no longer part of the makeup of belief in the modern home. But the vampire weaves them together and tells us all about the remote through the vehicle of the familiar. This is a transfigured uncanny, but it is not so different from the original.

It is worth noting that the “homely” anxieties by which the transcendent is accessed are firmly rooted in the specific backgrounds of these texts and change readily with the times. Judith Halberstam finds in Murnau’s *Nosferatu* a “parasitism linked specifically to Jewishness” (96) and a drastic intensification of the simmering anti-Semitic spirit she finds in Stoker’s original, even though the consensus seems to be that Murnau was far from Anti-Semitic himself.<sup>301</sup> Similarly, Richard Matheson’s *I Am Legend*, published in 1954, couches vampirism in the language of pandemic, but clearly evokes both an American Zeitgeist for whom the fear of nuclear obliteration was now a common household anxiety—as, perhaps, was an unaddressed relationship to monstrosity rising from the American use of the weapon.

Consider, too, as a relatively new development in vampire literature, the clandestine vampire society. In the wake of Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*, the (usually secret) society of vampires has become normalized in culture, usually in the form of a vaguely Masonic, highly ritualized hierarchical counter-society preserved from a distant past. The Camarilla of *Vampire: The Masquerade* adopts this secret-society model (indeed, the word “Masquerade” refers to its ironclad law of secrecy, a sort of

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<sup>301</sup> Tony Magistrale, in *Abject Terrors*, suggest that Murnau’s well-attested homosexuality may have made him particularly sensitive to the Jewish plight

vampiric *omerta*), and Stephenie Meyer's Volturi fulfills the same function. In Inanna Arthen's 2007 novel *Mortal Touch*, vampire Jonathan declares knowingly, against a very flimsy fourth wall, that "the whole idea of a vast underground society or vampire counterculture, with a ruling class and enforcers and laws, is just...well, it's just a popular fictional convention" (77).

Indeed, in 2007, it is a popular convention, one so popular that the vampire himself must disclaim its existence to clarify things for the reader. But if I have made no mention until now of vampire societies, of "vampire counterculture," it is because they are not a feature of the vampire before *Dracula*—indeed, before Anne Rice socialized the vampire in 1976, turning the solitary apex predator into a symbol of "counterculture" (a compound word which, significantly, entered the language only six years earlier according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*). It is by seizing upon the modern invention of counterculture, and refiguring it as something Gothic (in this case, a pseudo-feudal underground surviving into modern times) that the vampire again transforms something in which modernity participates, the idea of an "underground" culture, into a vehicle for porous re-experience.

To the postmodern Catherine Morlands of the world, those young people whose imaginations are saturated with the connective mythology of contemporary vampire-fiction, one need not go all the way to Italy on the Grand Tour to travel backward in time: one need only head down to the local goth bar, a safe haven in the twenty-first century nightclub world from Top-40 pop music, and step into a social imaginary—a shared sense of common belief and practice—which reaches back toward *kairos* and enchantment. The goth bar may well be the new enchanted forest in this model: where

else, today, would one be more likely to meet a vampire? Such places function as loci of the carnivalesque, places in which a hedonistic form of quotidian human flourishing<sup>302</sup> and the vampiric re-imagining of transcendent ritual are powerfully re-united. Taylor remarks briefly in *A Secular Age* that certain collective social spaces of this kind, such as the cheering crowds of football games or rock festivals “are, indeed, the closest analogues to the Carnival of previous centuries[...]but unlike Carnival, they are not enframed by any deeply entrenched if implicit common understanding of structure and counter-structure” (715). Within the Gothic framework, though—even within the very remotely derived and much mutated version that has trickled down from Ann Radcliffe to Bauhaus and other goth-punk bands—such an understanding may, in fact, exist.

