

**"CONGERIES OF PLEASING HORRORS":  
FANTASMAGORIANA AND THE WRITINGS  
OF THE DIODATI GROUP**

**CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES**

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**STEPHANIE E. LEWIS**



"CONGERIES OF PLEASING HORRORS" :  
*FANTASMAGORIANA* AND THE WRITINGS  
OF THE DIODATI GROUP

by  
Stephanie E. Lewis

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## ABSTRACT

Umberto Eco's statement in his introduction to *The Name of the Rose* (1983) that "all books speak of other books" is a clear recognition of the fact that numerous discourses find their way into a given text. The fictional works that emanated from the gathering at Diodati during the early summer of 1816 are no exception. While each of them shows patterns and motifs from earlier Gothic fiction, the primary objective here will be to demonstrate the central influence on the fiction of Lord Byron, John Polidori and Mary Shelley of one common text: *Fantasmagoriana*. The reading of the ghost stories in this collection (several of which are now readily available in the English translation entitled *Tales of the Dead* ) provided the Diodati group with not only the inspiration to write their own tales but also several narrative patterns and thematic motifs.

Four pieces of fiction resulted either directly or indirectly from Lord Byron's challenge that " 'We will each write a ghost story' " (*Frankenstein*, 1831, ix). The most prominent figure of the group, Lord Byron himself, wrote "A Fragment of a Novel" which he soon discarded. It was left to his physician, John Polidori, to recast it into "The Vampyre," the first literary representation of the vampire in English fiction. Polidori's immediate response to the contest, however, was *Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus*, a work that until quite recently has been virtually ignored. The best known

and most impressive of the Diodati writing was, of course, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley.

Much attention has been given (especially in biographical accounts) to Byron's ghost story contest; however, very little has been written about either the collection of tales that initiated the challenge, or the impact that these tales had on the texts that resulted. While there have been brief comments made about the references to *Fantasmagoriana* and to the tales to which Mary Shelley alludes in her Introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, there has been no systematic attempt to examine together the tales of *Fantasmagoriana* and the stories they inspired. This present study undertakes that task.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
CHAPTER ONE:	
Diodati: The Intertextual Summer	1
CHAPTER TWO:	
<i>Fantasmagoriana</i> , Byron, and "The Vampyre"	36
CHAPTER THREE:	
<i>Fantasmagoriana</i> and <i>Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus</i>	64
CHAPTER FOUR:	
<i>Fantasmagoriana</i> and Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus</i>	86
CONCLUSION	133
WORKS CITED	136

## CHAPTER ONE

### Diodati: The Intertextual Summer

In her "Introduction" to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* Mary Shelley offers, at the request of her publishers, an account of the origins of the novel: "In the summer of 1816 we visited Switzerland and became the neighbors of Lord Byron . . . it proved a wet, ungenial summer, and incessant rain often confined us for days to the house. Some volumes of ghost stories translated from the German into French fell into our hands" (viii). The events that led up to the reading of these "volumes of ghost stories," *Fantasmagoriana*,<sup>1</sup> are well-documented in several biographies of the Byron-Shelley circle.<sup>2</sup> As these events played a significant role in shaping the Gothic discourse that permeates the writings of that summer, they are worth summarizing here.

In May 1816, Lord Byron and his physician, Dr. John Polidori, met Percy Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and Claire

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<sup>1</sup> The actual text read at Diodati was *Fantasmagoriana, ou Recueil d'Histoires d'Apparitions, Spectres, Revenans, Fantômes, etc., traduit de l'allemand, par un Amateur* (1812), a French translation from the German *Gespenssterbuch* (begun in 1811, but not appearing until 1815). The text used in this thesis is a rendition of the English translation by Sarah Elizabeth Brown Utterson titled *Tales of the Dead* (1813), recently edited by Terry Hale (1992).

<sup>2</sup> For example, see the following: Leslie Marchand, *Byron: A Biography* (London: John Murray Publishers Ltd., 1957); Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1975); Muriel Spark, *Mary Shelley* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1987); D.L. Macdonald, *Poor Polidori: A Critical Biography of the Author of "The Vampyre"* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

Claremont at the Hôtel d'Angleterre at Sechèron, near Geneva. Some weeks later, the two parties secured separate residences on the shores of Lake Geneva: early in June, the Shelley entourage settled at the Maison Chappuis at Montelègre; and on June 10, Byron and Polidori moved into the Villa Diodati, a more grandiose home situated above Montelègre and linked to it by an eight-minute walk up a narrow path. Here at Diodati (during the many rainy evenings of that summer) the group of five participated in numerous intellectual and literary discussions. "Whole days," according to Jane Blumberg, "and often nights . . . were spent in each other's company. Talk of ghosts and the telling of macabre tales often occupied such nights, as driving rain besieged the house" (4). Mary Shelley records other topics of discussion:

Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley to which I was a devout but nearly silent listener. During one of these, various philosophical doctrines were discussed, and among others the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability of its ever being discovered and communicated . . . galvanism had given token of such things . . . . Night waned upon this talk, and even the witching hour had gone before we retired to rest. (*Frankenstein*, 1831, x)

During one of these sessions there was a reading of a group of ghost stories, a French translation of the collection, *Fantasmagoriana*. This, according to Mary Shelley, led Byron to propose the famous contest:

"We will each write a ghost story," said Lord Byron, and his proposition was acceded to. There were four of us. The noble author began a tale, a fragment of which he printed at the end of his poem of Mazeppa. Shelley . . . commenced one founded on the experiences of his early life. Poor Polidori had some terrible idea about a skull-headed lady who was so punished for peeping through a key-hole - - what to see I forget: something very shocking and wrong of course . . . . The illustrious poets also, annoyed by the platitude of prose, speedily relinquished their uncongenial task. (*Frankenstein*, 1831, ix)

Scholars generally agree that, while the precise date of these events is elusive, the reading of the stories and Byron's proposal occurred between June 15 and 21. It has been suggested that Byron's inspiration may have actually come from the first story in *Fantasmagoriana*, "The Family Portraits," which has a frame narrative: " 'Every one is to relate a story of ghosts, or something of a similar nature . . . it is agreed amongst us that no one shall search for any explanation, even though it bears the stamp of truth, as explanations would take away all the pleasure from ghost stories.' " (83). Biographical accounts of the contest claim that the competition was agreed to by all present, but taken up only by Byron, Polidori and Mary Shelley. Four texts resulted from this famous contest: Lord Byron's "Fragment of a Novel" (1819), John Polidori's *Ernestus Berchtold; or the Modern Oedipus* (1819) and "The Vampyre" (1819), and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1818). The two most influential of these works are "The Vampyre" (the

fore-runner of a century of vampire literature culminating in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*), and *Frankenstein*, one of the most famous Gothic novels of all time. That the stories in *Fantasmagoriana* had such a significant influence seems clear.<sup>3</sup> But before tracing the particulars of the patterns of influence, it is important to consider the nature of this influence, and more specifically, the extent of intertextuality among these Gothic texts.

In proposing intertextuality within and amongst Gothic texts, I wish to avoid "classifying and systematizing isolated features of generic essences" (Howard, 2). It is crucial to recognize the fluid nature of any given Gothic text in any historical and social situation. While certain conventions do exist within the Gothic genre, the meaning of these conventions shifts with the context of each text. The issue of reproduction versus transformation is crucial; while reproduction is imitation, transformation is intertextuality. I wish to resist a synchronic reading of Gothic fiction and to explore its many layers of discourse, thereby exposing the seams of Gothic texts and tracing the patterns of each author's alterations:

because Gothic novels and tales are . . .  
metadiscourses working on prior discourses which  
embed values and positions of enunciation of those

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<sup>3</sup> There is at least one dissenting voice, that of James Rieger who in "Dr. Polidori and the Genesis of *Frankenstein*" asserts that "The *Fantasmagoriana* could not in any case have been much of a source, for, excepting Calzolari's unfilled promise (in "La Tete de Mort") to afford his audience 'quelques momens agréables avec des expériences d'électricité et de magnétisme' (I.242), not one concession is made to contemporary psychology and physical science, or to the aesthetic truth of any age" (470).

values, the effects produced in the dialogic exchange or 'intertextual operation of one discourse upon another' will constitute the novel's reality, permeating it at the level of space, time, plot, character and narration. (Howard, 45)

In filtering through the 'metadiscourse' of Gothic fiction, the focus will be on these levels of narrative technique, temporal and spatial boundaries, stock characters, and significant themes and motifs. Further, I will be considering style, but not style divorced from social and historical circumstance. The intertextuality examined here is an effort to reanimate Gothic tenets and style through contextualization. As Bakhtin asserts, "stylistics is not concerned with living discourse but with a histological specimen made from it with abstract linguistic discourse in the service of the artist's individual creative powers" (259). In this light, contextualization of Gothic style common to the texts considered here is an attempt to demonstrate that the Gothic is not a stagnant genre. In each of these texts is a transposition of discourse; there is an overlap from its antecedents, but each text is also something new - each is a transformation of the Gothic genre. Placing Gothic fiction within a socio-historic temporal/spatial frame can be achieved by examining a specific text, *Fantasmagoriana*, (which hearkens back to concerns from the end of the eighteenth century) and linking it to four texts written near the beginning of the nineteenth century. The proposed conclusion is that through elements such as style and theme, one work can have transformative residual effects from another. The Gothic context/text relationship,

therefore, can be seen to illustrate the shift in epistemology from one century to the next. In keeping with contextualization, it should be clarified that this process involves an examination of dialogic elements (speech patterns, language, discourse) that comprise the Gothic genre. It is crucial to trace the various voices, codes and discourses that traverse each text and to posit the levels of textual and contextual stratification evident in each text. First, the primary text is the influencing text on Byron, Polidori, and Mary Shelley's works: *Fantasmagoriana*.

It is surprising, given the nature of intertextuality in Gothic discourse, that little attention has been paid to the stories in *Fantasmagoriana* themselves. An examination will reveal that in fact these ghost stories contain within them many of the literary patterns that are carried through in both their immediate progeny from the summer of 1816 and in the Gothic genre in general.

Few facts surrounding the origins of the stories in *Fantasmagoriana* are available. Terry Hale, the editor of *Tales of the Dead*, a recent reprint of several of the tales, notes that they were "published in the first two of the five volume *Gespensterbuch* which was jointly edited by the prolific Friedrich Schulze (under the pseudonym of Friedrich Laun) and the playwright Johann Apel (Leipzig, G.J. Goshen). This collection, which began to appear in 1811, was not completed until 1815" (Hale, 10). The collection, translated from its original German into French, was circulated among the



readers at Diodati under the complete title *Fantasmagoriana, ou Recueil d'Histoires d'Apparitions, Spectres, Revenans, Fantômes, etc.; traduit de l'allemand, par un Amateur*. According to Hale, this version was published in 1812, and was followed in 1813 by the English translation entitled *Tales of the Dead*. Apparently, the English version appeared anonymously, but was later determined to be the work of an unknown writer, Sarah Elizabeth Brown Utterson (1782?-1856). As for the version read by those at the Villa Diodati, Hale notes that the "Amateur," or "enthusiast," appears to have been Jean Baptiste Benoît Eyriès (1767-1846) (12). This triple publication in three different languages and within the space of no more than a year at a time indicates that this collection was clearly popular among early nineteenth-century readers of the literary fantastic.

Since it is the French version that concerns the Diodati group, it is significant to note the differences between the English text being used here and the one actually read at Diodati. The English version contains one story not in the French - "The Storm." Hale outlines the anomaly surrounding the French version:

the French edition contains three stories which are not to be found in the English. "Le Revenant" concerns a doctor who pretends to die in order to give his wife her liberty. He returns to see her and they discover that they are still in love with each other. The two concluding stories which are interwoven, "La Chambre gris" and "La Chambre noir", are both in the tradition of the supernatural *expliqué* of the Ann Radcliffe school. Possibly they were rejected by Mrs. Utterson on the grounds that

the mechanism was far too familiar to English readers to warrant further exploitation. (17-18)

The remaining five stories that we *do* have available to us, however, indeed "warrant further exploitation"; in fact, they demand it.

Taken story by story, *Fantasmagoriana* is rather varied in its subject matter. However, dominant literary patterns and stock Gothic themes, characters and machinery all play a role in the formation of a cohesive body of literature. When juxtaposed against the stories resulting from the 1816 competition, a tale in its own right, one of Gothic intertextuality, emerges. The tales that are common to both *Fantasmagoriana* and *Tales of the Dead* are, "The Family Portraits," "The Fated Hour," "The Death's Head," "The Death-Bride," and "The Spectre Barber." As the speculation about the existence of ghosts and other macabre topics fascinated the Diodati gathering, it is little wonder that these tales in *Fantasmagoriana* captivated their interest as well. The duration of the summer witnessed the individuals in the group setting sail imaginatively with the Gothic as they "were buoyed up on the wave of their own imaginations and shared a craving for a romantic world shaped by those imaginings" (Blumberg, 53). These Gothic tales offered the group a "romantic redefinition of the individual as a transcendent being" through "the Gothic aesthetic which permits the depiction of exalted states of perception. A picture, a ventriloquist's act, a dead body even, may all be perceived as animate objects. Sense

experience - whether visual, tactile, or olfactory - become disturbingly unstable" (Hale, 19).

Each of these stories shares similar narrative and thematic patterns. They exhibit an intense interest in magic, science, superstition, folklore, and myth. Some can be seen as political allegory, while others play out anxieties surrounding love. In each tale, the primacy of family is a given, and often, the stories centre on the maintenance of family lines. Gothic machinery is abundant, taking the form of solemn oaths, family pacts or curses, medieval castles and damsels in distress, spectres and phantoms of all variation, animated portraits and corpses, masks, angels and demons in disguise, death chambers and picturesque landscapes, and, finally, electricity and magnetism. What *Fantasmagoriana* offers the lover of the literary fantastic, in short, is a virtual extravagant feast. It is little wonder that those assembled around the fire at Diodati in June of 1816 knew what a treasure they had in their possession.

The first story in *Fantasmagoriana*, "The Family Portraits," concerns two families, who through various mishaps and revelations, discover their fated connection and resolve their family difficulties. These narratives of the two families, themselves filled with mystery and intrigue, are related to a group of travellers, and are presented as though they were ghost stories. Its frame narrative, the 'story-within-the-story,' is a common structural motif in Gothic fiction. The next story, "The Fated Hour," has only one narrator, the Princess Florentina, who happens to be the last of her race; there is, however,

a time shift in the narration. Replete with superstition and mysticism, it has, of all the stories, the most personal and intense consideration of the role of fate. "The Death's Head" may very well be the story that sparked much of the discussion among the Diodati group about reanimation, electricity and magnetism. It is this tale from which the collection receives its primary name - *Fantasmagoriana*. In it, a ventriloquist attempts to frighten a group of spectators by "conjuring" a ghost from a skull, the "death's head". The tables are turned on him, however, as the death's head actually speaks to him from the world of the dead - in the voice of his disgruntled father's ghost. There are many similarities between this story and the biographical accounts of discussions that took place during the summer of 1816. One of the longest and most complex in the collection is "The Death-Bride" which, like "The Family Portraits," has a frame narrative and the 'tale-within-the-tale' pattern. Again, the relation of the tale takes place within *conversazioni*, as a form of entertainment. This, along with "The Family Portraits," is one of the stories recalled most vividly by Mary Shelley in her "Introduction" to *Frankenstein*. In the final story, "The Spectre Barber," the Gothic is combined with wish-fulfillment reminiscent of the eighteenth-century preoccupation with Orientalism. Unlike the other four, "The Spectre Barber" does not share the same 'story-within-the-story' framework. Although it has narrative layering, the entire story is told from an omniscient point of view. In this, then, it stands apart from the rest of the stories both in narrative and thematic patterns.

A more detailed examination of the tales in this collection will illustrate the dominant thematic and narrative patterns that later emerge in the writings of the Diodati competition.

Dialogism is integral to the contextualization of Gothic works when tracing patterns of influence. In terms of narration, dialogism is characteristic of all speech; no discourse exists in isolation. A given novel's dialogue, both within and without the text is drawn from a context of a language world which precedes it. Dialogism in this sense, then, is similar to intertextuality in that no text stands in isolation from other texts, particularly those which are said to comprise a part of a particular genre. How dialogism and intertextuality interplay in Gothic discourse is specific to the text considered.

The narrative technique of Gothic texts, like the stories found in *Fantasmagoriana*, follows similar patterns, such as the 'tale-within-the-tale' structure, but also differs in each stories' treatment of narrators and characters. Most of the tales in *Fantasmagoriana* are told through a narrator rather than from the characters' perspectives. These narrations are examples of external focalization in that the events are related and the characters act, but are not given voice to think or feel. Although these characters do speak, what they say is mediated through the narrator. Later Gothic works,

as will be shown, reshape this focalization from external to internal, and to combinations of the two. Verbal and written agreements are key elements in the narrative patterns of the tales in *Fantasmagoriana*. By considering two of these tales in particular, "The Family Portraits" and "The Spectre Barber," we can view certain narrative strategies as part of Gothic discourse. Pacts, secrets and curses are part of the language that both enmeshes and unfolds the narrative; they are, in short, a part of the intertextuality in which Gothic narratives participate.

"The Family Portraits" unfolds as a dramatic narrative within a narrative. The three 'sub-tales' located within the frame are all interwoven and each sheds light on the mysteries of the other two. The frame narrative is within the *conversazioni* of a rural gathering, and then moves to the castle Wartbourg. At the gathering, a young woman, who later turns out to be Clotilde de Hainthal, relates a story that concerns Ferdinand de Meltheim's sister, Julianna. Ferdinand, in turn, recounts a history of the Wartbourgs, who are close friends, as is later discovered, of the Hainthals. The third narrative is told by Clotilde's father, the Baron de Hainthal, and concerns the connection between the Meltheim, Hainthal, and Wartbourg houses. The predominant theme of "The Family Portraits" deals with the anxiety surrounding love as is revealed in the interconnectedness among the three families, families linked by an intricate web of unrequited love, revenge, and penance. The story also explores concerns surrounding the possible extinction of family lines. Destiny plays a role in that

the families and their lines of succession have been determined centuries ago. The creaky hinges on which these narratives within "The Family Portraits" rest are curses, pacts, and family secrets.

The extinction of family lines revolves around the sins of Ditmar, the founder of the Wartbourg race. It is discovered by the characters through the reading of his will and of documents by both Bertha de Hainthal and Tutilon, a monk of St. Gall, that the three houses are linked by history, and by a series of curses and pacts, to play out their destinies together. Following the termination of Ditmar's race, a chest which contains the family secrets is finally opened, revealing Ditmar's plans for succession of the Wartbourg house and his explanation for the strange demise of all possible Wartbourg heirs. In his confession to Tutilon, Ditmar reveals that he killed the only male heir of his enemy (and later, his enemy himself), Bruno de Hainthal, as revenge for Bruno's marriage to Bertha, the woman Ditmar loved. So, from this unrequited love comes an act of vengeance that sets the tragedy in motion. As a form of penance, Ditmar raises Bertha and Bruno's daughter, Hildegard, and marries her to Albert de Meltheim, the author of Ferdinand's race. However, the monk Tutilon curses death upon the Wartbourg family heirs until the time comes when the last of the heirs dies. At this point, the Meltheim house becomes responsible for continuing the Wartbourg line. So while one family line dies out, another is installed to take its place. The parchment on which Bertha reveals her connection to this mystery, also witnessed by Tutilon, states that the death of one of



her female heirs is required for her soul to be set free. It is only when Julianna, the last female heir in the Meltheim family, is struck and killed by her portrait that Bertha is finally free. The links among these three family histories are found within these documents and point to the narrative connections among the separate narratives within "The Family Portraits".