Even the word “counterculture” implies an understanding of structure and counter-structure, of a sort, when it comes to society. From a theoretical perspective, “counterculture” is simply part of culture; the word has a hard time negating its opposite. But it does suggest that inherent within the social imaginary are cross-pressures against it. If secular modernity does not contain islands of porousness, then, it at least contains islands of effort to reach back toward such porousness. The omnipresence of cross and crucifix imagery in Goth fashion<sup>303</sup> and artwork is never quite reverent in a pre-modern sense. It may be blasphemous, or an unmindful adoption of aesthetic. In a sense, though, it serves as a displaced marker for a certain kind of porousness: what the cross-wearing Goth is inviting into the modern home, so to speak, is not necessarily the medieval Christian God, but at least some aspect of the medieval worshipper’s relationship to an

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<sup>302</sup> It is, in particular, the kind of place we might find Gautier’s rakish nocturnal version of Romuald, if the story were recast into the present day.

<sup>303</sup> In *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*, Detweiler and Taylor describe the quintessential Gothic ensemble as “all black except for an occasional crucifix” (230).

immanent enchantment. The same thing occurs with Wiccan or more generally “pagan” religious iconography; further still, the actual practice of seasonal rituals, spellbook-writing, and blood imagery surrounding some of these systems constitutes an enthusiastic re-invitation to porous forces, which never quite lead back to a pre-modern state, but function nevertheless as continuous gestures toward it.

This rebellious young audience, armed with a conceptual awareness of “counterculture” that Stoker’s contemporaries “would have found incomprehensible,” to borrow Taylor’s words,<sup>304</sup> is part of the same social imaginary which reconstructs Stoker’s hairy-palmed, rank-breathing old vampire as an alluring, dignified, tragic figure—a reading as useful and interesting, but as potentially anachronistic, as those depicting Milton’s Satan as the unabashed hero of *Paradise Lost*. There are traces of Polidori’s Lord Ruthven in Anne Rice’s Lestat, but there are traces of Marlon Brando’s biker from *The Wild One* there as well. Nowhere is this connection made more explicit than in the title of Joel Schumacher’s vampire-film *The Lost Boys*. In spite of the seeming irony of the term, the reference to Barrie’s *Peter Pan* underscores both the kairotic, unaging space of the vampire and the sort of quasi-tragic innocence of the sympathetic monster.

In all these new narratives the vampire blends well with other mythic (and often heroic or antiheroic) tropes—the biker, the Mafioso, the angsty teenager, the Man with No Name, the wronged criminal. For the first time, “vampire” is not the only job the vampire holds down. There are vampire writers, vampire detectives, vampire musicians. Very quickly in this climate of radical possibility, too many threads of interconnection

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<sup>304</sup> See his original context (“Afterword” 302-3).

start to surface: the kind of study that works with vampires before *Dracula* doesn't work the same with with vampires after. In both cases, though, a similar function starts to appear, and that is the function of porous re-mediation, of the classic symbolic dimensions of vampirism (disease, sex, death, empire, the subaltern) being rendered by the vampire not as ends in themselves, but as a means of tapping the enchanted world through the spheres of a social imaginary that has otherwise shunted enchantment out. The modern world does not need vampirism as a symbolic aid to understand drug addiction,<sup>305</sup> for instance. But the vampire's ravenous hunger reconnects the gluttonous discourse of addiction into something on the edge of, or just past the edge of, quotidian flourishing or failure.

The finer points of this conclusion may be new; but that does not mean that aspects of it have not been touched on before in more general ways. Diane Long Hoeveler's *Gothic Riffs* concludes with the idea, similarly couched in Taylor's language of secularization, that

the gothic became the genre *par excellence* of alternately approaching and then fleeing from the realities of living in the world of the immanent. The gothic imaginary finally situates itself firmly on that cusp between the premodern and the modern, between endorsing a belief in the transcendent or the quotidian[...]its subject matter consists, then, of various secularization scenarios presented to a populace that itself had not been able to choose definitively one worldview over the other and, indeed, never has. (229-30)

A "belief in the transcendent," in Hoeveler's words, does not amount to its reinstated immanence: one must still go across, so to speak, to fetch it. But approaching and then fleeing from immanence, without actually reaching it, is for Hoeveler a characteristic

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<sup>305</sup> See Juan Antonio Rodríguez Sánchez's article, "Vampirism as a metaphor for addiction in the cinema of the eighties (1987-1995).

function of “the gothic” (she is not specific as to its referent here). I suggest the gothic *mode*, as it indicates this function is still being performed; it further indicates the interesting possibility that entirely secularized and distant descendants of Gothic kind—the hard-boiled detective, for instance—can themselves serve as Gothic connectors to an enchantment in which they themselves never directly participated.