The unifying factor in the narrative of "The Spectre Barber," like that of "The Family Portraits," is a family secret. However, the manner in which this narrative unfolds and the role this family secret has to play in the resolution of the mysteries of this tale differ significantly from the counterparts found in "The Family Portraits". "The Spectre Barber" concerns the fortunes of the protagonist, Francis, the sole heir to a wealthy merchant named Melchior. He squanders the money he inherits from his father and for much of the narrative is searching to mend his ways for the sake of his love for Meta, a neighboring seamstress with few prospects but, unfortunately for Francis, a well-meaning yet ambitious mother. He travels far, from his home city of Bremen to the German "Low-Countries" (127), in search a way to improve his lot, but, ultimately, his answer comes in the form of a family secret. After a series of adventures, Francis finally learns the location of a buried treasure secured in a garden by his father before his death:

[Melchior] as a precaution against necessity, had buried this money, without any intention to deprive his son of this considerable portion of his inheritance; but dying suddenly, he had carried the

secret to his grave, and nothing but a happy combination of circumstances could have restored this lost treasure to its rightful owner. (139)

As a result of uncovering this family secret, Francis is able to return to the city of Bremen and marry Meta with his fortune and reputation intact. The family secret in this tale serves as a means of wish-fulfillment. As in "The Family Portraits," the anxiety surrounding love is resolved by a happy marriage. The final message of this tale is that a prosperous life will follow those who lead a "virtuous and active life" (143). This is seen in Francis, who changes from a "prodigal" (117) to a "guardian angel" (143). This process of transformation is effected by a series of coincidences and prophecies from beyond the grave, a process that offers more interest than the family secret that ultimately turns Francis' fortune around.

A typical motif, to be found also in the other stories in *Fantasmagoriana*, is a ghost who occupies the centre of the narrative. It is the message that this ghost, the 'spectre-barber' of the title, brings from the spirit world that enables Francis to transform his life. This spectre is stock Gothic material:

in stalked a tall thin figure with a black beard, whose appearance was indicative of chagrin and melancholy. He was habited in the antique style, and on his left shoulder wore a red cloak or mantle, while his head was covered with a high-crowned hat. Three times with slow and measured steps he walked around the room, examined the consecrated

candles, and snuffed them: he then threw off his cloak, unfolded a shaving apparatus, and took from it the razors, which he sharpened on a large leather strop hanging to his belt. (130)

At this entrance, the reader is expecting a gruesome death for Francis, but the ghost, being a 'spectre-barber,' does nothing more than shave Francis bald. When Francis returns the favour for the ghost, the spirit is released from his curse. For three hundred years, the 'spectre-barber' has been doomed to haunt the castle of Rummelsburg for ridiculing a foreign monk. When, for the amusement of the master of the castle, Count Hartmann, the barber shaves the sacred crown of hair (representative of Jesus' crown of thorns) from the monk's head, the holy man curses him:

"Depraved wretch," said he, "know that at your death, the formidable gates of heaven, of hell, and of purgatory will alike be closed against your sinful soul, which shall wander through this castle, in the form of a ghost, until some man, without being invited or constrained, shall do to you what you have so long done to others." (132)

Francis, who is gradually experiencing his own spiritual awakening on this journey, releases the penitent ghost from his centuries of punishment. In return, the 'spectre-barber' instructs Francis when and where to meet a friend who will tell Francis how to become rich. The next message for Francis from beyond the grave comes in the form of a dream by a beggar named Berthold. The beggar, who turns

out to be the friend of the 'spectre-barber's' prophecy, tells Francis that his "good angel" stood at the end of his bed one night and said to him:

"Berthold, listen attentively to my words, and do not lose any part of what I am about to say. A treasure is allotted you; go and secure it, that you may be enabled to live happily the rest of your days. Tomorrow evening, when the sun is setting, take a pick-axe and spade over your shoulder, and go out of the city by the gate leading to Hamburgh: when you arrive facing the convent of Saint Nicholas, you will see a garden, the entrance to which is ornamented by two pillars; conceal yourself behind one of these until the moon rises: then push the door hard, and it will yield to your efforts; go without fear into the garden, follow a walk covered by a treillage of vines, and to the left you will see a great apple-tree: place yourself at the foot of this tree, with your face turned towards the moon, and you will perceive, at fifteen feet distance, two bushy rose-trees: search between these two shrubs, and at a depth of about six feet you will discover a great flag-stone, which covers the treasure enclosed within an iron chest . . . . You will be well rewarded for your pains and trouble, if you look for the key which is hid under the box."  
(137-138)

The beggar never follows the advice of his 'angel,' since he gives very little credence to the viability of dreams as prophecies. However, to Francis, this vision makes perfect sense. The land the beggar describes used to belong to his father. Francis then realizes that the ghost's instructions were valid; he recovers the buried treasure and

fulfills his life's wishes. In this process, though, the tale's message becomes clear through Francis' treatment of the beggar after he retrieves the treasure. Francis has completed the journey from a wanton lifestyle to one of virtue and prosperity as he takes responsibility for both the management of his own affairs and those of the beggar. In the change from a 'prodigal' to a 'guardian angel,' Francis leaves behind his wasteful ways and establishes Berthold in a house with all the comforts his old age could want. The function these curses, dreams and secrets have in this narrative is as a means towards wish-fulfillment. In "The Spectre-Barber," then, the messages from beyond the grave act as the narrative turning points in the fate of the story's characters.

A final point of interest concerning narration is the blurring of temporal and spatial frames. In the tales, narration involves distorting the order of events of a given circumstance. Although the events have occurred in one order, they are narrated in quite another. Spatial shifts also occur quite frequently in *Fantasmagoriana*, where space is given to detailed focus on a given event, yet a span of days, months, or even years is limited. As a result, chronological time becomes distorted; the 'reality' we witness, then, becomes the events given precedence in the narrative. These Gothic tales, by fracturing time in this manner, are presenting temporal and spatial kaleidoscopes where events are intensified.

Because of shifting temporal and spatial boundaries in narration, one can argue that the Gothic narrative found in

*Fantasmagoriana* is challenging world views or epistemes of the late eighteenth century. The subject of these narratives indicates what is being shifted: the belief in the supernatural. As the rationalism of the eighteenth century is changing into an interest in the irrational, these tales are a reflection of the age in which they were written; they are indicative of fin de siècle angst that seems to recur at the end of each century when uncertainty leads to vacillation and a search for metaphysical or spiritual certainty. The appearance of *Fantasmagoriana* in 1812 with its veiled discussions on the existence of the supernatural connects to the concerns of the end of the eighteenth century and, therefore, can be seen as part of an eighteenth century context.

One major feature of the Gothic is the contemplation of elements that are inexplicable by the laws that govern the physical and material world. In many ways, the stories in *Fantasmagoriana* test the limits of what we deem valid or what conforms to the natural, universal laws that we have set out to explain the perceivable world. All of the stories contain these elements in some measure, but the best illustration is "The Death's-Head". This tale, like "The Spectre-Barber," focuses on a wayward son who goes through a spiritual transformation and ultimately regains his inheritance. The circumstances that initiate this transformation are also similar to those of "The Spectre-Barber": a message from the spirit world provides the direction for both prodigal sons. However,

unlike Francis in "The Spectre-Barber," Calzolaro in this story becomes the victim of his own duplicity. In an attempt to frighten a gathering of people with a fantasmagorical display, Calzolaro is drawn into his spectacle and is forced into retribution for his greed. This spectacle, as will be shown, is both inexplicable in terms of universal, natural laws and is essential to the narrative pattern of the tale. The magical elements in this story initiate Calzolaro's transformation, and provide the axis on which the narrative turns.

Calzolaro has many identities: he is a leader of a troop of performers, the son of the local schoolmaster, and a ventriloquist and conjurer. Each identity is linked to the other; he comes to this town in his travels with his troop to contest the will of his father, Schurster, and in the meantime decides to entertain Colonel Kielholm's (his host) company. It is revealed throughout the narrative that Calzolaro has disgraced his father by pursuing a life of which he did not approve. As a result, Calzolaro's inheritance is given to "a distant female relation" and he is left with "an extremely scanty pittance" (68). In his attempt to contest this will, Calzolaro ignores all pleas to respect his father's memory and relinquish his greedy plan. That is, the prodigal refuses to relent his selfish designs until the night of the fantasmagorical spectacle.

It might be worth noting here that there seems to be no English definition for the term "fantasmagorie". However, there is a definition of the term in the *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* (par



E. Littré, tome deuxième, D-H Paris, Londres: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1873):

fantasmagorie: Art de faire voir des fantômes, c'est-à-dire de faire paraître des figures lumineuses au sein d'une obscurité profonde; il n'a commencé à être bien connu que vers la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Cela se fait au moyen d'une lanterne magique mobile qui vient former les images sur une toile que l'on voit par derrière. Comme ces images grandissent à mesure que le foyer s'éloigne de la toile, elles ont l'air de s'avancer sur le spectateur. Par analogie, en littérature, abus d'effets produits par des moyens ou l'on trompe l'esprit, comme la fantasmagorie trompe l'oeil; - apparition (voy. fantôme): parler aux fantômes, appeler les fantômes. (1616-1617)<sup>4</sup>

This description is, in effect, what Calzolaro plans for Kielholm's guests. Upon hearing that this performer is also a ventriloquist, Kielholm suggests to Calzolaro that "what would produce the most astonishing effect on those who have never heard a ventriloquist, would be a dialogue between the actor and a death's head" (70). The two conspirators put their plan into motion and ask the sexton, for the sake of authenticity, to produce a real human skull for the spectacle. At midnight, Calzolaro's performance begins. In his

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<sup>4</sup> fantasmagorie: The art of producing a ghost, that is to make luminous figures appear in the dark; this art became popular only towards the end of the eighteenth century. It is done through the means of a magic lantern situated behind a canvass onto which images are cast. As the lantern was moved away from the canvass, the images appeared to become enlarged and to move towards the spectator. By analogy, in literature, an excess of effects produced by deceiving the reader, as the fantasmagorical spectacle deceives the eye. - an apparition (see ghost): speak to ghosts, call ghosts (1616-1617).

"Oriental costume," Calzolaro assumes the air of a foreign conjurer (73). The room in which this act is being performed is hung with black draperies, filled with incense, and has an altar in the centre of the room on top of which sits a skull. Calzolaro speaks about things of a mystical nature to the company in "a deep sepulchral tone" (73). He enacts a magical ceremony which, for him, has disastrous results:

He . . . opened a door of the closet hitherto concealed from the company, brought a chafing dish filled with red-hot coals, threw thereon some Incense, and walked three times round the altar, pronouncing at each circle a spell. He then drew from its scabbard a sword which hung in his girdle, plunged it in the smoke issuing from the incense, and making frightful contortions of his face and limbs, pretended to endeavor to cleave the head, which, however, he did not touch. At last he took the head upon the point of his sword, held it up in the air before him, and advanced towards the spectators a little moved. (74)

In the course of this spectacle, the ghost of Calzolaro's father appears to him, and temporarily deprives him of his reason. According to Calzolaro, his father's ghost said to him, " 'Tremble, parricide, whom nothing can convert, and who wilt not turn, to the path thou hast abandoned!' " (75). As a result of this encounter, a spiritual awakening occurs in Calzolaro; he gives up his intentions to contest the will, changes his name back to Schurster, and marries the heiress (out of love, not greed). In effect, then, Calzolaro/Schurster's experiment in electricity and magnetism, or in things of a

fantasmagorical nature, produces an unnatural phenomenon that results in his transformation. It is in this position, also, that this unexplained encounter signifies the turning point of the narrative.

A final point of interest in this tale is the intersection of myth and magic. The circumstances surrounding the "death's head" procured by the sexton probes this connection. When asked by Kielholm and Calzolaro to produce a skull for their spectacle, the sexton decides to test the validity of local superstition. In an effort to prove the truth of the superstition "that when a child speaks to the head of its deceased parent at the midnight hour, the head comes to life again," the sexton deliberately retrieved the schoolmaster's skull for the spectacle (77). Although this deceit explains Calzolaro's experience with his father's ghost, it still confirms the inexplicable; the existence of elements that are not governed by material or physical laws becomes a possibility. Evidently, these fantasmagorical "events had produced to the spectators a night of much greater terror than the colonel had prepared for them" (77). From this exploration of supernatural and scientific issues, the interest in "The Death's Head" for the Diodati group's own testing of such ontological limits is self evident.

There are further examples of the unexplained in the other stories in *Fantasmagoriana*. Most notable is the use of a standard Gothic image, the animated portrait, in the collection's first story, "The Family Portraits". Each of the three accounts in "The Family Portraits," as indicated in the title, revolves around mysterious

portraits. There are two significant portraits which figure in the narratives: the "author" of the Wartbourg race, and an ancestor of both the Hainthals and Meltheims. Both of these portraits carry with them either visual or written messages that help to unravel the mysteries in the separate stories. But it is the one that hangs in the Wartbourg castle, as told in the narrative by the Baron de Hainthal, of Ditmar, the founder of the Wartbourg family, that provides the unexplained Gothic phenomenon of the animated portrait. This depicts a "hideous figure" of Ditmar since it has been marred, as we find out, by the ghost of Bruno and Bertha's son, the same child whom Ditmar has murdered. One evening, as the protagonist, Ferdinand, is staring at this portrait, it takes on "the appearance of a horrible moving spectre" (29). He describes this animated portrait to the rural gathering:

On a sudden, I perceived . . . the same figure represented in the formidable picture, enveloped in the grey mantle I so well knew. It advanced towards . . . and gained the back door which led to the apartments in the colonnade of the *château* . . . no powers can depict the horrors I endured when I saw the frightful figure at the side of [the children's] bed. I beheld the spectre stoop towards the [first] child and softly kiss his forehead: he then went round the bed, and kissed the forehead of the other boy. (29)

Eventually it is revealed that Ditmar has been cursed to see his race die out, and this scene describes how he has been doomed to carry out this curse. From Ferdinand's 'tale-within-a-tale,' there is further

evidence of probing the mysterious that recurs in Gothic fiction. In support of this contention, it is necessary only to consider the apparent effect that this description had on the imaginations of those at Diodati. Mary Shelley, remembers a very close version of this incident fifteen years after reading the story in her 1831 "Introduction" to *Frankenstein*:

[there was] the tale of the sinful founder of his race whose miserable doom it was to bestow the kiss of death on all the younger sons of his fated house, just when they reached the age of promise. His gigantic, shadowy form, clothed like the ghost in *Hamlet*, in complete armour, but with the beaver up, was seen at midnight, by the moon's fitful beams, to advance slowly along the gloomy avenue. The shape was lost beneath the shadow of the castle walls; but soon a gate swung back, a step was heard, the door of the chamber opened, and he advanced to the couch of the blooming youths, cradled in healthy sleep. Eternal sorrow sat upon his face as he bent down and kissed the forehead of the boys, who from that hour withered like flowers snapped upon the stalk. I have not seen these stories since then [i.e. 1816], but their incidents are as fresh in my mind as if I had read them yesterday. (ix)

This is quite a remarkable description of a story read fifteen years earlier; clearly, the effects these stories had upon the imaginations of their readers in 1816 were significant. As will later be illustrated, such concerns with probing the supernatural and the scientific are found in the works of fiction that came out of the reading of *Fantasmagoriana* during the summer of 1816. From this

examination, however, it is clear that the tales in *Fantasmagoriana* address the challenging of eighteenth century rationalism and the contemplation of the irrational.

In two of the ghost stories, "The Death Bride" and "The Fated Hour," the central preoccupation is with the spectral lover and the doppelgänger. The term "doppelgänger," of German origin and literally meaning "double-goer," was first used "by the novelist Jean Paul (Richter), who in 1796 defined the word in a one sentence footnote: 'So heissen Leute, die sich selbst sehen.' ('So people who see themselves are called.');" in its broadest sense, it "can mean almost any dual, and in some cases even multiple, structure in a text" (Hallam, 5). As with many Gothic influences, the doppelgänger is derived from a confluence of cultures, myth, legend, and folklore. Hallam notes that "the phenomenon of the divided or reflected self is a widespread common belief, which in turn has been expressed throughout literary history from its earliest oral and written traditions (including mythology, Märchen, and folk epic) to the present" (5). Various cultures from the primitive, where the 'double' is a good omen, a mystical embodiment of the portable soul, to the advanced, where the 'double' represents an evil projection of the self, each have some conception of the doppelgänger (Hallam, 6-7). According to Mary Patterson Thornburg,

the doppelgänger is so common a figure in Gothic fiction, poetry, and art, . . . that it is often classed with other Gothic standbys, like the ruined castle or

the mouldering crypt, as a standard piece of paraphernalia - loaded with symbolic significance for some critics, to others nothing but a well-worn piece of stage equipment. (7)

The doppelgänger effectively exhibits the intricacies of the human psyche by juxtaposing positive and negative traits of a given character through the image of 'other'. This 'other' manifests itself in many forms, incorporating both the supernatural and the physical. Usually a ghostly image in its ethereal manifestation, or another character in a real sense, the doppelgänger in Gothic fiction is used to delve further into the psyche of the narrative's protagonist. Such doubling results in an increase of knowledge, particularly of the self, for this central character. Apart from being typical Gothic motifs, these phantom 'others' are central to the narratives of both tales. It is the relation of events surrounding these motifs that furthers the plots and makes the narrative pattern, in effect, possible.

There is a great discrepancy between the two tales, however, in their respective uses of these phantoms. In "The Fated Hour," the phantom is a doppelgänger of the sister of the main character. Florentina, the main character, is the last of her family. She relates her mysterious history to her friends, Amelia and Maria, as they sit around a fire to alleviate the dampness from the storm that is evident throughout the story. They also light the fire, as Florentina says, so that "the chill which my recital may produce be not increased by any exterior course" (52). That the Diodati group read these ghostly tales while sitting in front of a wood fire in an attempt

to escape the storm outside indicates another similarity between the real and fictional situations. The story Florentina relates is that of her sister, Seraphina, who is described as a mystical creature both in life and in death. Seraphina, as her name indicates, is unlike other children when growing up; she rarely participates in "infantine amusements" and displays astonishing knowledge of astronomy, astrology, and, like any good angel, music (53). Florentina even describes her in angelic terms. Seraphina's beauty is evident in her "graceful figure and beautiful flaxen locks" and "fine blue eyes"; it is these eyes, "her soft, angelic eyes, from which Seraphina's pale countenance borrowed all its sublimity" (54). Seraphina is, then, more than the European ideal of beauty, an angel in both talent and physical features. Florentina sees Seraphina's doppelgänger walking in the garden with their father while Seraphina herself is standing right in front of her. This confirms the strange and numerous rumours that Florentina's family has heard. The phenomenon of this doppelgänger is now confirmed for Florentina:

I felt convinced of what I had heard from several persons, but what my father always contradicted; which was that while Seraphina was in the house, she had been seen elsewhere. I secretly reflected also on what my sister had repeatedly told me, that when a child (she was ignorant whether sleeping or awake), she had been transported to heaven, where she played with angels; to which incident she attributed her disinclination to all infantile games. (55)



Seraphina was chosen by angels, as it turns out, to deliver a fateful message to her beloved family. Over the course of the story, Seraphina encounters her own double and learns from it of the family doom. She reveals all to her father before she is taken finally by the angels as the clock strikes nine - the fated hour. Her prophecies come true, her father dies, again at the fated hour, and passes the secret prophecy on to Florentina. She is forbidden to marry, since on the third day before her marriage, she too will die at the fated hour. However, Seraphina cannot determine from her doppelgänger if by abstaining from marriage, Florentina will be freed from her participation in the unraveling of the families' destiny. Florentina, as a result of this uncertainty, decides to live out her fate and fulfill her sister's prophecy. This reveals both a severe anxiety surrounding love, and a very deterministic philosophy: that fate is essentially inescapable. As her father tells her from his deathbed, "destiny appears to have conspired against our race" (62). Readers are assured that Seraphina's prophecies come from celestial rather than demonic sources, as confirmed by her final appearance, this time as an angel, to Florentina. When the clock strikes nine, Amelia and Maria witness the extinguishing of the fire and the arrival of Seraphina "illuminated by the moon's rays" (64). She folds Florentina in her arms and they disappear, presumably to the spirit world. In this story, then, the doppelgänger suggests destiny and all of the tragedy that its unfolding entails. In *Fantasmagoriana*, the doppelgänger is an apparition meant to

forewarn (as Seraphina does for her twin sister, Florentina) or to make good on a promise that extends beyond the grave (like that made between Filippo and Clara, the 'death-bride' herself). In "The Death-Bride," the motif is extended to encompass a slighted lover. Here, the 'other' is not so much a spiritual twin as it is a vengeful spirit. In this case, the spectral lover signifies a main Gothic preoccupation - the anxieties surrounding love. Florentina's fear and fascination with death at the approach of her wedding day and her 'fated hour' also indicates anxiety surrounding love. The only discrepancy between the two instances of this anxiety is that one is directed against the lover in question (i.e. Filippo), while the other merely surrounds Florentina's lover. The question for Florentina still remains that her refusal to accept her lover in marriage may or may not save her from the fulfilling of her fate, and does not directly involve him.