In essence, the vampire is an ideal vehicle of this Gothic functioning, answering in part some of our questions about why the vampire is considered “Gothic,” and in what ways. But like the *film noir* detective, the new vampire clothed in the trappings of the ancient vampire has never really participated in a purely enchanted imaginary either, reminding us of a porousness from which only its thematic roots have been drawn. When Hoeveler returns to “the master trope: Death” (234), she returns by an altogether new road of inquiry to an ultimately traditional centre of Gothic understanding, namely, that it is “anxiety about our own fates” (235) that contributes to Gothicism’s cultural persistence. In this light, the vampire resumes its familiar and time-tested symbolism as a *memento mori*; but unlike the closeted skeletons of Radcliffe’s mysteries, there is a degree of affectation to the vampire as memento: the vampire reminds us of the inevitability of death, but without actually participating it (as, for instance, the corpse or the skull does). So too might be its tenuous relationship with the pre-modern world, a relationship in which the participation of a vampire in a porous past whose disenchanted icons he still wears “does not amount to belonging,” in the same way that Derrida’s texts participate, but do not belong, in genre (230).

This helps us answer some difficult questions about “problem figures” of the modal Gothic sublime such as the monster in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*—figures

which are more explicitly delineated as products of modernity rather than porous antiquity (consider Shelley's subtitle, *The Modern Prometheus*), yet share a similar relationship to an enchanted past that did not necessarily spawn them. In "Christabel," we have two modern figures—the Gothic heroine and her sinister double—who through each other's doubling establish a transcendent connection. Coleridge, himself an early transcendentalist (at times) of Kant's school, must have been aware of the complex politics of his doubled protagonists, and perhaps even of the enchanted and disenchanted worlds of his text. For all the language of "within and without" (l. 127) that shapes Coleridge's poem, and in spite of the nice imagery of the castle walls as the buffers of modernity or the bulwarks of belief, the wall between castle and forest is, in itself, not quite the boundary between worlds. We might say, for instance, that the forest into which Christabel sleeplessly wanders is not the same forest from which Geraldine comes: No matter how far from the castle gate she travels, Christabel cannot really pass under her own power into the enchanted world as, for instance, the medieval knight could. There is nothing in that direction except more forest—more disenchanted forest—without aid from the guiding Charon-like figure of the porous intermediary.

The Romantic re-imaginings of the medieval fairy-ballad play with this concept: Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," too, plays with the idea of wandering to far into the "far countrée" of Faerie. But there, as in "Christabel," the knight must be *taken* to an "elfin grot" (l.29), and the unseelie food provided (ll.25-6) is food the Belle Dame must find *for* him. Rossetti's "Goblin Market" works in the same terms: Laura cannot find the enchanted fruit on her own—nor, even, can Lizzie—without risking contact with the unreliable goblin intermediaries. Christabel's return to an enchanted world, then, is

likewise dependent on Geraldine: we might easily remember that without Christabel's invitation, Geraldine cannot pass the buffered gates of Sir Leoline's outer wall: although the castle appears suitably Gothic, it is a disenchanted space until Geraldine is invited in. But we frequently forget, on the other hand, that there is a reflection of this in Christabel herself, who is likewise unable to cross a threshold of her own, into a world of supernatural immanence, without Geraldine's direct invitation. By inviting Geraldine into her world, Christabel is invited, in turn, into enchantment.