"The Death-Bride" has a frame narrative and two interwoven stories that operate within this framework. It is one of the more complicated narrative patterns evident in *Fantasmagoriana*. The main narrator, a Byronic "Italian marquis," tells a private gathering the story of the "Death-Bride" which he promises will be "full of extraordinary events" (82). His story, like Florentina's in "The Fated Hour," involves two sisters, this time twins, one who is living and one who is dead. Here we have both the doppelgänger and the spectral lover. It appears that the doppelgänger of Ida, who is in the form of Hildegard, is actually the mysterious 'Death-Bride' that abounds in

village folklore. The occasion of Filippo's infidelity to Clara (who, in actuality, are Duke Marino and Apollonia) is merely an avenue through which the 'Death-Bride' can exercise her ghostly curse. In this complicated plot, the unifying factor is the spectral lover, in this case, the 'Death-Bride' herself. In an effort to confirm Hildegarde's death after Marino recounts his strange meeting of her in the museum in Paris, her father, the count Lieppa, visits her grave to exhume her body. This must have excited the imaginations of those at Diodati given their fascination with both the return of the Undead (as in Polidori's "The Vampyre") and in reanimated corpses (as in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*). Count Lieppa states that it is

morally impossible . . . that any trick can have been played respecting my daughter's death: the circumstances attendant thereon are but too well known to me. You may readily believe, also, that the affection we bore our poor girl would prevent our running any risk of burying her too soon: but suppose even the possibility of that, and that the tomb had been opened by some avaricious persons, who found, on opening the coffin, that the body became re-animated; no one can believe for a moment that my daughter would not have instantly returned to her parents, who doted on her, rather than have fled to a distant country. (89)

When the count and the marquis open Hildegarde's coffin, her corpse is there, but it is lying, as the marquis says, "uncorrupted . . . in the vault" (89). What explains the mystery is the link Hildegarde has to both Apollonia and the 'Death-Bride'. Embedded in the main story

that the marquis is telling the gathering of the Lieppa family is another tale that he tells to the Lieppas in order to ferret out Marino's secret concerning his first engagement to Apollonia. Here is the next piece of the puzzle: the pact that Marino (known as "Filippo" in the marquis' tale) and his former bride-elect, Apollonia (called "Clara") make is revealed. As "Filippo" must undertake a short journey before their marriage, he and "Clara" pledge themselves to each other in life and beyond the grave in case of either party's infidelity. The marquis relates that the lovers

prayed even that whichever of the lovers should prove unfaithful might not be permitted to repose quietly in the grave, but should haunt the perjured one, and force the inconstant party to come amongst the dead, and to share in the grave those sentiments which on earth had been forgotten . . . . The lovers finished by making punctures in their arms, and letting their blood run into a glass filled with white champagne. 'Our souls shall be inseparable as our blood!' exclaimed Filippo; and drinking half the contents of the glass, he gave the rest to Clara. (92)

The marquis then recounts how "Filippo" meets "Camilla" (meant, of course, to be Ida, or more specifically, the ghost of Hildegarde/'Death-Bride') and forsakes "Clara" for her. As a result of his selfish breach of his pact with "Clara," "Filippo" is dragged to the grave by the ghost of his spurned, and now spectral, lover, and dies "in the most violent convulsions" (100). Listening to this tale, Marino's "countenance, which had frequently changed colour during

the recital, evinced strong marks of the torments of a wicked conscience" (94). Marino, despite his guilty conscience, still goes ahead with his marriage to Ida regardless of the oath he made with Apollonia. Nothing happens during the ceremony, as in the marquis' tale of "Filippo and Clara," but Ida's doppelgänger, the ghost of Hildegarde, comes in to finish the narrative. Marino dies of fright in the nuptial chamber with the ghost of Hildegarde who, as it turns out, is not only Ida's doppelgänger coming to play out Ida and Marino's fate, but is also the 'Death-Bride,' or the spectral lover, of the village folklore. The marquis embarks on his third narrative within his main story with a description of the 'Death-Bride' legend which he learns from villagers near the Lieppa castle:

this affianced bride lived in this district, about the fourteenth or fifteenth century. She was a young lady of noble family, and she had conducted herself with so much perfidy and ingratitude towards her lover, that he died of grief; but afterwards, when she was about to marry, he appeared to her on the night of her intended wedding, and she died in consequence. And, it is said, that since that time, the spirit of this unfortunate creature wanders on earth in every possible shape; particularly in that of lovely females, to render their lovers inconstant. As it was permitted for her to appear in the form of any living being, she always chose amongst the dead those who the most strongly resembled them. It was for this reason she voluntarily frequented the galleries in which were hung family portraits. It is even reported that she has been seen in galleries of pictures open to public inspection. Finally, it is said, that, as a punishment for her perfidy, she will wander until she finds a man

whom she will in vain endeavour to make swerve  
from his engagement . . . (106)

Evidently, the 'Death-Bride,' by taking on the deceased form of Hildegarde, accomplished her goal with Marino. The narrative resumes its original position in the company of the small group and the marquis. In a typically Byronic fashion, the marquis makes a mysterious disappearance - thus reinforcing the possibility of all things supernatural. An ending such as this forces the reader of this tale to question if the marquis is a spectre himself.

From narratives concerning messengers and messages from the spiritual world, to tales incorporating stock Gothic machinery, these are the stories that fascinated the readers at Diodati and the topics that inspired them enough to embark upon a respectful imitation, and ultimately an innovative transformation, of what they read. It has been argued that the stories contained in *Fantasmagoriana* are

about dreams and wishes that become so insistent  
that they lead to altered states of consciousness . . . .  
We are plunged, in short, into a world in which the  
mind is not the passive receptor of external stimuli  
but is the governing principle. [The collection], in  
other words, presents us with an example of the  
romantic construction of emotion and personality.  
(Hale, 18)

As will be shown through an examination of the works by Lord Byron, John Polidori, and Mary Shelley, these ghost stories proved to be a

significant influence on the readers at Diodati. In their narratives, the stories included in *Fantasmagoriana* address concerns of the age out of which the Diodati group was emerging. As these writers took the Gothic reins, the transformation of the genre ensued. This will be seen in the chapters that follow, as Byron's "Fragment of a Novel," Polidori's *Ernestus Berchtold* and "The Vampyre," and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* are each seen to share in this Gothic intertextuality.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Fantasmagoriana*, Byron, and "The Vampyre"

The Diodati ghost story competition in 1816 contributed to the appearance of the two most enduring of Gothic myths: the vampire and the Frankenstein monster. The vampire entered British literature as a result of Lord Byron's "Fragment of a Novel" and John William Polidori's "The Vampyre" - both of which can be traced to the reading of the tales in *Fantasmagoriana*. Each of these works is innovative in narration, setting and character: even though they both retain similar Gothic motifs, the method of narration changes to a confessional form, setting becomes more accessible or contemporary, and characters are reshaped into more compelling and psychologically diverse figures. Carol Senf, in *The Vampire in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*, states that

while early gothic works are set in the remote past or in a timeless never-never land, quite different from the England inhabited by both writers and readers, the second generation of Gothic writers . . . move their mysterious tales to their own era and to more ordinary settings. Interested in exploring the psychology - often the abnormal psychology - of characters who appear perfectly ordinary, in probing the more mysterious occurrences of life, and in avoiding the stultifying rationalism that they associated with their predecessors in the Enlightenment and with many of their contemporaries, the second generation of Gothic writers discovered that they could create realistic



characters and settings and still relate the profound sense of mystery achieved by the early Gothic writers. (24)

It is in this expansion that Byron and Polidori incorporate older tenets with newer ones, and in the process, both figure largely in initiating the mythic capabilities of the Gothic genre.

Lord Byron's "Fragment of a Novel" contains within it the narrative patterns and Gothic motifs noted previously in *Fantasmagoriana*. Although it is a fragment, sufficient evidence can be gathered from both text and context to identify in it significant layers of Gothic intertextuality. The "Fragment" incorporates the same Gothic preoccupations with supernaturalism, mysticism and ontology found in the tales in *Fantasmagoriana*. Byron, however, uses a slight variation on the narrative strategy, bridging the Romantic concerns and the Gothic. Rather than narrate the story from many perspectives through a frame narrative followed by the 'story-within-the-story' technique that is evident in all of the tales in *Fantasmagoriana* except "The Spectre Barber," Byron uses the first person to relate his tale. This, in effect, narrows the focus of the tale entirely to the "I" of the story, and filters the events through this ego-centric perspective. In his use of the first person narration, Byron casts his tale in a typically Romantic light, rather than in the Gothic shadow of multi-voiced textual layering. Further, the confessional tone of the narration is similar to that of some of Byron's more personal and subject-centered works such as his dramatic

poem, *Manfred*. This interbreeding of Romantic and Gothic narrative patterns affects the unfolding of the tale itself, and transposes new meaning on to the Gothic genre.

The narrator/protagonist of the story is a young traveller, never identified by name, who has "determined on a journey through countries not hitherto much frequented by travellers" (172). This preoccupation with travelling to distant places strikes two chords: it hearkens back to the eighteenth-century interest in Orientalism and imperial expansionism; and it acts as metaphor for extending one's beliefs far beyond their natural perceptions, including, in this case, the encounter and coming to terms with a supernatural being. Such an encounter presupposes the existence of supernaturalism and magic. Rather than posit this existence as a possibility, as do the tales in *Fantasmagoriana*, Byron's "Fragment" accepts the possibility and delves further into suggesting potential reasons for and limits on the supernatural. Augustus Darvell, the mysterious figure, provides a venue for this exploration by occupying the narrator's interest. Establishing Darvell from the outset to be the subject of his tale, the narrator uses description to set the supernatural intrigue:

[Darvell] was a few years my elder, and a man of considerable fortune and ancient family . . . . Some peculiar circumstances in his private history had rendered him to me an object of attention, of interest, and even of regard, which neither the reserve of his manners, nor occasional indications of inquietude at times nearly approaching alienation of mind, could extinguish. (172)

Darvell is the Byronic figure; he has a mysterious past and is given to extreme behaviour bordering, as the narrator indicates, on insanity. The mystery surrounding Darvell makes up a significant portion of the narrative, while the other portion is given to a sideward glance at the narrator himself through a comparison with Darvell. While the narrator is an innocent, a novitiate, Darvell is the opposite; he is "deeply initiated into what is called the world" (172). The "cureless disquiet" to which Darvell is subject is of increasing importance to the narrator, and it is on this hinge which Byron could have turned his narrative, (if he had completed the tale), following in the pattern of the revelation of the mysterious in *Fantasmagoriana* (173). The source of this secret is, as with other melancholic Byronic figures, undetermined. The narrator reveals that "whether it arose from ambition, love, remorse, grief, from one or all of these, or merely from a morbid temperament akin to disease, I could not discover" (173). This gives Byron two possible avenues to follow in the creation of his ghost story, but the potential path is never realized in the existing narrative. Byron does, however, indicate that Darvell is evil because he has such a "contradictory and contradicted" history: "Where there is mystery," the narrator states, "it is generally supposed that there must also be evil" (173). Evil seems to be a valid perception of Darvell as the narrator continues to relate his strange experience with this mysterious figure. During their travels together in Southern and Eastern Europe, Darvell, although without

any discernible illness, becomes "daily more enfeebled . . . and . . . he was evidently wasting away: he became more and more silent and sleepless and at length so seriously altered" that the narrator becomes greatly alarmed (173-4). At this point, even though he notices some strange circumstances surrounding Darvell, the narrator still believes that his travelling companion is actually human. But the narrator gradually gathers sufficient information to assume that Darvell is, as he noted earlier, "a being of no common order" (172). By placing the character of Darvell simultaneously in such close proximity to human existence and non-human mystery, Byron is extending the belief in the supernatural from creatures that are intangible (angels, ghosts, demons) to creatures that come frighteningly close to reality. In this, Byron is reshaping the eighteenth century questioning of supernaturalism to nineteenth century affirmation of supernaturalism.

The fact that the travellers ultimately stop at a "Turkish cemetery" with "turbaned tombstones" further adds to the Oriental atmosphere. The description of this "city of the dead" is quite striking; it mingles the Gothic with the Oriental, a typical eighteenth century motif. But here, Byron, rather than describe the Oriental setting as lush and sensuous (as did his eighteenth century Orientalist antecedents), extends Orientalism to encompass Gothic aesthetics. The scene was "contrary to the usual aspect of Mahometan burial grounds, the cypresses were in this few in number, and these thinly scattered over its extent: the tombstones

were mostly fallen, and worn with age" (174). Perhaps Byron is demystifying the Orient through this depiction. The narrator learns that Darvell has been in this place before and has chosen specifically to die in this graveyard. Darvell tells the narrator, " 'This is the end of my journey, and of my life - I came here to die; but I have a request to make, a command - for such my last words must be - you will observe it?' " (175). As in *Fantasmagoriana*, this speech signals a deathbed pact. The narrator agrees to conceal his death, as part of the agreement, but is requested by Darvell for a further service. He presents the narrator with "a seal ring . . . on which were some Arabic characters" (175). He then, in an echo of "The Fated Hour," tells the narrator that " 'On the ninth day of the month, at noon precisely (what month you please, but this must be the day), you must fling this ring into the salt springs which run into the Bay of Eleusis: the day after, at the same hour, you must repair to the ruins of Ceres, and wait one hour' " (175). What significance this has to the narrative is unknown, since the tale ends shortly after this deathbed request. Speculations can be asserted that these ceremonies will facilitate the return of the dead given the allusions to Eleusis and Ceres. In terms of Gothic discourse, however, allusions to both Arabic and Greek symbols lift the Gothic out of the domestic and place it in the realm of the foreign and the fantastic. Given the models that Byron was respectfully imitating and reshaping, it can be deduced that this pact would carry with it drastic and fatalistic repercussions, as was the case in the stories in *Fantasmagoriana*.

Another undeveloped supernatural occurrence that has potential narrative consequences is the appearance of a mysterious stork. As Darvell is dying, this stork "with a snake in her beak, perched upon the tombstone" near Darvell and the narrator and watches them intently: "Darvell," the narrator tells us, "pointed to it, and smiled: he spoke - I know not whether to himself or to me - but the words were only, ' 'Tis well!' " (175). Darvell then instructs the narrator to bury him where the bird is perched. A brief and enigmatic conversation ensues in which Darvell divines that the stork does not eat the serpent despite the fact that "it is her natural prey" because, as he says weakly, " 'It is not yet time!' ," leaving the narrator, and the reader, in suspense (175). As the narrator watches the stork fly away, Darvell dies. Perhaps these events and symbols (the oath and the stork) are death tokens which again, like the foreign references, suggest a new, fantastic possibility that the entire natural world is somehow involved in supernatural events. Byron then draws his supernatural exploration back to his immediate concern: Darvell. In shock, the narrator watches Darvell's "countenance [which] in a few minutes became nearly black" (176). This event confirms for the narrator that Darvell is indeed an other-worldly creature. When the narrator and the janizary accompanying the two travellers bury Darvell, they notice that the grave Darvell has chosen had "already received some preceding Mahometan tenant" (176). This perhaps suggests that Darvell was once the tenant of the grave, had risen as Darvell, and will rise again as

someone else at some future date (if the casting of the ring and the visiting of the temple all on times and dates of nines have anything to do with his rebirth).

The final words of the tale are the narrator's. He states that "Between astonishment and grief, I was tearless" (176). Whether or not this tale would follow in the *expliqué* school of thought, or if it would be anti-Radcliffian is not explicit. However, from the way Byron has established the mysteries in his story, it could easily be assumed that his tale, like those of his Diodati contemporaries, would deny rational explanation. In this, it resembles the tales of *Fantasmagoriana* and confirms the epistemological and ontological shift those tales initiated. If Darvell does indeed return from the grave and is seen elsewhere, perhaps Byron had more than the literary traditions left to him by the stories in *Fantasmagoriana* to inspire him. For these writers of the ghost stories, undoubtedly fiction was often based, however loosely, on fact.<sup>5</sup> Whatever Byron

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<sup>5</sup> The following anecdote illustrates Byron's personal experience with a doppelgänger, ghost, or an impostor (depending on the interpretation): "B wrote to Murray on 2 Apr. 1817: 'I hate things *all fiction* . . . there should always be some foundation of fact for the most airy fabric - pure invention is but the talent of a liar' (BLJ v. 203). Although this fragment is merely a ghost story and certainly fictitious, it may well have had some 'foundation of fact'. For in Sept. 1810, B was seriously ill with a fever in Patras . . . . In a letter to Murray of 6 Oct. 1820, B told him of a curious incident that had occurred to Robert Peel, his old school friend, during the time: He told me that in 1810 he met me as he thought in James Street, but we passed without speaking. - He mentioned this - and it was denied as impossible - I being then in Turkey. - A day or two after he pointed out to his brother a person on the opposite side of the way - 'there' - said he 'is the man I took for Byron' - his brother instantly answered 'why it is Byron and no one else.' - But this is not all - I was *seen* by somebody *to write down my name* amongst the Enquirers after the King's health - then attacked by insanity. - Now - at this very period, as nearly as I could make out - I was ill of a *strong fever* at Patras, caught in the marshes near Olympia - from the *Malaria* - - If I had died there this would have been a

ultimately intended to do with this foray into fiction is unknowable; it is clear, however, that what is present in his "Fragment of a Novel" follows and extends the patterns established in *Fantasmagoriana*, and therefore exhibits the larger Gothic patterns that were pursued by other members of the Diodati group. It would be left to John Polidori to take Byron's fragmentary tale and create "The Vampyre," the beginning of a myth.

"The Vampyre," first published in 1819, was originally attributed to Lord Byron who was quick to refute authorship: "If the book is clever," Byron writes, "it would be base to deprive the real writer - whoever he may be - of his honour; - and if stupid - I desire the responsibility of nobody's dullness but my own . . ." (quoted in Whitton, 477). In fact, the evidence indicates that Byron was adamantly averse to authoring such a tale, as he wrote to his publisher:

the formality of a public advertisement of a book I never wrote and a residence where I never resided - is a little too much - particularly as I have no notion of the contents of the one - nor the incidents of the other. I have besides a personal dislike to "Vampires" and the little acquaintance I have with them would by no means induce me to divulge their secrets. (quoted in Whitton, 477)

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new Ghost Story for you. (BLJ viii. 192)" (Nicholson, *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, 331-332).



Byron states nothing of his unfinished "Fragment," or of Polidori's obvious reference to it; however, the connections between Lord Byron and Polidori's "The Vampyre" have been examined in terms of the actual relationship between the two men.<sup>6</sup> Byron's rank, melancholy and scandalous behaviour greatly informed Polidori's tale; in it, Polidori transformed these characteristics into a central Gothic figure - the Byronic hero/villain.

In his creation of the Byronic figure in "The Vampyre," Polidori figuratively glances back at *Fantasmagoriana*, as he implicitly reshapes the familiar Gothic hero drawn from his supernatural and Faustian precursors in tales such as the Italian marquis in "The Death-Bride". Margaret Carter, in *Spectre or Delusion: The Supernatural in Gothic Fiction*, makes an interesting observation about Polidori's story:

Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819) is an artistically executed tale, rising like a crescendo to a climax, very compelling from a stylistic point of view. It gave reality to a folk myth, and pointed out the future techniques of Romantic supernatural fiction with an increased stress upon local color and folklore, and with a heavier shade of the supernatural no longer rationalized and explained away. It abandoned the "disinheritance plot" of the conventional Gothic romance, and pointed out a similar shift in focus from the earlier "hero" as a passive noble soul to a more dynamic and consummate "villain." But this change, too, is another spotlight on an aspect of "Byronism." (25)

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Patricia Skarda, "Vampirism and Plagiarism: Byron's Influence and Polidori's Practice," *Studies in Romanticism* 28 (1989): 249-269.

Polidori's story has had such an impact largely due to his creation of the Byronic vampire. Lord Strongmore [more widely known as Ruthven]<sup>7</sup> is a nobleman "more remarkable for his singularities, than for his rank" who appears at the functions of London society; at these gatherings, he is aloof and is attracted to "the light laughter of the fair" (33). Strongmore has an "evil eye" that instantly instills great fear in the object of his gaze:

Those who felt this sensation of awe, could not explain whence it arose; some attributed it to the glance of that dead grey eye, which, fixing upon the object's face, seemed not to penetrate, and at one look to pierce through to the inward workings of the heart; but to throw upon the cheek a leaden ray that weighed upon the skin it could not pass. (33)

This nobleman has a further strangely immortal look about him. Many people in London society, the narrator reveals, seem to perceive that he "who by his colourless cheek, which never gained a warmer tint from the blush of conscious shame or from any powerful emotion, appeared to be above human feelings and sympathies, the fashionable names for frailties and sins" (33). Like the German society that entertains the equally mysterious and compelling Italian

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<sup>7</sup> Although the Gothic villain of Polidori's tale is generally referred to as Lord Ruthven, the editors of the text used in this thesis (D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf) adopts the name Lord Strongmore in keeping with the holograph revisions made by Polidori. (See *The Vampyre and Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus: Collected Fiction of John William Polidori*)

marquis in "The Death-Bride," the London society that invites this aristocrat into their homes "felt the weight of *ennui*, [and] were pleased at having something in their presence capable of engaging their attention" (33). "Something" is without a doubt the operative word in this case:

Lord Strongmore is addicted to the aristocratic vice of gambling, and he drains some of his victims of cash at the faro table much as he drains others of blood after dark. Polidori may have taken the gambling motif from 'The Death-Bride,' one of the stories in *Fantasmagoriana*, in which the central character is a mysterious 'Italian marquis' who breaks all the gaming tables at a spa (Utterson 80-2). Like Strongmore, he carelessly loses his money as soon as he wins it. Unlike Strongmore, however, he has a moral purpose: he wants to wipe out gambling at the resort. Strongmore simply delights in ruining the innocent and supporting the vicious, and perhaps, still more simply, in keeping money in circulation, like blood. (Macdonald and Scherf, 3-4)

Polidori's fascination with the corruption of the innocent is one of the distinguishing features of his tale. Through this corruption, Polidori examines evil on a literary level. Christopher Frayling, in *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*, also notes the connection between Lord Strongmore [Ruthven] and the marquis:

when Polidori was seeking 'models' for his vampire, Lord Ruthven, he turned not only to Caroline Lamb's Glenarvon (scarcely a mainstream Gothick source) but also to 'the Italian Marquis', a villainous character in *La Morte Fiancée* (from the

*Fantasmagoriana*): 'His long and wan visage, his piercing look, had so little of attraction in them, that everyone would certainly have avoided him, had he not possessed a fund of entertaining stories.' Like Ruthven, the Italian Marquis of the ghost story specializes in destroying lesser mortals at the gaming table. Polidori found much more than stock Gothick effects in the *Fantasmagoriana* and the aristocratic *Vampyre* was more than just a clichéd bogeyman to him: two years later, he was to denounce rank, wealth and power as empty illusions in his essay on the 'Source of Positive Pleasure'. Unlike Mary Shelley (in her Introduction), he was interested in a great deal more than the clanking of chains. (16-17)

These interests which extend beyond mere Gothic trappings are the most provocative.

Through his Byronic villain, Polidori moves the Gothic tale from political allegory to social commentary, an illustration of the moral shift from eighteenth century formality to a relaxation of convention in the nineteenth century. He cleverly exposes the vices of London society (particularly of female London society) that result from its fascination with evil itself, personified, of course, by Lord Strongmore. Polidori launches a bitter attack on London society and virtually refers to its members as metaphoric vampires. The women are described as "female hunters"; one in particular, Lady Mercer, allows herself to become "the mockery of every monster shewn in drawing-rooms since her marriage," and Lord Strongmore is no exception to her self-deprecating rule, even though she is unaware that he is, quite literally, a monster (33). The narrator harshly

judges all of the women in this London society for their admiration of the nobleman. They become, in effect, social vampires who are just as eager to drain the excitement out of an unusual guest as is their guest to drain the blood out of them. Strongmore facilitates this interdependent vampiric relationship through his social finesse. His "reputation of a winning tongue" and "his apparent hatred of vice," according to the narrator, enable the society to eventually "overcome the dread of his singular character" and he shares his company "as often among those females who adorn their sex by virtue of their domestic virtues, as among those who sully it by their vices" (34). The very society which seeks to seduce the nobleman into their company, then, becomes seduced by his charms. At this point the protagonist, young Aubrey, enters the narrative and begins to uncover the extent of Strongmore's monstrosity.

Vestiges of Gothic heroes such as Ferdinand from "The Family Portraits," Calzolaro from "The Death's Head," and Francis from "The Spectre Barber" are also to be found in Polidori's "The Vampyre". While Aubrey does not hold the same mythic attraction as does the Byronic vampire, he does contribute to a new form of protagonist in Gothic fiction: a Romantic and virtuous double for the Gothic villain. As a result, Polidori's revisioning adds new dimension to the psychological possibilities of Gothic doubling. The mirror image, rather than simply reflect what it sees, becomes inverted to extend beyond the obvious.

In an echo of characters from the five ghost stories in *Fantasmagoriana*, Aubrey is "an orphan left with an only sister in the possession of great wealth, by parents who died whilst yet in childhood" (34). But the description of Aubrey is highly Romantic; it sounds remarkably like a description of Percy Shelley (perhaps an effect of the impression Shelley made on Polidori at Diodati). Aubrey, like Shelley, had a "high romantic feeling of honour and candour" and "believed all to sympathise with virtue, and thought that vice was thrown in by Providence as by authors of Romances merely for the picturesque effect of the scene" (34). The narrator describes him as "handsome, frank, and rich" and that he "thought, in fine, that the dreams of poets were the realities of life" (34). One of the greatest connections Aubrey has with Shelley is his fascination with midnight reveries and speculations on the supernatural; this is, perhaps, another feature of Polidori spending time in Shelley's company during the summer of 1816. The narrator, somewhat disdainfully perhaps in echo of Polidori's jealousies, records that

Attached as he was to the romance of his solitary hours, he was startled at finding, that, except in the tallow and wax candles flickering not from the presence of a ghost, but from a draught of air breaking through his golden leathered doors and felted floors, there was no foundation in real life for any of that congeries of pleasing horrors and descriptions contained in the volumes, which had formed the occupation of his midnight vigils. Finding, however, some compensation in his gratified vanity, he was about to relinquish his

dreams, when the extraordinary being we have above described, crossed him in his career. (34)

This elaborate description could be a link between Aubrey and Shelley, Strongmore and Byron. Or it could simply be the narrator's way of constructing a complete innocent in his protagonist for the sake of a dramatic fall precipitated by the evil Lord Strongmore. This inverted mirror image of virtue and innocence on the one side, and evil and malefaction on the other, directly parallels the fictional protagonist-antagonist dynamic in Byron's "Fragment". It has been posited that the Aubrey/Strongmore opposition is meant to further parallel the factual Polidori/Byron dynamic, as suggested in this next passage:

[Aubrey] gradually learnt that Lord Strongmore's affairs were embarrassed, and soon found, from the notes of preparation in ----- Street, that he was about to travel. Desirous of gaining some information respecting this singular character, who, till now, had only whetted his curiosity, he hinted to his guardians, that it was time for him to perform the grand tour . . . and Aubrey immediately mentioning his intentions to Lord Strongmore, was surprised to receive from him a proposal that they should travell [sic.] together. (35)

This is similar to the arrangements made between Polidori and Byron in 1816. In this case, the possibilities for intertextuality extend beyond the limits of the text and wander into the realm of reality. The narrator, whatever his intentions for biographical connections

are, proceeds to offer a scathing account of Lord Strongmore's less than favourable actions. He, according to the narrator as seen through Aubrey's eyes, prefers to bestow charity upon "the profligate" rather than "the virtuous indigent" simply because of Strongmore's preference for the "importunity of the vicious" of the former as opposed to the "retiring bashfulness" of the latter (35). In keeping with Strongmore's 'apparent' disgust for vice, these profligates would, shortly after Strongmore's generosity, fall prey to the "curse upon it, for they were all either led to the scaffold, or sunk to the lowest and most abject misery" (36). Polidori's protagonist, as presented here, is juxtaposed directly against his villain.

Polidori, much like Byron in the "Fragment" on which "The Vampyre" was based, extends the use of the supernatural in the Gothic. The unexplained is a given 'reality' by the single event of giving unnatural events and characters natural qualities. That is, the supernatural in "The Vampyre" is lifted from the ethereal ghosts, angels and demons as seen in *Fantasmagoriana*, and is placed more firmly (although still tentatively) on earth in human-like form with human-like and superhuman characteristics. The enticement of this supernatural creature now emanates from the fact that he closely resembles yet has additional powers that transcend human capability. What was once beyond human reach in previous Gothic tales, is now frighteningly tangible and, as a result, all the more real. In one of the most powerful descriptions of Lord Strongmore, Aubrey



(through the narrator) provides evidence for the unearthly qualities of his travelling companion:

Lord Strongmore in his carriage, and amidst the various wild and rich scenes of nature, was always the same: his eye spoke less than his lip; and though Aubrey was near the object of his curiosity, he obtained no greater gratification from it than the constant excitement of vainly wishing to break that mystery, which to his exalted imagination began to assume the appearance of something supernatural.  
(36)

Here we see both Strongmore's qualities and Aubrey's compelling instinct to decode the mystery surrounding his companion; the Gothic villain is close enough to touch, but is still supernaturally untouchable. During the course of their travels, Aubrey learns more about Strongmore that adds to the mystery that envelops this character. Strongmore, it is revealed, has left London society because of a scandal based on the events of his own doing. His character, Aubrey's guardians write to him from England, is "to be dreaded, for the possession of irresistible powers of seduction, rendered his licentious habits too dangerous to society" (36). The narrator describes how the women in London society had thrown their virtuous masks aside "and had not scrupled to expose the whole deformity of their vices to the public view" as a result of associations with Strongmore (37). Further seductions are noted by Aubrey while on tour with Strongmore. One in particular, "an innocent,

though thoughtless girl" in Italy, causes Aubrey to leave Strongmore on moral grounds (37).

In Greece, Aubrey meets and falls in love with a "beautiful and delicate" girl named Ianthe, whose innocence the narrator takes great pains to establish (37-39). It is, ironically, this innocent Gothic figure who tells Aubrey "the tale of the living vampyre, who had passed years amidst his friends, and dearest ties, forced every year, by feeding upon the life of a lovely female to prolong his existence for the ensuing months" (38). In the inclusion of this information, Polidori's tale becomes an intersection of folklore and fiction. Ianthe further asserts that some vampire hunters or "old men, . . . had at last detected one living amongst themselves" and it is Ianthe who describes to Aubrey "the traditional appearance of these monsters" (38). When he hears this description, although it is never revealed to the reader, Aubrey makes an immediate connection with Lord Strongmore. His suspicions which forced him to wonder at the mysterious nature of his former travelling companion are now confirmed. All of these details for Aubrey begin "to excite a belief in the supernatural power of Lord Strongmore" (39).

Ianthe's story may well be an echo of actual folkloric accounts of Greek vampires. Carter argues that "Even in remote valleys and clustering villages of Greece the vampire stalks, unquestioned and accepted as Brucolacas" (17-18). The Greek superstitions (i.e. the forest where vampires are said to haunt) seem to parallel the village superstitions and folklore found in "The Death-Bride," "The Death's

Head," and the other tales of *Fantasmagoriana*. Aubrey ends up in such a forest on a stormy evening. Here, he is attacked by the vampire (whose identity is still undisclosed at this point, even though we know it is Strongmore):

[Aubrey] felt himself grappled by one whose strength seemed superhuman: determined to sell his life as dearly as he could, he struggled; but it was in vain: he was lifted from his feet and hurled with enormous force against the ground. - His enemy threw himself upon him, and kneeling upon his breast, had placed his hands upon his throat - when the glare of many torches penetrating through the hole that gave light in the day disturbed him. (40)

This interruption saves Aubrey's life and the vampire escapes. However, the first victim of this vampire, Ianthe, is here described:

[She had] no colour upon her cheek, not even upon her lip; yet there was a stillness about her face that seemed almost as attaching as the life that had once dwelt there; - upon her throat were the marks of teeth having opened the vein of her neck: - to this the men pointed, crying, simultaneously struck with horror, 'A Vampyre! a Vampyre!'. (41)

As Frayling states, the vampiric "kiss of death" motif is a long-standing Gothic preoccupation:

The *Fantasmagoriana* did not, of course, conjure up the 'kiss of death' theme of *Les Portraits de Famille* from out of thin air. The Gothick novelists may

have referred *en passant* to the theme of vampirism, but they did not exploit it in a thoroughgoing way, so the source which Eyriès acknowledged was from an earlier period, predating the burning of the Gothick flame - a period when philosophers of the Age of Reason in France, Germany and Italy were trying to come to grips with well-publicised epidemics of vampirism emanating from eastern Europe. The Preface to Eyriès's collection refers specifically to the works of Augustin Calmet and his critics, as well as to Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique* and to the more credulous works by cranky scientists, dating from the more recent age of illuminism. The anonymous Introduction to Polidori's *Vampyre* (written for the *New Monthly Magazine*, April 1819) also refers to Calmet's 'great work upon this subject', but adds 'the veracious Tournefort's' account of his travels in the Levant to its list of sources. There is no record of any discussion about these books having taken place in summer 1816 (although Southey was discussed, and he had appended both Tournefort's account and an anecdote from Calmet *in extenso* to his vampire poem *Thabala the Destroyer* fifteen years before), but the 'epidemics' they analysed must nevertheless be considered as crucial stimuli to the success of the vampire genre in the nineteenth century. (Frayling, 19)

Whatever the pre-text of the "kiss of death" of the vampire, Polidori's context appears to be folklore mixed with the fiction he found in *Fantasmagoriana*. In either case, the effects of Polidori's vampire are as disastrous as the effects of fate in the *Fantasmagoriana* tales.

After his devastating, near-death encounter, Aubrey falls into a delirious fever. Now associating the vampire with Lord Strongmore, Aubrey curses Strongmore as Ianthe's "destroyer" (41). It is at this point where Aubrey and Strongmore cross paths. Strongmore installs himself as Aubrey's caretaker and effectively nurses him back to health; however, Aubrey remains suspicious of Strongmore despite their renewed friendship. Aubrey is "at times . . . surprised to meet [Strongmore's] gaze fixed intently upon him, with a smile of malicious exultation playing upon his lips" (41). He and Strongmore resume their travels around Greece after Aubrey regains his health only to succumb to an attack by banditti (as in the "Fragment"). Lord Strongmore, like Augustus Darvell, is 'mortally' wounded, and makes the often alluded to 'deathbed' request of Aubrey:

'Swear by all your soul reveres, by all your nature dreads, swear by that for a year and a day you will not impart your knowledge of my crimes or death to any living being, in any way, whatever may happen, or whatever you may see.' - His eyes seemed bursting from their sockets: 'I swear!' said Aubrey; he sunk laughing upon his pillow and breathed no more. (43)

This secret pact echoes the pacts made on deathbeds in several of the tales in *Fantasmagoriana*. It also links with Byron's "Fragment" and the pact made between the narrator/protagonist and Darvell. MacDonald and Scherf make a firm connection between *Fantasmagoriana*, Byron's "Fragment" and Polidori's "The Vampyre":

Polidori [in *The Vampyre*] borrowed his oath of silence from Byron: in practically the only fully dramatized incident in Byron's fragmentary story, the dying Darvell makes his friend promise not to reveal his death. Byron in turn seems to have borrowed the oath from *Fantasmagoriana*. 'The Family Portraits,' . . . contains a deathbed revelation of the origins of a family, a revelation that is sealed by an oath of silence and that, when revealed, helps to resolve the story's complicate dynastic plot (Utterson 38). 'The Death-Bride,' . . . contains two such oaths: the villain asks the Italian marquis to swear not to reveal his past misdeeds (Utterson 85, 101-2), and the heroine's father asks both the villain and the marquis to swear not to reveal that the heroine's twin sister has returned from the dead (88, 90). These seem to have particularly impressed the Genevan party: the oath in both Byron's fragment and Polidori's tale is designed to facilitate the villain's return from the dead, and in Polidori's tale it has two parts, corresponding to the two oaths in the earlier story: 'swear that for a year and a day you will not impart your knowledge of my *crimes* or *death* to any living being' (43; emphasis added). (Macdonald and Scherf, 5)

Clearly, Polidori was so impressed that he thought it fitting to include a version of this pact in his tale.

There are a few curious circumstances surrounding Strongmore's death. Aubrey feels "a cold shivering" coming over him when he remembers his oath (43). When he attempts to bury the corpse, a bandit informs him that Strongmore had requested to be placed on a mountaintop after his death so that his body "should be exposed to the first cold ray of the moon that rose after his death"

(43). Aubrey discovers that the body is missing when he goes to the mountaintop to bury it. Weary of all the "terrible misfortunes" and the heightened "superstitious melancholy" that Greece had caused him, Aubrey goes to Smyrna to await a ship that will take him to Otranto or Naples (44). It is on his return journey to England that Aubrey compiles evidence that confirms his suspicions that Strongmore is the vampire. While waiting in Smyrna, he goes through Strongmore's personal effects and finds "several daggers and ataghans" among which he finds "a sheath apparently ornamented in the same style as the dagger discovered in the fatal hut" in which Ianthe was killed and he was attacked (44). In Rome, Aubrey checks in on the innocent young girl Strongmore was attempting to seduce on their original passage through the region. He discovers that she had "fallen a victim to the destroyer of Ianthe"; he then quickens the pace of his return to England "as if he were hastening to save the life of someone he held dear" (44). This narrative strategy foreshadows events to come and quickens the pace of the narrative.

He returns home to his sister, Miss Aubrey, who is, like Florentina from "The Fated Hour," and Ida from "The Death-Bride," the epitome of a melancholic Gothic orphan. She is to enter into London society at the "next drawing-room" and it is at this occasion, Lord Strongmore reappears very much alive: Aubrey "could not believe it possible - the dead rise again!," but this is indeed the case (45). At another social function, Aubrey finds Strongmore "in earnest conversation" with Miss Aubrey, and it nearly drives him

mad because he can do nothing to protect her as a result of his pact with the monster (46). On both of these occasions, Strongmore warns Aubrey to remember his oath. Aubrey slowly descends into madness and becomes increasingly "distracted . . . now, that the certainty of the monster's living again pressed upon his thoughts" (46). As a part of being Strongmore's double, he bears a certain responsibility for Strongmore's malevolent successes and, although he did not create him, he feels responsible for his monster. However, Aubrey knows the nature of the beast:

was he then to allow this monster to roam, bearing ruin upon his breath, amidst all he held dear, and not avert its progress? His very sister might have been touched by him. But even if he were to break his oath, and disclose his suspicions, who would believe him? He thought of employing his own hand to free the world from such a wretch; but death, he remembered, had already been mocked.  
(46)

Aubrey would have to wait for future vampire stories to learn how to kill one!