The mutual invitation inherent in "Christabel" is connected to an invitation to the reader too. Sometimes, this is the only dimension in which the connection plays out: we cannot say that Ruthven's brutal murder of Ianthe in *The Vampyre* is likewise a gentle invitation to experience the echoes of a pre-modern sublime. But we *can* say, however, that the killing has this effect on Aubrey (and through him, on the reader), who may not be the target of the vampire's fangs, but is certainly violently reconnected with the enchanted world through accompanying Ruthven on his travels. We might call all of Greece Lord Ruthven's "elfin grot," in that Aubrey (or the reader) going alone might encounter only a later, disenchanted Greece. Through Ruthven alone can Aubrey pass into an enchanted Greece of an ancient, porous time: in this, perhaps, Polidori most brilliantly captures the ability of Lord Byron to fulfill the same function. To this day, when backpackers enter Greece armed with Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, they approach much nearer and altogether different social imaginary. Byron's poetry, to the audience who travels with him, performs of its own accord a similar connective function; we are all really, in this sense, the Aubreys to Byron's Lord Ruthven.

The politics of this invitation to enchantment plays out in a similar fashion across all those eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts we have considered here. Even the long “Sir Bertrand,” whose vampire-like villain appears nowhere in the text, fulfils this important role. His power not only suspends the castle within *kairos*; it suspends *kairos* within the castle. Sir Bertrand has only the power to enter the ancient dwelling; it is Almanzor who has pre-ordained what he will find there (ghostly hands, animated armour, and a princess, rather than a drafty old ruin). In the form of a real-estate contract, the buffered modernity of *Dracula* invites him to invite *it* backward. It is similarly at Clarimonde’s behest that Romuald gives up not only his impending life of dullness in a disenchanted clergy—a life going through the now-meaningless gestures of a once-porous world—but even his fantasy of a wife and family, a fully secularized human flourishing. He trades not one but both of these secular possibilities for a brief and fleeting experience of the numinous night-world into which Clarimonde leads him, a “brighter world” by night (to pun on her name) than he can have by day. The afterlife to which he resigns himself afterward, and from which he sadly recounts his story, is an afterlife of emptiness and solitude that no degree of secular flourishing can redeem. He is discarded back into grim disenchantment, as “alone and palely loitering” (Keats l.2) as the knight of “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” ever was.

Others return enriched and even empowered by the re-enchantment, however brief. The reader, most often, can be counted among these lucky pilgrims, having shared vicariously in the enchanted experience of the characters without direct experience of their suffering. But consider the epilogue to the adventures of *Dracula*, the last page of the journal in which Jonathan Harker concludes that “seven years ago we all went

through the flames; and the happiness of some of us since then is, we think, well worth the pain we endured” (378). Harker values the lost lives of Lucy and Quincey cheaply enough here, it seems—though Quincey, at least has a child named after him—but the idea that the happiness of their seven-year (to date) “ever after” was somehow *dependent* on “going through the flames” is a significant one. More telling, still, is the strange commemorative vacation they take to, of all places, Transylvania, and of all places in Transylvania, to Castle Dracula:

this year we made a journey to Transylvania, and went over the old ground which was, and is, to us so full of vivid and terrible memories. It was almost impossible to believe that things which we had seen with our own eyes and heard with our own ears were living truths. Every trace of all that had been was blotted out. The castle stood as before, reared high above a waste of desolation. (378)

The answer, still maddeningly elusive, to the Aikins’ question on just why we enjoy reading about things that terrify us, remains hard to articulate in the theoretical. But their fundamental question is figured here in practice, perhaps more powerfully than in “Sir Bertrand”: why, having endured and suffered so much, would the Crew of Light choose to return to the site of terror that began their horrendous (and in some cases, deadly) experience?

The final answer here is that the Crew of Light is not really “returning” at all to the site of their struggle, but merely to a place akin to it, something like it, a buffered facsimile. Without the mediating figure of the vampire to invite them into the porous world—as Dracula does with his introductory letter to Harker (4)—no real return is possible. The marvellous, fantastic, sublime details of *Dracula*’s narrative are now, for Jonathan Harker himself, “almost impossible to believe” (378); that is, they are still

marginally possible—but one distant possibility among many, eclipsed by the powerful alternatives of unbelief. The “Crew of Light,” in this epilogue, are no longer figured as such champions of a higher order; they are simply Harker and Company, modern tourists on a sentimental journey to a defunct castle across a disenchanting forest.