Aubrey's angst is enacted through his concern for his sister, Miss Aubrey. In Aubrey's dilemma, a moral/ontological fixation is evident: who will believe him if he reveals the truth? His solution, to do nothing until disaster hits, bring about the drastic and tragic resolution of the narrative. Aubrey is overcome with madness as a result of his inability to act and refuses society, Miss Aubrey, and help. He becomes increasingly "anxious to fly that image which



haunted him" (46). This apathy and ego-centric absorption facilitate Strongmore's final act of destruction: the murder of Miss Aubrey. Aubrey is plagued with guilt by the thought that he has left his loved ones "with a fiend amongst them, of whose presence they were unconscious" (46). His narrative lamentations indicate Aubrey's descent into mad ravings which last one year. Aubrey is clearly counting down the year and the day promised to Strongmore so that he can reveal his secret without fear of repercussion. His guardians watch Aubrey and note "that several times in the day he would count upon his fingers a definite number, and then smile" (47). But Strongmore deceives Aubrey once again (under the name of the Earl of Marsden): he marries Miss Aubrey on the day preceding the deadline of Aubrey's silence. It is a familiar motif that connects the narrative; when Aubrey sees a miniature portrait that Miss Aubrey carries of her future husband, Aubrey's worst fears are realized - Marsden is in fact Strongmore. In fear, Aubrey "seized the portrait in a paroxysm of rage, and trampled it under foot" (48). Aubrey fails to stop the wedding and is warned a fourth time by Strongmore: " 'Remember your oath, and know that if not my bride to day, your sister is dishonoured. Women are frail!' " (49). So, Strongmore has glutted his sexual appetite, yet another trademark of the Byronic vampire. Aubrey dies that same evening after he reveals his tale to the guardians at the stroke of midnight. The narrator ends the tale with the following explanation: "The guardians hastened to protect Miss Aubrey; but when they arrived, it was too late. Lord

Strongmore had disappeared, and Aubrey's sister had glutted the thirst of a VAMPYRE!" (49). Polidori, in his use of curses, pacts and portraits, ends his innovative tale with a respectful bow to his Gothic antecedents.

The impact that "The Vampyre" has had is easily seen today. Polidori's tale is the first of "a fully-fledged literary genre, with well-defined rules and a series of plot formulae which could be manipulated to suit popular taste at any time between 1820 and 1850; the location may change (Ruthven was reincarnated in Greece, Italy, the Balkans, rural England and Scotland . . . ) but the story remained more or less the same" (Frayling, *Vampires: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*, 62). Polidori's combination and expansion of the Gothic tenets seen previously in *Fantasmagoriana* and Byron's "Fragment of a Novel," resulted in the creation of a literary archetype. In this sense, then, Polidori's "The Vampyre" initiates a Gothic intertextual myth-making that continues far into the twentieth century. Were it not for the Diodati competition, this literary tradition may not have taken its present form. Critics agree that even

Before the events of 1816, there had been isolated references to vampirism (or to the iconography of vampirism) in prose literature . . . and even sustained attempts to exploit the myth, by early Romantics from Germany such as Goethe and Tieck, but those who were involved in that 'wet, ungenial summer' succeeded in fusing the various elements

of vampirism into a coherent literary genre (some might say a cliché) for the first time. The immediate consequence, for both Mary Shelley and Polidori, was that they wrote not as teenagers exploring the possibilities of fiction for the first time, but with the detached, tired sophistication of seasoned groupies. The long-term consequence can still be seen today, on television and on video and at the cinema, any night, especially at the 'witching hour', all over the western world. (Frayling, 18)

Some of these "long-term consequences" began with Lord Byron's "Fragment of a Novel," and John Polidori's tale, "The Vampyre".

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Fantasmagoriana and Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus*

"The Vampyre," although Polidori's best known work, was not his sole contribution to the Gothic genre. His more immediate response to the ghost story competition at Diodati was *Ernestus Berchtold; or, The Modern Oedipus*. That this tale was a direct result of the contest is made clear from his own statement: "[the] tale here presented to the public is the one I began at Coligny, when *Frankenstein* was planned, and when a noble author having determined to descend from his lofty range, gave up a few hours to a tale of terror, and wrote the fragment published at the end of *Mazeppa*" (51). Furthermore, this is the tale referred to by Mary Shelley, in her "Introduction" to *Frankenstein* as Polidori's "terrible idea about a skull-headed lady" (ix). Although her recollection is somewhat erroneous in this case, Mary Shelley confirms certain similarities between Polidori's story and her remembered account. A closer analysis of *Ernestus Berchtold* will illustrate how both Mary Shelley's recollection, and more significantly, key Gothic patterns are played out in Polidori's novel.

Typical of many eighteenth and nineteenth century novels, *Ernestus Berchtold* has a tripartite structure. Each section comprises

approximately thirty pages; however, the third section is divided into two sections - Ernestus' narration (continued from the first and second parts), and the narration of Filiberto Doni. The change in point of view in the third section signals a significant shift in the narrative, a shift which provides both the climax and denouement of the tale through a different narrative voice. This shift also indicates a change of position for Ernestus; once the first-person narrator, he now becomes a listener like both his audience and the reader. His subject position, therefore, shifts, and the text becomes a dual-voiced narrative. This split is indicative of a transformation of the narrative layering evident in the ghost stories of *Fantasmagoriana*. In a combination of external and internal focalization, the characters are both described by the narrator, and given voice. Like the narrator in Byron's "Fragment," the narrator in *Ernestus Berchtold* is the protagonist, whether it be Ernestus or Doni. In both cases, the narrative pattern has evolved from the external focalization of *Fantasmagoriana* to the internal focalization with the narrator as protagonist. Like the inclusion of myths and folklore in *Fantasmagoriana*, the many-voiced narrative in *Ernestus Berchtold* signals a new form of dialogism in the Gothic tale: the many levels of discursive layering shifts to many layers of voices (i.e. heteroglossia).

The tale begins in the first-person; the narrator is Ernestus, an orphan who, with his twin sister Julia, lives with an elderly priest named Berchtold. This narration is similar to that of Byron's "Fragment" in that it is confessional and self-revealing. Ernestus

presents a history of himself and his family and the terrible curse that shapes their existence and that causes their ultimate destruction. It is interesting to note that Ernestus, as a part of his confessional narrative, accepts responsibility for the welfare of his loved ones. This reflects the predominant theme in *Fantasmagoriana* ("The Fated Hour" and "The Family Portraits" for example): the anxieties surrounding love. The first instance occurs at the end of Part One with the death of Berchtold. Ernestus says: "Berchtold was but the first victim to my love. My love has left me, a scattered pine amidst this desolate scene, but first it has destroyed all who were bound to me, my love has proved, - but I must preserve my strength, - I have horrors to relate" (81). Again, when Julia dies, Ernestus takes responsibility for his sister's downfall and death: "I was the source of all, my coloring of Olivieri's good qualities, my exposing to her the sources of my doubt in those doctrines our sainted foster-father had taught us, my example in the career of vice were the causes of her fault - her death" (112). He carries this argument even further and, extending his foreboding to Louisa and Doni, insists on the role of destiny:

It was yet but the second victim to my fate; there were two others wanting; I sat by the dead body reflecting upon the horrible fatality that had caused my virtues and my vices to prove alike mortal to the two beings who for many years had been the only companions I possessed in nature, the only sympathizers in my joys and sorrows. (112)

Similar to the determinism found in *Fantasmagoriana*, fate is the controlling element in the narrative. But Ernestus' self-admonition continues; as Julia dies and he is left with her child in his arms, Ernestus tells his listener (probably the child now grown) that he "gazed upon his infantile face, while a bitter tear fell from the eye of him who had been the cause of his birth being loaded with infamy and shame" (112-113). However, a turning point in the narrative occurs when Louisa dies and Ernestus gains some confidence in the thought of an afterlife: "Religion, Louisa's words, however, had not lost all influence, I resisted that will, which would have led me to immolate myself a victim to the manes of those my love had slain. The hopes of a futurity, of Louisa in Heaven, upheld me" (126). This belief in a heavenly life after death echoes a Christian ontology not expressly evident in either *Fantasmagoriana* or Byron's "Fragment". Through the inclusion of this element, Polidori examines the possibilities of the supernatural from a Christian religious perspective, a variation on a familiar Gothic pattern.

A final point about the narrative technique in *Ernestus Berchtold* is the shift of temporal and spatial boundaries. One of the ways Polidori effects this is through his use of an audience who is present within the text. Through this audience, the narration is given space to shift from past to present, and from one place to another as the events of the narrative unfold. *Ernestus Berchtold* is narrated to an audience; but unlike other tales, this audience is neither a *conversazioni* (as in *Fantasmagoriana*) nor completely

unknown (as in the "Fragment"). In Polidori's novel, the audience is a single, silent, though identifiable person. The narration of *Ernestus Berchtold* is kept solely between the narrator and the auditor, with the reader as privileged listeners; however, the identity of Ernestus' listener is never overtly given. Some clues are given as to the auditor's identity through both the narrative itself and through the intrusions made by the narrator. Ernestus refers to the listener as a "young man," and we are already aware that Julia's child is male (112). At an interesting point during the narration, Ernestus almost gives away the story's mystery in a narrative intrusion: "Louisa was mine - Louisa mine! But Heaven had not smiled upon our union - no, no. It was but the anger of a God veiled under the brightest hues. Louisa was my, - but I must relate the whole" (124). And, again, Ernestus intrudes, "You may think I rest too much upon these instances of my life; but I dread to narrate my miseries; the recalling to memory anguish and grief racks my heart; but I have begun, and you shall hear the whole" (72). These narratorial intrusions confirm both the confessional nature of the tale and the possible identity of the silent listener. Perhaps the listener is the son of Julia and Olivieri. Ernestus says of Julia's child when he is born: "I gave him his mother's and my own name, that I might still have a bond between us" (112). Perhaps his name is Julian or Ernestus, but he is most certainly named Berchtold. In any case, the use of this listener removes temporal and spatial boundaries both within and without



the text in the movement of time and place, and the intermingling of the narrative's audience with the text's reader.

The supernatural tone is set early in the novel. Ernestus, recollecting his childhood, notes: "I was lulled half trembling to sleep by the tales of my foster mother concerning ogres and spirits from the dead" (54). This early recollection marks a key part of Ernestus and Julia's psychological make-up: their connection with superstition. As both characters move throughout the narrative, this core superstition evolves into a connection with the spirit world and, in particular, with their deceased mother. As the subtitle indicates, the search for identity through the mother is fundamental. This identity crisis is ultimately resolved through the exploration of the supernatural. This quest begins at the outset; the orphans take their foster-father's surname because nothing (other than their strange arrival and death) is known of their mother or father. Despite their lack of knowledge of their mother (who is later discovered to be Matilda), the twins are particularly attached to her memory, and their "first infantile communications" occurred at their mother's graveside (55). Ernestus and Julia do, however, have one reminder of Matilda: a locket which contains her portrait. Ernestus tells his auditor,

I had so often gazed upon my mother's picture, which my sister wore round her neck from her earliest infancy, that, while sitting by her tomb, it seemed as if her image had haunted me in my sleep, for I frequently found myself arguing as if I

had had actual proof of the existence of beings superior to ourselves. (61)

Immediately, a signal is established that indicates a mystery to be unraveled and this tale, like its counterparts in *Fantasmagoriana*, contains the mysterious portrait that typically plays such a significant role in the narrative. Descriptions presented by Ernestus of this portrait always point to the "melancholy look" on Matilda's face mingled with the "heavenly" peace that also rests there (73). The first glimpse of Matilda the reader obtains is filtered through Ernestus' eyes:

I had gazed upon it so often, that I had her image before me, even when far from home, but it was only distinct in the face, which appeared to be gazing on Heaven, with the consciousness of having obtained a prayer for me. Since my sister's dreams, it seemed as if I knew a mother's care, and I often sighed, to think, that though thus thoughtful of one even in Heaven, she did not think me worthy of enjoying her smile. (73)

The portrait, as in the other ghost stories considered so far, is a narrative link to the disclosure and closure of the mysteries in the novel. At the climax of the novel, Ernestus has the small portrait of his mother transformed into a life-sized portrait. This painting is awe-inspiring according to Ernestus: "She seemed starting from the canvass; the outline of her figure was lost in the blaze of light, and her face, meek amidst splendor, severe, though with features

naturally mild, seemed speaking those words I had heard" (124). Although it plays a central role in the unfolding of Ernestus' narrative, the uncovering of the portrait's significance does not happen until the narrative of Filiberto Doni at the story's end. If further confirmation of Ernestus' searching for identity through his belief in the supernatural is required, we need only listen to Ernestus himself. Ernestus offers his listener a reason why he dwells on the particulars of his childhood so extensively. He says that "those years saw deposited in my breast the seeds which have brought me to the state of apathy and misery you witness . . . . My life till now has passed in dreams" (60-61).

Crisis of identity in *Ernestus Berchtold*, as has been shown, is directly connected to the supernatural. Of equal significance are the identities of crisis, namely, doubles and the maintenance of family lines. Each of these motifs of identification is inextricably bound to the exploration of the supernatural. In the other ghost stories discussed, the interplay of family members is crucial, as here in *Ernestus Berchtold* where it becomes a dominant theme. As in the stories in *Fantasmagoriana*, family annihilation and the doppelgänger are strong motifs, but here they take on added significance. Polidori extends these familiar Gothic trappings through his exploration of incest. The motif of family annihilation is transformed by the motif of incest in that the family becomes a much larger, and more complicated unit. The concerns for the maintenance of family lines, then, become mired down in ethical questions. The fact that lovers

are brother and sister complicates the issue of identities. In terms of the doppelgänger, again, the larger family unit presents multiple possibilities in both the tangible and intangible sense. Doubles occur in terms of actual characters and in ghostly forms of characters but are given further significance through the addition of a Faustian motif. *Ernestus Berchtold*, then, presents an expansion of these patterns and of the incest theme found in other Gothic and Romantic works earlier, contemporary and future (i.e. Lewis' *The Monk*, Byron's *Manfred*, Shelley's *The Cenci*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*).

A division can be made in the evidence of doppelgängers in Polidori's novel as there seems to be a split between the treatment of female and male characters. The male characters are doubled in a tangible sense in that they exhibit the familiar literary doppelgänger as two halves of the same psyche represented by two characters. In this case, the two male counterparts are Ernestus and his brother, Olivieri, Berchtold and Count Doni. Ernestus is often juxtaposed against Olivieri by Doni as "an example of strength, resisting all the temptations of vice" at first (87). Olivieri, though, exposes Ernestus' predilection for vice by involving him in the gambling world. Berchtold is the priest of God figure and Doni is the dabbler with the Devil, or the Faustian figure. Both the Ernestus/Olivieri and the Berchtold/Doni dualities represent split halves of the struggle between good and evil forces so intrinsic in Gothic fiction. One of the elements which leads to the downfall of the Berchtolds/Donis is

Faustian ambition. This is manifested rather early on in the narrative through Ernestus himself. He admits to a love of glory and honor gleaned from war, and of the defects in his informal education that flaw his character; namely, Ernestus is "taught to admire public instead of private virtues" (56). He also admits in this first part that his life has been "in the hands of the foul fiends that have tormented [him], as plastic clay, which they formed in that manner, best fitted to contain the miseries they were preparing to pour upon it" (60). This foreboding statement acts as a foreshadowing of the disastrous consequences such ambition and folly eventually bring. The only male character who is exempt from Faustian visions of wealth and power is Berchtold, who instead becomes a victim of Ernestus' vice (or so Ernestus perceives). As will be seen, Faustian greed affects each of the inhabitants of the Doni household, and leads to either damnation or salvation accordingly.

With the female characters, however, the doppelgänger motif is not as tangible. Julia and Louisa can be considered doubles as one falls from grace and one remains virtuous. However, each of these female characters can be seen as a double for their mother, Matilda. While Julia actually communes with her mother's spirit and therefore becomes a conduit for her warnings and wishes, Louisa is the physical embodiment of Matilda, and is therefore, like her mother, the guiding angel of Ernestus. Ernestus recounts one of Julia's visions of their mother while he was away at war:

while I was away she had seen our mother, who appeared to her arrayed in mourning, announcing, that I was in the greatest danger, and that she must guard me, but that unless she wished my peril, she must conceal it from me. 'Ernestus,' my sister said, 'I cannot obey, let your fate be mine, and I am content.' (66)

Again, when Julia and Ernestus arrive at Milan with the Donis, she "was visited with a threatening appeal from [their] mother, who bade her depart with [Ernestus] once more to [their] native wilds, and never return" (83). Julia is the link to the spirit world, the witch or necromancer, and in this way even parallels Ernestus and Doni in her Faustian greed. She recounts to Ernestus

that she discovered the means of raising a superior being; but that startled at his appearance, she had sunk to the ground . . . . She did attempt to raise a spirit, but what was to her horror, when the walls of her apartment echoed but scoffs and mockings, they seemed to say that she needed not a greater price than the gratification of her passions, and that they would not give her more; that she was theirs already, and that to command them could only be obtained by one not already damned. (111)

Louisa, unlike Julia, is not associated with evil or folly; rather, she represents the virtue of Matilda. This resemblance is seen from her first appearance in the novel. Louisa and Ernestus have a literal bond from the moment they meet: the scarf Louisa gives Ernestus acts as a metaphoric umbilical chord representative of the mother-

son bond within a sister-brother (and unfortunately, a wife-husband) tie. While Julia is the prophetess of doom, Louisa is the angel of salvation. From their first meeting, Ernestus refers to Louisa as his "guardian angel," his "ministering angel," and his "protecting angel" (75 and 90). He further claims that from "the first moment that I had seen her, she seemed to visit this earth as my protecting angel; now it appeared as if such a being had led me to the throne of him of whose commands she was the bearer" (102).

Further, there is a connection between these two sets of doppelgängers. While the male characters seem to cause the misfortunes, the females are the conduits of excessive emotion and are the bearers of the repercussions of the Oedipal conflicts. Ernestus has another double in Julia; this is natural, because they are twins, but as Ernestus describes it, the bond runs deeper to an almost spiritual level:

I had loved my sister with all that affection two isolated beings naturally feel towards each other. She had been to me as the weaker part of myself, which always needed protection and defense. To me she had been the holder of all my secrets, the partaker of all my sorrows; when an outcast, she had received me; when a wretch, she had not spurned me. (112)

As with many of the characters in *Fantasmagoriana*, each of the characters in *Ernestus Berchtold* has a connection with the supernatural. However, rather than simply await the fulfillment of

destiny like Florentina in "The Fated Hour" or watch their families die out as in "The Family Portraits," the characters in *Ernestus Berchtold*, through this connection, either seek identity or become identifiable. Julia's role as prophetess and Louisa's role as angel have already been discussed. However, Ernestus, Doni, and even Olivieri intermingle with forces from beyond. Ernestus later becomes the link to the spirit world after Julia's death, but there are indications of his other-worldly connection before his sister dies. This connection manifests itself initially in his nightmares of Louisa, which later become positive dreams. Even from the time when he first meets Louisa, Ernestus is plagued by nightmarish visions of her:

I was soon lost to all external objects, and I again saw hovering at my side, her, who had seemed in the morning but a vision. She smiled upon me, again urged by these words; - but suddenly it seemed as if the earth parted between us, and a huge chasm opened at my feet; we seemed to stretch our hands towards each other; I threw myself into the gulph, and awoke. (62)

This use of nightmares can be linked to the strange visions and psychic phenomena previously seen both in the tales from *Fantasmagoriana* and in Lord Byron's "Fragment". And later, upon hearing of the mysterious accounts of the Donis when they are living in Beatenburg, Ernestus admits:

I did not laugh at the idea of the supernatural part of the report. We were both too strongly imbued with the tales of our foster-mother not to attach



some credit to them. My sister's dreams in which our mother visited her, my own which always portended misfortune, had enforced upon our minds the belief of the interference of superior beings. (73)

After Julia's death, however, he takes on her role as the recipient of his mother's warnings. The rumours that Doni has "communication with a spirit" are confirmed for Ernestus and Julia in the second part of the novel (101). This leads Ernestus to Faustian reveries:

I went to bed, but not to sleep, the thoughts of having seen an unembodied being, the tales of my foster-mother, of power, of wealth, arising from the communication with beings of another world, arose before me. Obtaining such a power, it seemed as if I might learn the things hidden in the earth's deepest recesses, the ocean's depth; I even thought, that by such a power, I might tear away the veil which the first cause has thrown over itself. (101)

Ernestus gives in to these reveries in the third section where he reveals his passionate jealousy over what he perceives as Louisa's attentions to another man (Count Wilhelm). In his madness, he attempts, as both Doni and Julia did before him, to hold an audience with supernatural beings. However, his mother's guiding spirit keeps him from his folly:

the light cleared, and gradually the features of that face, which I had so often gazed upon in my imagination, my mother's, appeared distinctly before me. Her form was majestic, but in her eye

there was a softness, which was not even destroyed by the severity of her feeling. 'Ernestus,' were her words, 'Heaven has decreed at my prayer, that this crime shall be spared to you, you shall not act ungratefully.' - She seemed to vanish with an expression of sorrow upon her face, as if she were not allowed to continue, and felt the horror that burst upon me in consequence of the ignorance in which I was left. (121)

As a result, Ernestus is spared the repercussions of his Faustian greed founded on jealousy, unlike the fates that befell Doni and Julia. Ernestus feels he is condemned to live while his loved ones die all around him. Like his counterparts in *Fantasmagoriana*, Ernestus feels disastrously governed yet strangely protected by destiny:

I cursed that fate which seemed to hang about me, always shielding me from death. I fought in battle, but never yet had received the slightest wound: I had escaped from prison while the axe was falling. My rashness seemed incapable of hurting me; for there was a shield around me, that snatched me from peril. I was preserved from worse than death. (122)

Like Calzolaro and Francis from "The Death's Head" and "The Spectre Barber" respectively, Ernestus has his misfortune mysteriously thwarted. But unlike these two characters, Ernestus is not able to enjoy fate's protection through wish fulfillment; he must live only to witness the demise of his loved ones. Olivieri, too, is condemned to live in greed and its consequences; he is portrayed as pure evil, and

as such, is connected to the underworld that is represented by the world of gambling. The gambling motif that is evident in "The Death-Bride" from *Fantasmagoriana* arises as central to the metaphorical implications of Polidori's novel. Olivieri is, according to Ernestus "a student, a gambler, and a libertine" (87). The world of gambling into which Olivieri seduces Ernestus is a seething underworld of lasciviousness, lust and danger. Whereas Ernestus dips temporarily in and out of this world, only to be ultimately redeemed by Louisa, Olivieri belongs to this world. Motivated by revenge, Olivieri lures Ernestus into this underworld. Ernestus states that Olivieri "had been mortified at his father's holding me up as a pattern of strength against temptation; he was revenged, he exposed my weakness" (90).

Doni is the quintessential Faustian figure in the novel; it is he who initiates the downfall of his family. In his narrative in the third part of the novel, Doni reveals his pact with foul fiends. While travelling in the Middle East (an echo of the interest in Orientalism in *Fantasmagoriana* and Byron's "Fragment"), Doni encounters a dying Armenian who passes his ability to communicate with the spirit world on to Doni. But this knowledge comes with a grave warning:

I have a power that is supposed to bring the curse of the Almighty upon it; I can, - I have the power of raising a spirit from the vast abyss, and make him lay at my feet, the infinite wealth enclosed within the earth's recesses. But if you would listen to the aged, who has borne this blasting power from early youth, you would refuse the dangerous gift. For

there is a condition necessarily bound to that power, which will undoubtedly quell your ardent longing even for riches. (137)

Doni then interjects with the details of this pact:

He told me that either I could only call for a certain sum at a time, and that at each time, some human domestic infliction, worse than the preceding, would fall upon me, or that, I at once, could gain unlimited power, and constant domestic prosperity, on the condition of giving myself up for ever to the will of a malignant being. He had chosen the first, had called but once for the exertion of the demon's power, but his happiness had been withered by that once. I did not hesitate, I laughed in my own mind at domestic happiness . . . . I begged him to disclose his secret; he did. I bound myself to the first condition. (137)

Selfishly, and in keeping with Faustian ambition and greed, Doni risks harming others rather than forfeit his own soul. He performs the ceremony of conjuring up this demon: "I impatiently rose, I left the old man upon his dying couch, and retreated to my own tent. I raised the spirit, his hideous form might have appalled a stronger heart than mine. I trembled, but his mocking laugh subdued my fears, and bending my knee, I acknowledged him as my superior through life" (137-138). It becomes clear at this point that this pact (as well as each time Doni conjures up this demonic spirit throughout the narrative) has been the cause of his family's destruction. The pact arises out of Doni's unrequited love for Matilda, another motif

which echoes "The Family Portraits" in *Fantasmagoriana*. By making this pact, Doni acquires wealth and betrays Matilda's true love, Huldebrand. He returns from his travels abroad only to deceive Matilda into marrying him by making her believe that Huldebrand is dead. When this is later discovered, Matilda leaves him with two children, Louisa and Olivieri, while she is pregnant with the twins, Ernestus and Julia. It is this original deceit and pact that causes the downfall of the Berchtold/Doni family. Doni connects all of the family's misfortunes and hopes that the "pestilential breath" of the demon leaves Ernestus and Louisa alone (142). However, the end of Doni's hopes is marked by the presence of Matilda's portrait. He concludes the tale with this summation: "Your mother's portrait was Matilda's. Olivieri had seduced, you married a daughter of Matilda, of Matilda's husband, and I was the murderer of her father" (143).

There are other connections between this and the earlier Gothic tales, one of which is the subterranean vault. In *Fantasmagoriana*, we have Hildegard's vault in "The Death-Bride," and the Nun's Rock in "The Family Portraits". In *Ernestus Berchtold*, however, the subterranean vault is more than a mere enclosure; in keeping with its psychological overtones, here it becomes a symbol of the human psyche - a new dimension of a familiar Gothic tenet. First, Ernestus is imprisoned in an underground vault at Chillon "below the level of the water" and "down a narrow staircase" (76). His isolation in this narrow chamber symbolizes his pre-initiation state, as he is yet

unaware of the disasters that await him. Later in the novel, he goes into a "subterranean chapel":

silver lamps, hung over the shrine [dedicated to St. Borromeo], sent up a column of light to the very roof. I descended the stairs, and found myself within the chapel. The lamps were almost failing, and the silver walls darkened by the torch of the devotees absorbed the little light they emitted. I approached the shrine; the dried corpse of the saint, arrayed in his pontificals, seemed, by its repose, to invite me to seek peace where he possessed it. (91)

This chapel can be likened to the darkness into which Ernestus has fallen, and the rays of glimmering silver light represent the hope offered by Louisa, whom he meets in this chapel while she is praying for his soul. A third subterranean vault into which Ernestus descends is another prison that he enters on Olivieri's behalf. It is, much like his prison at Chillon, below ground, dark and cold. Ernestus finds himself "in a low gallery, the damp air was slowly falling in measured drops from the arched vault above, and the coldness of the chilly air made [him] shiver (115).

Most significantly, the narrative of *Ernestus Berchtold* depends, as *Fantasmagoriana*, the "Fragment," and "The Vampyre," on the deathbed revelations and parchments associated with revelation of family secrets. These revelations, as in the other tales considered so far, serve as points of narrative closure. There are four excellent examples. First, Berchtold writes to Doni on his deathbed about the children he has cared for in their mother's

[Matilda's] place. As Ernestus affirms, "Berchtold's last request, was, that [Doni] should supply his place, and take my sister and myself to him, as his children," ironically enough, and he writes a history of Ernestus' and Julia's childhood and orphaned state before he dies (82). Related are two confessional revelations: Julia tells her history of her fall from grace to Ernestus; and Olivieri confesses his mistakes to Ernestus. This clears his name somewhat, and clarifies Julia's narrative. The final revelation comes from Doni, who ultimately resolves the remaining mysteries of the novel when (on his deathbed) he reveals to Ernestus and Louisa that what he knows "will blast you, as it had done your friend. You must learn it, but it shall be when I am in the grave, and before him who has thus punished my crime; then, then, I may intercede for you, if I myself am sufficiently purified by suffering. He may hear a father's, though it be a criminal's, prayer" (125). Ernestus then gives the papers of Doni to the listener to read. In this final part of the novel, entitled, "The Life of Count Filiberto Doni," Ernestus leaves the narration in favor of Doni. As a result, the narrative of *Ernestus Berchtold* is (en)closed by a deathbed revelation. It is this final exchange, as well, that reveals a little more about both the listener's identity and Ernestus' confessional nature. Doni's narration is written in the context of the novel, but is also a part of the narrative text. Significantly, Ernestus also has a final request (a deathbed one) of the listener:

depart tomorrow on your intended journey, if that you stay, who knows but the curse which has attended me through my life may yet be acting, and may fall upon you as well as all others whom I have loved. These papers will explain to you what I have withheld, the life of Doni. If that you return this way, you may find me dead. Drop not a tear over my grave, I shall be with Louisa. Farewell, but depart knowing that there exists a consolation, which misfortune cannot destroy, the belief in a future state, in the mercy of a redeeming God. It is there I find refuge. (127)

In this exchange, we see an extra-textual occurrence; the listener, with whom we as readers identify, becomes, like all those in the *Ernestus Berchtold* narrative, a character. As a result, Polidori has effected a pronounced shift in both textual and readerly space not seen previously in the works considered so far. The narrator is addressing his listener, who may be identified as Julia's son because he is included with "all others" whom Ernestus has loved and who have fallen victim to the disastrous fate surrounding the Berchtold/Doni family. This listener's history, therefore, depends, to a degree, on the papers of Doni. Included in Ernestus' last considerations are, fittingly, the anxieties surrounding love, and the annihilation of family lines. Ernestus considers that "it seemed as if Heaven wished by repeated inflictions of its bitterest curses, to humble to the dust the family circle of my protector" (114). This statement connects to the role that fate inevitably plays in this tale of unrequited love, Faustian greed and ambition.



Although Polidori's *Ernestus Berchtold* connects, through its patterns and motifs, to *Fantasmagoriana*, Byron's "Fragment," and his own "The Vampyre," this text is in some respects innovative in its use of Gothic tenets. While drawing upon the works of his antecedents, Polidori does introduce new Gothic elements with *Ernestus Berchtold*. But neither Byron's "Fragment," nor the two works by Polidori would have the impact and endurance of the fourth of the Diodati texts - Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Fantasmagoriana* and *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*

The stories in *Fantasmagoriana* exhibit literary patterns and motifs that cover the entire spectrum of the Gothic genre. Some of these patterns, from the narrative technique to the use of portraits, dreams and nightmares, spectral lovers and doppelgängers, and electricity and magnetism, are adopted and developed in Lord Byron's "Fragment of a Novel," and in Polidori's *Ernestus Berchtold*, and "The Vampyre". It is *Frankenstein*, however, that extends these patterns far beyond their forms in the earlier ghost stories. What we find in *Frankenstein* is a reshaping and a transformation of earlier motifs through a sophisticated use of intertextual cues. Gothic literature, rather than assert principles of cohesion, consistency and order, is a statement about the irreducibility of the human experience and psyche. In maintaining the fantastic, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a direct subversion of rational principles. The presentation of dual 'realities' makes this novel an ontological statement about the possibilities of the coexistence of different levels of reality. It is the narrative structure which presents these possibilities and which contains layers of discourse that fragment

traditional narrative chronology. While some of this technique is evident in the other Diodati works, *Frankenstein* goes far beyond all of them in its dialogism. Through this technique, Mary Shelley posits an expanded textual space for the Gothic novel.

*Frankenstein* speaks to an evolving scientific era in which age-old myths are challenged by pseudo-scientific and scientific explorations. Commenting on *Frankenstein's* interdiscursivity, Howard asserts that the novel, like many Gothic novels and tales of the nineteenth century, is "pseudoscientific" and extrapolates material from "folklore, balladry, myth, and legend, alongside their 'scientific' references to psychic phenomena, setting up a dialogic interplay of ideas which evoke doubt and fear, and revealing the continuing importance of the 'folk' elements for the genre" (242). Here, the Gothic languages that once emanated from beneath the surface and beyond the grave in the tales of *Fantasmagoriana* are now rooted in the temporal and spatial present through *Frankenstein's* "appropriation of scientific discourse" (Howard, 242). This modernity is most evident in *Frankenstein's* questioning of humanity's unsettled and unsettling juxtaposition with matters once governed under the domain of the supernatural, the unexplained, and the transcendent. However, Mary Shelley does not leave this challenge at rest; rather, she creates a world in which dual possibilities - the scientific *and* the supernatural - coexist. Here, *Frankenstein's* dialogism moves within the novel to postulate an ongoing debate between 'real' and 'transcendent' alternatives. The

language of scientific rationalism runs parallel to the language of the paranormal; 'reality' is denied a fixed, scientific explanation as Mary Shelley throws her characters into alternating worlds of dreamstates and nightmares, the picturesque or sublime and the grotesque. Gothic fiction in *Frankenstein*, then, transforms from imposing reality on the unreal to imposing unreality on the real.

*Frankenstein's* narrative structure, while it bears similarities to the Gothic tales previously discussed, strikes out into new territory. As in the influencing tales found in *Fantasmagoriana*, *Frankenstein* has a complex 'tale-within-a-tale' structure. The novel is similar to "The Family Portraits" in which each of the tales found within the frame narrative informs the others. However, while Mary Shelley maintains the familiar 'tale-within-a-tale' structure, she fragments it and frames it within an epistolary form. This fragmentation of traditional forms leads to the many layers of discourse that produce a multiplicity of realities both within and without the novel. Mary Shelley guides the perspectival camera gradually inward to the heart of the tale: the Monster's tale. On the perimeters of the novel are Robert Walton's letters to his sister Margaret, which introduce and frame Victor Frankenstein's tale. Embedded within Victor's tale is the Monster's story, while the love letters of Safie and Felix occupy the text's centre. From here, the narrative moves gradually outward through the Monster's tale, Victor's story, and finally, back to Walton's letters to Margaret. It is this concentric narrative structure

of multiple 'tales-within-tales' centred with, and framed by, letters that informs *Frankenstein's* Gothic textual position. Each tale is a reflection of the others, and as in the novel's antecedents in *Fantasmagoriana*, each tale fills in the textual gaps that are evident in the unfolding narrative. The end result is a Gothic novel that asserts the genre's familiar tenets while introducing new elements to its intertextual dialogue.

Narrative intrusions in *Frankenstein* reflect those found in the tales in *Fantasmagoriana* in that they serve as a constant reminder of who is speaking; however, the reader is quite aware at the same time of the similarity of voices speaking (those of Walton, Victor, and the Monster). Of more significance is the complex weaving of a narrative web in which individual characters are inconsequential. What is important is the story that is being told, not who does the telling. Further, the listeners who were given status in the previous Gothic tales considered, the *conversazioni* in *Fantasmagoriana*, Julia and Olivieri's son in *Ernestus Berchtold*, are silenced here. The 'listener,' Margaret Walton Saville (who perhaps represents the author herself), receives the tale through the written word, Walton's letters, and therefore retains significance as the chronicler of the narratives. However, the speakers are ever-conscious of a listener, or an audience. One example of this occurs when Victor is speaking. After he reveals his creation of the Monster, Victor intrudes and reminds the reader that his tale is being told to a listener, as with the other tales considered to date:

I see by the eagerness and the wonder and hope which your eyes express, my friend, that you expect to be informed of the secret with which I am acquainted; that cannot be; listen patiently until the end of my story, and you will easily perceive why I am reserved upon that subject. I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery. (51-52)

Frequent intrusions such as these not only are a reminder that a voice is being heard, but also point to the fact that the various speakers in the novel are not always distinguishable from each other; hence, narratorial intrusions can be seen as a means of blurring 'realities'.

*Frankenstein* is innovative in its narrative structure to a greater degree than either the influencing tales in *Fantasmagoriana*, or in those written by Byron and Polidori. In her 'tale-within-the-tale' structure, Mary Shelley respectfully imitates and radically transforms a pattern she also knew from Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner". In a similar fashion to Coleridge's poem, the novel beckons to a "Wedding-Guest," or an 'auditor,' (Margaret), to receive the unfolding narratives. Although it is stated that Walton and Margaret are corresponding, we read only Walton's contribution. Margaret is, then, the silent 'auditor,' like the author herself, and is referred to only through the characters' speech within the narrative itself. While the similarities between Margaret and Coleridge's "Wedding Guest" may only be superficial, a connection can be made

between the two in that both Coleridge and Mary Shelley engage a nearly silent 'listener' who is removed from the action of the narrative perhaps as a means to promote believability. Aside from this, the inclusion of these 'listeners' also provide textual complexity through the use of the frame narrative and the 'tale-within-the-tale' strategy. In *Frankenstein's* narrative pattern, then, similarities to Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" are evident.

A significant subversion of the rational in *Frankenstein* is the merging of chronological time, which forces into question causal relationships (i.e. the events in the narrative). In much the same manner as the tales of *Fantasmagoriana*, in *Frankenstein* the various narratives resist chronology and reshape the novel into a tale about tales, rather than the typical novel with a plot or storyline. But *Frankenstein* extends the original use of multiple tales found in *Fantasmagoriana*. The novel's narratives surface in the epistolary journal of Walton, and the tales that are contained therein. *Frankenstein* "works to show the limits of . . . individuality and . . . replace[s] the individual voice with a network of voices" (Favret, 4). In this, the novel takes its precedent from the format found in *Fantasmagoriana* and reshapes it to inform its more complex and highly dialogic narrative structure. The narrative moves chronologically in Walton's letters, but both Victor's and the Monster's tales are retrospective; in this, they fragment the chronology of the text. Temporal shifts are evident mainly in Victor's dreamstates and nightmare visions. It is predominantly

through Victor's feverish states that time becomes fractured and takes on other-worldly status.

Another way Mary Shelley blurs 'realities' in the novel is through her use of spatial boundaries. The spatial shifts have already been observed in the movement from *conversazioni*, or intimate gatherings, to castles and public spheres, as in "The Fated Hour " and "The Family Portraits," and from rural and urban homes to far away lands, as in "The Spectre Barber," "The Fragment of a Novel," *Ernestus Berchtold* and "The Vampyre". Always evident in these spatial shifts are the revelations of family secrets or the discovery of monstrous 'others'. The shifts in *Frankenstein* are away from the homestead - Walton from England, Victor from Geneva, and even the Monster from the laboratory in Ingolstadt - to lands of ice and desolation. What each of these characters experience, much like their counterparts in the previous Gothic tales, are mirrors of themselves that have both positive and negative effects.

In *Frankenstein*, the presentation of the rational binaries of 'good' and 'evil' is thwarted by spirit and demonic selves suggesting new archetypes of psychological possibilities. Mary Shelley's novel offers an irrational world under the guise of scientific exploration where answers to questions are found in unexplained and unexplainable sources, and the characters who seek these answers are mystified by a breaking down of rational binary oppositions. A manifestation of this mystification is evident in the Monster. The



reanimated corpse of the Monster that Victor gleans from charnel houses is reminiscent of Hildegard's uncorrupted body in "The Death-Bride" from *Fantasmagoriana*. Mary Shelley's Monster is just as much an amalgamation of other Gothic textual remnants as it is of body parts. Through this Monster, Mary Shelley reanimates a Gothic tradition of lost souls and restored bodies, while at the same time she makes her living dead a sympathetic character. In this sense, she both hearkens back to an older tradition and transforms it. What was once Undead and purely mysterious or evil is, in *Frankenstein*, very much alive and darkly ambiguous. The challenge here is to scientific possibility glorified during the Enlightenment with all of its ontological and epistemological ramifications. Of equal importance is the challenging of ethics and the positing of the natures of both good and evil in all their complexities.

While the Monster by himself is a manifestation of the struggling definitions of good and evil in *Frankenstein*, there is also evidence of this struggle within the larger context of the narrative. This conflict is enacted by and through the characters who reflect each other or, as noted in previous Gothic tales, through the doppelgänger. The apparitions and ghostly 'others' from the tales in *Fantasmagoriana* are transformed in *Frankenstein* to physical manifestations of the doppelgänger. As in *Ernestus Berchtold*, the characters in *Frankenstein* mirror each other. Rather than presenting a character reflected in the spirit world or in the world of the Undead, this novel portrays doubling of 'real,' albeit monstrous,

'others'. Both Victor and Walton and the Monster and Victor mirror each other. Although the Monster is the explicit monstrous 'other,' the lines between humanity and monstrosity are disturbingly blurred.