This is the secularized experience in full bloom, the experience of a lost personal enchantment at a safe distance, buffered from the world in which its terror was genuinely unsettling, such that only its thrilling echoes seep through. We might call Harker’s yearning to revisit the “nostalgic,” but I think this is exactly the opposite of what we mean. Nostalgia, after all, is the pain of being unable to return to home and the familiar; what Harker feels—a feeling shared, perhaps, by any audience of supernatural fantasy—is the pain of being unable to really *leave* it. Even the Uncanny isn’t really all that unheimlich: it’s delivered to us only through the symbolism of what’s partially familiar. A secular world, after all, is an enclosed one, walled entirely around with the mighty bulwarks of unbelief.

What, then, has been the long history of those walls? This is what *A Secular Age* has been written to tell us. Taylor has established that there is a protective quality to them, that indeed they were first built to keep out the bad, to disengage from what he calls a “vulnerability to malevolence” (37). But there is no tearing down what has been built; and while we may venture outside them for a time to walk in the woods, as Christabel does—indeed, as Wordsworth does—there is no getting outside the idea that the world in which we now live is itself buffered. And these are the cases in which getting back to the woods for a while is even possible: there are many more cases, so pluralized is secular modernity, where we have only a little tower window—the romance

or the poem, perhaps—through which we can distantly perceive the woods and mountains of sublime enchantment, and remember what it might once have been like to walk there.

This is, as my imagery should suggest, a Gothic situation in itself. The disenchanted world is hardly a distasteful prison, but it is a place to which the buffered self is confined. As Harker in later years stands nostalgically surveying the defunct Gothic castle, it is lost on him that he does so from within the confines of an altogether different kind of imprisoning fortress. In this situation, there is something to be said for Hoeveler's return to death as fundamental to the Gothic experience of supernatural connection; once we have entered the confines of a buffered modernity, death is the only lasting escape from it. That death is inevitable, then, is modernity's most persistent reminder of its own boundaries, and of its sheltered and disengaged relationship with eternity.

As supernatural figures, vampires are for us (as for Harker) reminders of that dangerous but fulfilling outside—but cursed with immortality, they are of course stuck in here with us. I'm reminded of Goethe's *Faust*, ready to sell his proper share of eternity, his immortal soul, for a brief glimpse at the enchanted world: dissatisfied with his mastery of secular knowledge, the Faustian scholar must know what lies beyond the secular world, and pays the price of inviting in the Devil to achieve a return to belief. But I am also reminded of the Randy Newman's two-centuries-later take on *Faust*, a revisitation from so deep within secularity that the Devil himself is trapped in it:

You know it's a lie,  
It'll always be a lie,  
The invention of an animal who knows he's going to die,

Some fools in the desert with nothing else to do,  
 So scared of the dark they didn't know if they were coming  
     or going,  
 So they invented me, and they invented You,  
 And other fools will keep it all going and growing.  
 (Newman, "Glory Train")

Although his own existence should constitute proof in an enchanted order, even the Devil cannot escape the walls of unbelief: Newman imagines, as he logically should, the existential anxiety that buffered thinking must mean to a supernatural being—to a fairy who does not believe in fairies, for instance. The exile from Heaven is neatly paralleled by the Devil's exile from the whole kairotic order that generates him. Newman plays the divide for biting comic effect, a sort of mid-life crisis for the kairotic forces themselves—but the divide here is a serious one, and illustrates modernity's increasingly troubled relationship to its own buffers.

If Newman's Devil cannot overcome the buffers of disbelief, the rest of us have little chance of it; even if we could, we shouldn't read the cross-pressures against secular modernity as a guaranteed sign that we really want something else. It was not for nothing that Latin Christendom spent five centuries, and considerable effort, to refashion itself in a fully secular sphere, and Taylor's nova effect suggests in that time the growth of a broad matrix of desires as well as beliefs: "what we want," as far as porosity goes, has as many discrete answers, now, as what we believe. There are more even than identified by Taylor: Simon During raises the question of those, for instance, who "neither feel the spiritual emptiness of modernity nor embrace secular reformism's promise" (113) as those who would not dismantle its walls if they could. During further suggests that Taylor "believes that to be properly human is to be possessed by spiritual hunger" (113), a

hunger which typically manifests, I would suggest, in the reverse-nostalgia for the porous experience—less a nostalgia than a wanderlust, a desire for the ancient and faraway.

I don't think it's fair to ascribe to Taylor any single notion of "proper" humanity, particularly when the whole current of *A Secular Age*'s late narrative runs counter to this. I think the very nature of his pluralistic version of modernity leaves room for the spiritually hungry and the "materialistically sated," if you like, to coexist. The effacing of hierarchies of belief in this climate further disavows the idea that any form of humanity can be more "proper" than another: who is the arbiter of propriety, and who writes the secular self's manual of spiritual etiquette? But it might be fair, though, to say that both *A Secular Age* and supernatural fantasy are written chiefly with this kind of person in mind. Those whose relationship with "spiritual hunger," with enchantment or the porous, with nostalgia or counter-nostalgia, is anything other than full disengagement, have a stake in Taylor's narrative of secularization, whether or not they are consciously interested in its outcome. They have a stake in the kind of relationship that supernatural fantasy (especially the vampire) provides. They are profoundly invested in modernity's changing relationships to the transcendent, and to the possibility that modern literature can invent tools to revisit it, or at least to revisit (as Harker does, as Burke does, and so on) "something like" it.

A complete disengagement with this is actually quite hard. Even Sigmund Freud, not just an atheist but an aggressively anti-spiritual unbeliever, struggles to find a place in his model for the undeniable *Ewigkeitsgefühl*—the "eternity feeling"—which he describes in the language of sublime landscape as "oceanic" in *Civilization and its Discontents*. "From my own experience," he writes, "I could not convince myself of the

primary nature of such a feeling. But this gives me no right to deny that it does in fact exist in other people” (12). Freud’s answer, for himself, is that this feeling is a derived one (from the ego) rather than one which spontaneously springs onto the self from the outside. His buffers, we might say, are too complete to allow for that kind of action to take place. But they do not insulate or buffer him from the feeling itself; he experiences it as surely as the religious zealot—indeed he must, for Gothic literature to have aroused in him so much more than a clinical interest.

It is still possible, in the deep pluralism of secular modernity, to imagine a subject even more disengaged with supernatural belief than Freud, someone to whom the “absurdities” of the modern cultural stage—vampires and witches, saints and superheroes—are all equally unintelligible, except as symbols of forces contained and generated entirely within the enclosed quotidian world. In such a case, the story indeed stops with the initial set of allegories: the vampire is a symbol of sex, or colonization, or parasitic greed, or the child-mind unsatisfied. We are still “scared of the dark,” as Randy Newman puts it, in this context; but this is a Lockean rather than Jungian darkness, a darkness only of photons and sensory organs. Within this sphere, vampirism is stereotypically “monstrous” in that it shows us, or demonstrates to us, all these quotidian fears. But it is only in relation to the enchanted world of the pre-modern self that the vampire does its work as mediator, not only expressing quotidian anxieties but connecting them to the fullness of eternity.

Taylor’s *A Secular Age*, in spite of its size and scope, tells an incomplete story. How much more incomplete, then, must be this smaller one. From its edges we can see far afield in further directions: if the vampire fulfils this connective role, doesn’t

supernatural fiction, on the whole, involve itself in these same concerns? It absolutely does; when Todorov writes that the fantastic “permits us to cross certain frontiers” (qtd. in Jackson 180), this can be refigured in relation to secularization. It is one way of resolving and explaining the difference between the fantastic (a modern invention, I might controversially suggest) and what Rosemary Jackson calls its “magical predecessors” and “transcendental counterparts” (179). Stories of knights, swords and magic exist in the centuries of Cervantes,<sup>306</sup> and Walter Scott, and William Morris, and George R. R. Martin—just as they did in the centuries of *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. But these similarities of costume—both the trappings of the characters and of the romances themselves—have made it difficult to delineate and explain the fundamental difference in genre and function of supernatural literature that occurs between porous and buffered social imaginaries.