Monstrosity is both implicit and explicit in the novel. After the death of William, the Monster's first victim (for instance), Victor likens his creation to a vampire:

I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave and forced to destroy all that was dear to me. (74)

But, Mary Shelley indicates that Victor is as monstrous as his creation. When Justine is tried at court and found guilty, Victor begins to feel his own guilt. The "fangs of remorse" tear at his conscience and the thirst for confirmation that it is his Monster that has brought on this situation makes Victor's "lips and throat . . . parched" (81) much like the vampire who thirsts for his victim's blood. Victor, then, presents the blurred monstrous image. As he becomes more distraught, Victor bears "a hell within [him] which nothing could extinguish" (84). He destroys his victims who are, up to this point, innocent women and children, only to later encompass all of his loved ones. Victor reverses this monstrosity upon himself, or at least he does so with exhortations to this effect. He laments that he "would spend each vital drop of blood for" the sakes of his

kin (85). In this sense, Victor becomes a victim of his own monstrosity manifest not only in his creation, but in himself as well. In Paris, Victor's feverish madness overwhelms him and he rests there with his father on their way to Geneva. Caught in a dilemma, Victor has given life to a monster, but is unable to reverse the process, however much he asserts that he would like to save humanity: "I am the assassin of those most innocent victims; they died by my machinations. A thousand times would I have shed my own blood, drop by drop, to have saved their lives; but I could not, my father, indeed I could not sacrifice the whole human race" (177). However, Victor at least has one glimmer of an other-centred, humanitarian hope as represented by Walton. At the same time, he also acknowledges that his loved ones will have to be the "hapless victims to [his] unhallowed arts" if the destiny of he and his Monster, the "inexorable fate be satisfied" (85). Victor is evidently aware of his role in the disaster that unfolds around him; this fact is worsened by his own admission of his monstrosity. Victor intuits "the dead calmness of inaction and certainty which follows [a quick succession of sorrowful events] and deprives the soul of both hope and fear (86). Like the damned soul of the Undead, Victor has, he presumes, nothing left to lose and, as a result, nothing left to fear:

The blood flowed freely in my veins, but a weight of despair and remorse pressed on my heart which nothing could remove. Sleep fled from my eyes; I wandered like an evil spirit, for I had committed deeds of mischief beyond description horrible, and more, much more (I persuaded myself) was yet

behind . . . . I was seized by remorse and the sense of guilt, which hurried me away to a hell of intense tortures such as no language can describe. (86)

This passage is reminiscent of the Byronic figure who is burdened with remorse as a result of a dark secret. The remorse Victor feels is part of what turns his humanity into monstrosity, as the world becomes for Victor a place of torment and misuse. As he says "now misery has come home, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood" (88).

The Monster also has qualities of monstrosity which become apparent in his method of murder. He strangles his victims - the marks of death are the bruises surrounding the victim's throat. This show of cruelty and strength forces into question the sensitivity and compassion exhibited by the Monster in the first half of his tale. His seemingly human traits disappear here, leaving his monstrosity exposed. The Monster even becomes a manifestation of the Nightmare, as seen in the nightmares suffered by Victor throughout the novel. The deaths of his loved ones lead Victor to have nightmares that the Monster is grabbing at his neck. William's death is described in horrifying detail by the Monster, the proud fiend who has the power (and the inclination) to drain his victims of their life-source. In fact, after William's mode of death is discovered, Victor begins to consider that the Monster is his brother's murderer. All that once seemed human-like in the Monster is obliterated in the descriptions of his desecrating acts. Through both Victor and the

Monster, Mary Shelley creates monstrous 'others,' that expand the concept of the doppelgänger. Taking what was previously evident in tales such as "The Death-Bride," *Frankenstein* presents reflections of humanity in a grotesque Gothic mirror which are all the more terrifying because of their ambiguity.

Mary Shelley goes much further to expand the use of doubling in her Gothic novel. *Frankenstein* draws upon two other cultural myths which add sophisticated complexity to the treatment of the doppelgänger not seen in the tales considered so far. In Victor Frankenstein and his Monster, an intense mirroring occurs that also reflects the ambiguity of an older mythic figure: Prometheus.<sup>8</sup> Himself filled with the potential for both great good and great evil, Prometheus serves as a useful paradigm of both the mythic hero and the anti-hero. Through the use of Prometheus in *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley not only affirms the complexity of the Greek myth, but also diversifies the stock Gothic protagonists found in the tales of her contemporaries.

A few details of his existence links Prometheus very closely with both Victor Frankenstein and the Monster:

the fact that both Frankenstein and the monster have their Promethean aspects is not surprising, since the original Prometheus archetype is ambiguous. With respect to man, he appears as a creator and thus as a divine figure; with respect to Zeus, he takes on the role of a rebel against divine

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<sup>8</sup> Mary Shelley seems to have been familiar with both versions of the Prometheus story: the Greek (Aeschylus) and the Roman (Ovid).

authority and eventually of a tortured creature, thus becoming a symbol of human suffering at the hands of the gods. (Cantor, 104)

In his rebellion against Zeus, his over-reaching, Prometheus has qualities that are reflected in Victor. Prometheus, by giving humans fire, thought he "could move the world," not unlike Victor's ambitions to create a new race of creatures and to bestow upon himself the gratitude of humankind. The human limitation recognized by Prometheus is Victor's downfall; he is a mere human attempting to fill the office of god(s). Victor is an inventor as is Prometheus; however, Prometheus shares his knowledge with humans to aid them in their lowly existence. He teaches humans mathematics, language (the alphabet), speech, writing, how to tame animals and harness them for use, gives them medicine to cure their illnesses, and of course, fire. In giving humans all of this, Prometheus elevates the condition of humanity, and makes them more akin to the gods. He is a god who has both the power and the inclination to aid humanity. However, Prometheus' gift is interpreted as his blasphemy against the gods. Mary Shelley invokes the spirit of Prometheus in her novel perhaps as a contrast to her protagonist. Wilfred Cude asserts that "Victor's one sin is a sin of omission, rather than a sin of commission [like Prometheus]: he fails to accept the responsibilities of his creativity, and for this he is fearfully punished" (223). In a sense, it is Prometheus' compassion for his creatures that leads to his imprisonment. Victor is an aberration of Prometheus here in his

refusal to be compassionate towards his creation. The result of Victor's quest for knowledge leads him to disaster as well. This he also shares with Prometheus. Mary Shelley imbues Victor with Promethean ideals; he searches for truth and the causes of all things as does the Greek god. Victor's project of creating the Monster is an echo of Prometheus before he was chained to the rock.

The appeal that the Prometheus myth had for the Romantic writers is the fact that although "his body was chained to the rocks, his mind remained stubborn and unconquered" (Aeschylus, 318). He therefore represents the power of the individual and the demonstration of free will against an oppressive authority. The Monster could also be seen as the human aspect of the downfall of Prometheus. He, like the human beings to whom Prometheus gave the spark of fire/knowledge, is brought to suffering by this gift. When he compares himself to the humans Felix describes to Safie, the Monster realizes how dire is his situation: " 'I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge. Oh, that I had forever remained in my native wood, nor known or felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat!' " (115). Like the humans in the Promethean myth, the Monster is, through his knowledge, given power, but knows not what to do with it or how to control it.

After the Monster's creation, Victor becomes the persecuted Prometheus. Waldman's praise and interest in Victor in the presence of Clerval is similar to Zeus' pride in Prometheus. Like Zeus,

Waldman has provided the tools and the impetus for Victor to spark life, as Prometheus sparked knowledge in humanity by fire. Victor, in a Promethean confession, reveals to Walton: "I felt as if he [Waldman] had placed carefully, one by one, in my view those instruments which were to be afterwards used in putting me to a slow and cruel death" (66). Like Prometheus, Victor "suffered living torture" knowing that his creation has committed the first of a series of heinous crimes (i.e. the death of William) (78).

The Promethean mirroring is evident in the Monster/Victor dynamic, but can also be traced in the Victor/Walton relationship. Victor and Walton, unlike the Monster and Victor, have a closer reflection in that they share many of the same Promethean qualities. Prometheanism becomes, for Victor and potentially for Walton, "the fatal passion" (61). In a moment of regret, Victor casts off his Promethean quest and begs of Walton to do the same. "Unhappy man!," Victor states, "Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me; let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!" (26). Victor reveals that his Promethean quest is similar to Walton's. He too yearns for glory and honour among humanity, but he goes further than Walton in his vision. Victor's quest is an example of Promethean over-reaching, as is attested to in his statement of intent at the beginning of his narration to Walton:

It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things or the inner spirit of nature and



the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my inquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world. (37)

Like Victor, Walton is willing to sacrifice everything in order to achieve his mission. The lessons Victor learns after he, in effect 'murders' his loved ones, he passes on to Walton so that, when the time comes for Walton to decide whether or not he will force others to suffer along with him (to force a passage through the Arctic ice), Walton chooses to listen to his crew and thereby averts his own tragic downfall.

Fire, so integral to the Prometheus myth, is fundamental in *Frankenstein*. It is, in the novel as well as in the myth, a source of creation and of destruction for both the giver and the receiver. This becomes clear when Victor challenges the Monster on their first meeting in the mountains of Chamounix: "You reproach me with your creation; come on, then, that I may extinguish the spark which I so negligently bestowed!" (95). Fire also becomes symbolic of revenge for the Monster. The most significant occurrence of fire in the Monster's tale is the burning of the De Lacey cottage, described in ritualistic terms:

As the night advanced, a fierce wind arose from the woods and quickly dispersed the clouds that had loitered in the heavens; the blast tore along like a mighty avalanche and produced a kind of insanity in my spirits that burst all bounds of reason and reflection. I lighted the dry branch of a tree and

danced with fury around the devoted cottage, my eyes still fixed on the western horizon, the edge of which the moon nearly touched. A part of its orb was at length hid, and I waved my brand; it sank, and with a loud scream I fired the straw, and heath, and bushes, which I had collected. The wind fanned the fire, and the cottage was quickly enveloped by the flames, which clung to it and licked it with their forked and destroying tongues.  
(133)

That both Victor and the Monster share elements of the Promethean archetype is confirmed in the closing scene, as fire and ice are brought together:

"soon . . . I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace, or if it thinks, it will surely not think thus. Farewell."  
(211)

In this action, the Monster assures his death by fire in the land of ice. The intermingling of these Promethean elements is both reminiscent of an older myth and symbolic of a more modern myth. Through her revisioning of *Prometheus Bound*, Mary Shelley blurs the previously held dichotomy of the distinction between good and evil, protagonist and antagonist.

*Frankenstein* also draws upon the central Western creation myth of biblical origins found in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and throws its characters into a parallel Gothic universe where creators are far from benevolent and creations are far from reticent and adoring. The similarities between Mary Shelley's novel and Milton's epic are far reaching. What makes Mary Shelley's revisioning of the epic particularly interesting are the departures she makes from this myth of origins; in other words, reading *Frankenstein* as a Gothic allegory of the central creation myth of the Western world demonstrates precisely how Mary Shelley destroys older texts in order to create a new one, and as a result, asserts her own voice. Many critics even see *Frankenstein* as a retelling of *Paradise Lost* : Cantor states that "*Frankenstein* retells *Paradise Lost* as if the being who fell from heaven and the being who created the world of man were one and the same" (105); Radu Florescu sees the use of *Paradise Lost* in the novel as "turning it into a sort of allegory" where the Monster suffers most gravely as he is "a startlingly "modern" and absurdist version of mankind, created and endowed with intelligence only to suffer the more hideously from self-consciousness" (178); Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar view Mary Shelley as "*rewriting Paradise Lost so as to make it a more accurate mirror of female experience* " and assert that "by parodying *Paradise Lost* in what may have begun as a secret, barely conscious attempt to subvert Milton, Shelley ended up telling, too, the central story of *Paradise Lost*, the tale of "what misery th' inabstinence of Eve/Shall

bring on men." " (220-221). The characters in *Frankenstein* can be viewed alternatively as God or Adam, and as Satan. Both Victor and Milton's God share similar qualities. Like God who created Adam and Eve, Victor creates the Monster (and the female monster, temporarily) and by this act gives him the "liability to fall"; but by no means has he caused the Monster's fall, just as God has not "predestined or caused" that of Adam and Eve. Victor's creation can also be likened to Milton's Satan. The Monster, like Satan, is looking through "a distorting mirror" and his "motives are those most elemental but also the most childish - pride, envy and revenge"; the Monster is "like a child-abuser, he takes out his own frustrations on the innocent and the newly created". But Victor is just as guilty of this since he effects the murder of the innocent and destroys the newly-created female mate. The Monster, like Satan, is "wracked with pain" because of his fallen state, as evident in the epigraph to *Frankenstein*, a lament from Adam about his fallen state:

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay  
To mould me Man, did I solicit thee  
From darkness to promote me?  
*Paradise Lost*, X, 743-45

In addition to the epigraph, the text of *Frankenstein* contains numerous allusions to *Paradise Lost*. From the beginning, when Victor is stitching together the body of the Monster, he refers to the condition of the human body in Miltonic terms. He asks Walton, "Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil as I dabbled among

the unhallowed damp of the grave or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay?" (53). His act of creation, like God's in *Paradise Lost*, is an enterprise involving clay figures (humans) who are not quite god-like. In *Frankenstein*, Victor is the god-figure working with "lifeless clay" to create a creature that is not quite human-like. In this sense, the allusion to *Paradise Lost* can be viewed as a turn on Milton's trope. In Victor's "workshop of filthy creation," science becomes the new religion, and a warped one at that. This seems to reinforce one of the novel's messages: that human beings cannot be gods. They can learn god-like powers, but the age-old, ethical question of how to use these powers becomes the main concern here.

More than mere reproduction in its tracing of origin myths, *Frankenstein* is a prophetic vision of a nightmare world where creatures, both human and otherwise, throw into ambiguity the age-old quest surrounding the nature of good and evil. Mary Shelley delves into this quest by incorporating and transforming Greek and English (Western) myths. What distinguishes *Frankenstein* from its Diodati 'relatives' is the extent to which its intertextuality expands beyond Gothic tenets apparent in *Fantasmagoriana*. In fact, intertextuality is the essence of the fabric of *Frankenstein*. The novel is, to a great extent, a 'mosaic' of quotations from well-known myths and contemporary works.

In the Gothic tales considered earlier, female Gothic characters are often figured as guardian angels for the protagonists. In *Frankenstein*, this is also the case, but angelic figures also signify much more. The two most outstanding instances are Caroline Frankenstein, Victor's mother, and Elizabeth Lavenza, Victor's fiancée. From her portraits, Caroline Frankenstein is pictured as an angelic influence in the family household. Victor's pursuit of endowing the human race with the capacity to raise the dead and imbue them with life can be linked to the untimely demise of his beloved mother. The symbolism of this becomes apparent in Victor's much discussed dream/nightmare of his mother and Elizabeth:

I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. (57)

Direct echoes of scenes from *Fantasmagoriana* reverberate here. Elizabeth becomes, in Victor's dream/nightmare, the archetypal death-bride; but more than this, she represents the extremes involved in the anxieties surrounding love. This dream/nightmare signifies the importance of Victor's task to reanimate lifeless matter, as well as the connection Elizabeth has with Caroline. She, like his mother, is an angelic figure, and is also a beloved female whom Victor cannot save. This doomed triangle is similar to that used in

*Ernestus Berchtold*, (Louisa, Matilda, Ernestus), but the anxieties played out here extend far beyond Oedipal conflicts. Rather, they point to the unstable division between life and death, and between heavenly and scientific possibilities. Victor describes the angelic countenance of Elizabeth as a child:

her hair was the brightest living gold, and despite the poverty of her clothing, seemed to set a crown of distinction on her head. Her brow was clear and ample, her blue eyes cloudless, and her lips and the moulding of her face so expressive of sensibility and sweetness that none could behold her without looking on her as of a distinct species, a being heaven-sent, and bearing a celestial stamp in all her features. (34)

Here, Elizabeth echoes a previous Gothic angel figure, Seraphina from "The Fated Hour". She, as the angel figure, represents the feminine principles that Victor rejects. Elizabeth "busied herself with following the aerial creations of the poets; and in the majestic and wondrous scenes which surrounded our Swiss home" (36). While Elizabeth enjoys contemplating "the magnificent appearance of things" (mountains, the seasons, etc.), Victor, by stark contrast and with Faustian overtones, views the world as "a secret which [he] desired to divine" (36). Rather than enjoy nature in all its sublimity and picturesque value, Victor wishes to seek out the origins of nature and all her secrets. In this dichotomy, Mary Shelley is setting up a division between female and male principles.

By aligning poetry and the love and observance of nature with Elizabeth, Mary Shelley is equating these sublime contemplations with the feminine, whereas science and the pursuit of cause and effect are relegated to the masculine sphere. This becomes important later in Victor's rejection of the Monster. Some critics, such as William Veeder in *Mary Shelley & Frankenstein: The Fate of Androgeny*, have argued that the rejection of the Monster signifies Victor's rejection of his feminine side since the Monster is associated with feeling, emotion and intuition (all traditionally female attributes). Victor even has a brief reminder of the fact that he should reclaim his feminine side before disaster worsens. The connection of Clerval with Wordsworth, poetry and nature, resembles the same preoccupations associated with Elizabeth, and therefore, the feminine. This association occurs just before Victor's final rejection of the Monster - the destruction of his mate, the female monster. Unfortunately, Victor once again rejects the feminine as he confines himself to solitude in the Orkney Islands (i.e. he leaves Clerval) and then destroys the female monster. His rejection of the feminine and angelic guidance offered explicitly by Elizabeth and implicitly by Clerval and the Monster contributes to his ultimate destruction.

Other characters are also associated with angels. When William is killed by the Monster, Clerval states, " 'Dear lovely child, he now sleeps with his angel mother!', " thereby relegating both him and his mother to a celestial state (71). Again, Victor also refers to him as a heavenly being when he says aloud, " 'William, dear angel!' " (73).



Alphonse Frankenstein also is attributed with celestial properties. When he goes to collect Victor from the prison in Ireland, Victor says: "the appearance of my father was to me like that of my good angel, and I gradually recovered my health" (173). Through its presentation of heavenly 'others,' then, *Frankenstein* posits the possibility of human goodness and the representations of goodness in celestial, or near-celestial beings. Clearly, a distinction is being made, as in other Gothic tales, between innocence and good on one side and initiation and evil on the other. In this presentation of feminine and masculine principles and their attendant associations with goodness or evil, however, Mary Shelley asserts binary oppositions that are evident nowhere else in her narrative, and that extend the use of celestial 'others' far beyond that of *Fantasmagoriana* and the tales by Byron and Polidori.

Portraits become, as in the previous tales, narrative links and emblems of identification and association in the novel. Each of the incidents involving portraits in some way connects to the narrative structure as a whole. While they are not animated, portraits in *Frankenstein*, as we have seen in *Ernestus Berchtold*, are imbued with deep psychological and narrative significance. William's death, for instance, is linked to a portrait of Caroline Frankenstein; more importantly, this portrait is connected to the Monster's psychological motivation for the crime. But this link also provides the Monster with an escape as it becomes circumstantial evidence of Justine's

'guilt'. As Victor says, this portrait of Caroline Frankenstein "had been judged to be the temptation of the murderer" (76). This is only symbolically true of the Monster's motives, however; the portrait represents the lost mother of Victor, the part of him, the feminine, which he has also discarded (along with, consequently, the Monster). On his return home to Geneva on this sad occasion, Victor finds comfort in the larger likeness of his mother that hangs in the Frankenstein home. Fittingly, she is pictured in an aspect of mourning:

I gazed on the picture of my mother which stood over the mantelpiece. It was a historical subject, painted at my father's desire, and represented Caroline Beaufort in an agony of despair, kneeling by the coffin of her dead father. Her garb was rustic and her cheek pale, but there was an air of dignity and beauty that hardly permitted the sentiment of pity. (75)

Below this formidable painting is "a miniature of William," signifying both a connection of mother and son and of two guardian angels, as they are both pictured as throughout the novel, a celestial connection somewhat similar to that of Louisa and Matilda in *Ernestus Berchtold* (75). The miniature of Caroline Frankenstein also serves to clinch Justine's 'guilt' in the eyes of the court. In her defense of Justine, Elizabeth reduces the significance of the portrait to that of a mere "bauble" in an attempt to clear the innocent girl's name (81).