This difference is important, and more multifaceted than can be entirely understood from the vampire alone. What I have managed here is only a small part of this larger story. I have cast too many desultory glances already, perhaps, down an eccentric array of side-streets—toward *Beowulf*, toward medieval Iberian ballads, toward Charles Perrault’s fairy tales, toward Stan Lee’s *Amazing Spider-Man*. But each of these roads invites us toward another chapter of the story, promising a richer and more complete picture of just where we find ourselves in relation to both ancient and modern cosmologies. To repurpose the two key questions of Coleridge’s “Christabel,” this is an untold narrative of who we are and how we came here.

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<sup>306</sup> Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, in particular, is a critical text in this larger story: when it appears in 1605, less than a decade after the longer French cycle of *Amadis de Gaule* (1540-94), its humour hinges on a dramatic irony, a dramatic difference in worldview, between the fully porous Quixote and the reader whose savvy reaction to the romance as stylized narrative rather than history already betrays a changing relationship to the world on the brink of disenchantment.

The scope of Taylor's work comes into full view when we consider that even this whole unfolded canvas—the entire field of literature—is only one aspect of the narrative; in *A Secular Age*, it is even one given shallower treatment than the “usual suspects” in sociology of Durkheim and Weber, the moral philosophy of Adam Smith, the revolutionary writings of Rousseau and what he cleverly terms “Humeanism” (862). These things have much to do with the shaping of literature, of course; but the literature itself has remained unexplored here. I have said already that Hoeveler's *Gothic Riffs*, the first real effort toward a sort of Taylorealan literary criticism, does not in itself constitute a movement. But it may be prophetic of such a movement, as a handful of emerging works<sup>307</sup> are beginning to suggest.

In this promising climate, the vampire seems a better place than many to add to this growing momentum. The familiar traits of family resemblance that exist among these texts are powerful markers of both quotidian and kairotic concerns; they provide an apparatus for understanding the vampire's role (and through the vampire, perhaps, at least a considerable subset of the roles of supernatural fiction). Most significantly, as a supposedly ancient symbol of terror, whose heritage from Lilith to Edward Cullen is sometimes considered an unbroken line, the vampire allows us to understand how modernity's tools for understanding and navigating its own buffered place—for establishing a secular relationship to eternity or something like it—can easily be misread as the leftover products of antiquity.

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<sup>307</sup> Alexandra Peat's *Travel and Modern Literature: Sacred and Ethical Journeys* (2011) and Alicia C. Montoya's new work on *Medievalist Enlightenment* (2013) are not what I would call specifically “Taylorealan,” but they exist in a space informed by *A Secular Age* and take his advancements in the story of secularization into account.

These are new monsters in old clothes. So, we might say, are all of our means of dealing with the secular social imaginary in which we now find ourselves. The whole symbolic language of this particular kind of oldness and newness is rooted in *chronos*, and relies upon the buffered understanding of a fully secular modernity to make sense of it.

In a time of immanence, of a porous cosmos, the enchanted world was an insistent presence in our daily lives. We felt it in our veins and did not need to read about vampires to remind us of this. But the medical language that surrounds the English literary vampire—language of infection, pandemic, psychosis, disease, the corrupted body—is language characteristic of a world in which our veins are filled with nothing more than a mundane cellular suspension. Like vampires ourselves, we hunger to be filled with something richer: this *is*, as Simon During terms it, a spiritual hunger, and it is this hunger—a famine, even, across a whole social imaginary—that we have resurrected the vampire to satisfy. Its predatory senses are keener than we might expect—keener than any senses Locke might describe for us. And if the vampire can find something more powerful in our blood than mere cells and plasma, perhaps we can too.

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<sup>308</sup> Attributed to Barbauld. Her authorship of the tale, and particularly of its conclusion, are both highly suspect.

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