As the narrative voice changes, so does the significance of portraits. For Victor, portraits are a means through which past is associated with present, and through which evidence is established (although Victor knows who the guilty party actually is). For the Monster, however, portraits are symbols of unfulfilled desire and someone else's identity. When the Monster tells his tale, he describes to Victor the murder of William and how he used the portrait to render Justine suspect and, ultimately, charged with the crime:

As I fixed my eyes on the child, I saw something glittering on his breast. I took it; it was a portrait of a most lovely woman. In spite of my malignity, it softened and attracted me. For a few moments I gazed with delight on her dark eyes, fringed by deep lashes, and her lovely lips; but presently my rage returned; I remembered that I was forever deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow and that she whose resemblance I contemplated would, in regarding me, have changed that air of divine benignity to one of expressive disgust and affright. (137)

The Monster is drawn to this portrait, but (as a result of his past experiences) feels rejected by its subject and becomes enraged and vengeful. He places the portrait in the pocket of the sleeping and feverish Justine because she, too, is a woman and is therefore a symbol of what pleasure the Monster has been "robbed of"; as he tells Victor, the "crime had its source in her; be hers the punishment!" (137). The woman, the object of desire that is to be

unrequited, is the scapegoat for his crime, an echo of the Gothic theme of unrequited love. But the unrequited love, revenge and penance witnessed in tales like "The Family Portraits" and "The Death-Bride" take on new meaning in *Frankenstein*. In the Monster's case, his crimes arise out of love unrequited, rejected, *and* denied. Here, these motifs are taken to new extremes where love that is unrequited is destroyed, revenge is waged as vengeance and penance becomes torture. Whereas Byron and Polidori use the destruction of the monstrous 'others' and their protagonists in "The Fragment" and "The Vampyre" as psychological fantasy, in *Frankenstein* destruction becomes a physical and psychological nightmare. The portrait of Caroline Frankenstein, in this case, can be seen as the trigger of a set of painful memories for the Monster, of an identity that belongs to his creator, not to him; and this encounter with the portrait and all the attendant desires it evokes gives him the inspiration to ask Victor for a female Monster who is hideous in form and who will not reject him. The portrait instigates the Monster's quest for an 'other'. "I am alone and miserable," he tells Victor, "man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species and have the same defects. This being you must create" (137). Portraits, then, are the narrative link to identity, desire and revenge in Mary Shelley's novel.

There are further uses of familiar Gothic tenets in the novel that also point to narrative technique. *Frankenstein* belongs to the anti-Radcliffean model of Gothic fiction in which supernatural events are presented, but are left unexplained. Events are dreamlike, but very much rooted in a scientific alternative: a grotesque version of reality. One of the key ways the novel presents these unexplained events is in the role assigned to fate, or at least, in Victor's ego-centric conception of the determinism operating in his life. The nature of 'reality' is, once again, left to the reader to decide. Mary Shelley questions ontological 'truths' in her presentation of multiple possibilities in the novel. This presentation is subversive in that the questioning occurs within a scientific, 'rational' epistemology. Not only does *Frankenstein* subvert eighteenth-century rationalism, but it also posits the validity and the limits of science. As rationalism and science went hand-in-hand during the Enlightenment, a questioning of both by offering dreamlike supernatural events, and radical scientific theories (or the resuscitation of outmoded ones) makes Mary Shelley's novel not only a subversive, but a doubly subversive textual act.

Fate, of course, plays a role within the context of *Fantasmagoriana*, the "Fragment," and is similarly evident in Polidori's two tales. But in *Frankenstein*, it has an added significance. Here, rather than an outside force or a mystical cause, fate is determined solely on the basis of the characters' actions, at least from the various characters' points of view. Mary Shelley, in this

sense, seemingly removes the supernatural from her tale, but in presenting this determinism, she is actually problematizing the role of fate, and as a result, is asserting alternative 'realities'. Although the reader is aware that both Victor and the Monster are the ones controlling their destinies, the characters are rarely conscious of this fact. The Monster does gain brief insights into why he is a murderer, but seldom does he control his overbearing rage. Victor, on the other hand, accepts no responsibility for either the rejection of his creation or the deaths of his loved ones. Even after the Monster confirms his suspicions that he has murdered Victor's family and friends, Victor refuses to acknowledge his own responsibility in these consequences. Rather, he attributes all of the events as the curse of fate, the responsibility of destiny. In an ego-centric fashion, Victor both precipitates and enables the occurrence of the disasters. He views himself as a passive victim of his destiny. As he tells Walton, "nothing can alter my destiny; listen to my history, and you will perceive how irrevocably it is determined" (29). Here, Victor echoes Gothic characters such as Florentina from "The Fated Hour," Ernestus from *Ernestus Berchtold*, and Aubrey from "The Vampyre". However, unlike these protagonists, Victor has a brief moment of clarity. His studies lead him to consider that the foundations upon which his endeavors are built could have directed his path toward folly sooner if he had not changed his preoccupations to the study of electricity and magnetism. He tells Walton, "Thus strangely are our souls constructed, and by such slight ligaments are we bound to

prosperity or ruin.' " (41). There is room in Victor's development, as indicated by this example, for his enlightenment. This brief foray into mathematical sciences keeps him from harm, but is soon relinquished in favor of his paranormal pursuits. " 'Destiny,' he tells Walton, ' was too potent, and her immutable laws had decreed my utter and terrible destruction.' " (41). This foray, then, simply reinforces the horror of the potentials of fringe scientific exploration in the face of the scientific rationalism of the Enlightenment.

Fate is also connected to the Monster's penultimate act of destruction: the murder of Elizabeth. This final part of the Monster's vengeance on Victor occurs after Victor destroys the female monster. The Monster threatens Victor: "*I will be with you on your wedding night* " and Victor views that night as "the period fixed for the fulfillment of [his] destiny!" (161). This is only partly true; the destiny that the Monster intends (i.e. to bereave Victor by taking away all that is dear to him) becomes convoluted in Victor's way of thinking. In his ego-centrism, Victor interprets his own life as that precious item that the Monster threatens to take away. Only for fleeting moments does Victor consider that the victim is to be Elizabeth, not himself, and still he places himself at the center of the Monster's revenge. Even the pattern already established by the Monster thus far (William, indirectly Justine, and Clerval) does not indicate a pattern to Victor. The destiny that Victor perceives will be fulfilled concerns, as he erroneously believes, only him.

Destiny continues to be a preoccupation with Victor in his denial of responsibility to other characters as well. In the prison in Ireland, Victor tells his father "some destiny of the most horrible kind hangs over me, and I must live to fulfil it, or surely I would have died on the coffin of Henry" (173). He has little sympathy for Clerval here; again, his concern is mainly with himself. The 'destiny' at this point is not yet out of his control, although he fails to see this. Victor tells Walton at the end of the novel that his destiny is to "pursue and destroy the being to whom [he] gave existence"; only "then," Victor says, "my lot on earth will be fulfilled and I may die" (202). Victor, in another brief moment of enlightenment, relinquishes his pact to fulfil his destiny in his final words: "Seek happiness in tranquillity and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed" (206). In this final statement, Victor ultimately uncovers his true obligation to fate: to end his Promethean ambitions. Walton's fate, perhaps as an enactment of Victor's enlightenment, is to turn southward at the request of his crew and to fail at a quest like Victor's. Through this process of Victor's preoccupation with fate, we witness a sophisticated handling of both the motif and the intricacies of character development merely hinted at in the *Fantasmagoriana* tales. The role Mary Shelley has assigned to fate in *Frankenstein*, then, seems to be one of deferring of responsibility, and therefore, of



authority. Like the multiple tales presented in the novel whose voices offer little or no distinction, fate is another method of denying authority to one 'truth'.

Another way in which *Frankenstein* extends familiar Gothic tenets (as with its progressive treatment of fate), is in its challenge to scientific rationalism. Mary Shelley presents this challenge through allusions to Milton's epic. Through allusions to *Paradise Lost*, Mary Shelley questions nineteenth century epistemology. In *Frankenstein's* exploration of scientific creativity and the search for origins, Mary Shelley addresses a central issue: where does science leave religion? By invoking Milton's *Paradise Lost* in her novel, Mary Shelley confirms the potential consequences of scientific exploration devoid of religious or moral ethos. Evidence of this clash is seen in the first conversation between Victor and the Monster with its echoes of *Paradise Lost*. The Monster's tale is like a tormented 'origin of the species' myth; it becomes a grotesque spin on Adam's tale in *Paradise Lost*. The intertextuality continues with the inclusion of Milton's work on the Monster's "reading list". Unlike the other works that the Monster has found, he relates that

*Paradise Lost* excited different and far deeper emotions. I read it, as I had read the other volumes which had fallen into my hands, as a true history. It moved every feeling of wonder and awe that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting. I often referred the several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state

was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature, but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition, for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me. (124)

From this speech the Monster indicates his plight: he is a fallen Adam and his existence is a pitiful example of Adam's. His creator, he now realizes, is absent; he reads in Victor's journal that he is actually abandoned. The Monster recognizes by reading Milton's work that his existence is a miserable one. Further, *Paradise Lost* is not only an analogy for the Monster's life, but it becomes 'Truth' for him; he accepts the story as a reality. In consequence, *Paradise Lost* becomes his reality as well. It is through this story that the Monster traces his own origins, and the parallels he draws between Adam, the "fallen angel" (Satan), and himself shape his perceptions to the point where he believes, not unjustly, that his creator should not have abandoned him and owes him a degree of happiness. The Monster, then, holds up *Paradise Lost* as his paradigm; to him, it is the luminescent reality through which he mirrors his shadowy existence. He tells Victor: "I remembered Adam's supplication to his Creator. But where was mine? He had abandoned me, and in the bitterness of my heart I cursed him" (126). While Mary Shelley constructs the Monster's tale as a direct response or "rejoinder" (Oates, 543) to

Milton's work, she presents Victor, on his deathbed, as fallen from grace and heavenly ambitions to the lowest degradation of Hell as a result of forbidden knowledge. He tells Walton that his elevated hopes to achieve "some great enterprise . . . now serves only to plunge me lower in the dust. All my speculations and hopes are as nothing, and like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell" (200-201). In a similar way, the Monster has forbidden knowledge of what his origins should have been like, just as Victor's act of creation is an example of forbidden knowledge and power. It is through the Monster's search for 'Truth' that Victor's folly becomes evident; as a result, the Gothic allegory of creation becomes more sharply defined as a failure of a scientific ethos.

The unexplained and the unexplainable that are so significant to *Fantasmagoriana* also appear in the deathbed pacts and various curses in the novel. But again, as with the use of portraits, these verbal agreements produce much more than melodrama and suspense; they point to key motivational factors inherent in the novel's characters. The first instance of this is when Caroline Frankenstein, on her deathbed, requests that Victor and Elizabeth be united in marriage. Victor relates that "She joined the hands of Elizabeth and myself. "My children," she said, "my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of your union. This expectation will now be the consolation of your father' " (42). This

request precipitates the novel's exploration of a familiar Gothic preoccupation with the anxieties surrounding love. This motif has already been noted in *Fantasmagoriana* and in Polidori's works, but *Frankenstein* further expands on this by drawing a parallel between Milton's Adam and Eve and Victor and Elizabeth. Just as the Monster's tale is a twisted version of Adam's, so is the experience of Victor and Elizabeth a reshaping of Adam and Eve's tale. In her consideration of religious ontology, Mary Shelley presents Victor and Elizabeth as a Gothic version of Adam and Eve who have all of their worst anxieties enacted. Here, however, Elizabeth (Eve) is not the agent of the fall; it is Victor (Adam) who denies the possibility of life and of paradise. In *Paradise Lost*, Eve is "the seed of all future generations" as are the female monster and Elizabeth. Elizabeth is Victor's saving grace as Victor reads her letter while he is recovering in Paris. He reads her "paradisiacal dreams of love and joy" and laments that "the apple was already eaten, and the angel's arm bared to drive me from all hope" (180). In this parallel, Victor and Elizabeth (Adam and Eve) suffer further because of the pain of recognition of the torture that dashes all of their hopes.

Caroline Frankenstein's request, unbeknownst to her, also becomes a curse as the marriage is the final medium through which the Monster can seek revenge on Victor. The infamous Gothic curse that emanates from (among other sources) Faustian legends is also given voice here. The Monster swears vengeance on Victor if he does not comply with his demand for a mate. He tells Victor: "I am

malicious because I am miserable" (138). The Monster warns his creator:

mine shall not be the submission of abject slavery. I will revenge my injuries; if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear, and chiefly towards you my arch enemy, because my creator, do I swear inextinguishable hatred. Have a care; I will work at your destruction, nor finish until I desolate your heart, so that you shall curse the hour of your birth. (139)

This is similar to how Doni, under demonic control, causes the downfall of his family in *Ernestus Berchtold*. But here, it is not wealth and power that the Monster desires; rather, he wishes to have love and acceptance. This threat uttered, the Monster gives Victor fair warning that an unloved creature is a vengeful one. Victor, about to begin the creation of the female monster, cannot enjoy the scenery of England like his travelling companion, Clerval, can. "I, a miserable wretch," he says, "haunted by a curse that shut up every avenue to enjoyment" (147). Victor, regretting his promise to make a female monster, but fearful of invoking the Monster's revenge, admits "I had indeed drawn down a horrible curse upon my head. . ." (155). Victor activates the Monster's solemn curse when he destroys his potential mate. Watching from outside of Victor's makeshift laboratory, the Monster witnesses the destruction of his mate, and of his future happiness along with her. Victor's dread at propagating a race of fiends is his impetus. From another perspective, one can

argue that the destruction of the female monster is Victor's ultimate rejection of the feminine. Victor tells Walton,

As I looked on him, his countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery. I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which he was engaged. The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness, and with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew. (159)

In one action, the destruction of the female monster with all of the rage associated with rape, Victor puts the Monster's curse in motion. Here, as with the deathbed pact made to Caroline Frankenstein, Victor's broken promise and the Monster's curse indicate the motivation behind the characters' actions. Victor becomes a Faustian wanderer when he embarks on his quest for the destruction of his Monster. The pact he makes resembles the pact of Faust in his dealings with the demons of Hell. Victor describes this pact that seals his inevitable doom:

I knelt on the grass and kissed the earth and with quivering lips exclaimed, "By the sacred earth on which I kneel, by the shades that wander near me, by the deep and eternal grief that I feel, I swear; and by thee, O Night, and the spirits that preside over thee, to pursue the demon who caused this misery, until he or I shall perish in mortal conflict. For this purpose I will preserve my life; to execute this dear revenge will I again behold the sun and tread the green herbage of the earth, which

otherwise should vanish from my eyes forever.  
 And I call on you, wandering ministers of  
 vengeance, to aid and conduct me in my work. Let  
 the cursed and hellish monster drink deep of agony;  
 let him feel the despair that now torments me."  
 (193)

This pact is not unlike the pact Victor has previously made with the tampering of the secrets of life and nature in the creation of the Monster. He now curses the Monster as the Monster has done to him. With this pact, Victor's solitude becomes a forced one, similar to that of the Monster (194). Victor, as the solitary wanderer, is much like the Ancient Mariner that Mary Shelley invokes in her novel. After Victor is confronted by his creation and is horrified by his monstrosity, he tells Walton that "A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing as even Dante could not have conceived" (57). Then, as he abandons his creation and wanders in the damp streets of Ingolstadt, Victor becomes aware of his similarity with Coleridge's Ancient Mariner:

'My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear, and I  
 hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look  
 about me':  
 Like one who, on a lonely road,  
   Doth walk in fear and dread.  
 And, having once turned round, walks on,  
   And turns no more his head;  
 Because he knows a frightful fiend  
   Doth close behind him tread. (58)

The family secret, a key feature in "The Family Portraits," is also evident in that Victor keeps from his family knowledge of the existence of the Monster. In this case, however, the secret proves to be the demise of the family rather than its means of maintenance or wish-fulfilment. With the exception of Ernest Frankenstein, who is dropped mysteriously from the narrative, the Frankenstein family is obliterated by the Monster. In this respect, the secret in *Frankenstein* resembles the secrets of both Doni and Aubrey in *Ernestus Berchtold* and "The Vampyre" respectively. There is also evidence in *Frankenstein* of the use of a family secret to preserve a family line. Just as Francis in "The Spectre Barber" keeps his identity secret until he regains his wealth and prestige, the De Lacey family is also forced to hide their identity as a means of continuance and survival. The pacts, curses and family secrets act, then, not only as crucial narrative links, but as the means through which intricate character development occurs. In the case of *Frankenstein*, these links point to both supernatural and scientific possibilities in that they assert simultaneously languages that occupy both transcendent and earthly 'realities'.

Dreams and nightmares, an integral feature of the tales in *Fantasmagoriana*, are crucial in *Frankenstein*. After Victor has destroyed the female Monster and is threatened by the Monster himself, he slips into a state of unreality. He says: "I walked about



the isle like a restless spectre, separated from all it loved and miserable in the separation . . . the words of the fiend rang in my ears like a death-knell; they appeared like a dream, yet distinct and oppressive as reality" (162). Here, Victor oscillates between the world of reality and the realm of dreams. Soon, his dream transforms into a nightmare, another motif perceptively gleaned and reshaped by Mary Shelley from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner".

The nightmare reveries in Coleridge's poem are spawned from the Mariner's life-altering encounters on the ship. Like sailors at sea who had nothing to drink, the Mariner reverts to drinking his own blood; this could be interpreted as a vampiric gesture since, for the Mariner, drinking his blood is life-sustaining. There is a presence of evil spirits on the ghost ship which further confirms the supernatural element. The female spectre, a rival for the spectres in "The Death-Bride," and "The Spectre Barber," is a classic vampiric image:

Her lips were red, her looks were free,  
Her locks were yellow as gold:  
Her skin was white as leprosy,  
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,  
Who thicks man's blood with cold. (15)

This Night-mare wins the Mariner in a cast of the dice with Death, and so, the Mariner is condemned to a 'life-in-death,' much like a vampire's existence. Further, he feels his 'life-blood' drain from him in fear as if the Night-mare were capable of draining it from him. Victor echoes these horrific experiences in *Frankenstein*. William's

death, the first of the succession, confirms for Victor the unreality of his extraordinary circumstances. During his time spent at his studies and in the creation of the Monster Victor's psychological understanding transcends the level of reality and enters the realm of the imagination. On many occasions, Victor comments on this dreamstate to Walton. After the Monster has claimed his first victim, William, Victor says that "Six years had elapsed, passed as a dream but for one indelible trace, and I stood in the same place where I had last embraced my father before my departure for Ingolstadt" (75).

This nightmare intensifies when Victor is confined to prison for the death of Clerval. He continually remarks how his circumstances appeared to be "like a dream" or that he found himself "as awaking from a dream" (169). He says that "if indeed I did not dream, I am sorry that I am still alive to feel this misery and horror" (170). He then says, "The whole series of my life appeared to me as a dream; I sometimes doubted if indeed it were all true, for it never presented itself to my mind with the force of reality (170). This statement confirms the unreality of Victor's life. This unreality could be interpreted as a dream turned to a nightmare, or it could be related to the fact that Victor is dissociated from his inner self because he has rejected a significant portion of himself. His dreams turn to nightmares on the voyage back to Geneva from Ireland. Victor tells Walton "sleep did not afford me respite from thought and misery; my dreams presented a thousand objects that scared me. Towards morning I was possessed by a kind of nightmare; I felt the fiend's

grasp in my neck and could not free myself from it; groans and cries rang in my ears" (175). Once on board Walton's ship, Victor gives himself up to death; the Monster's revenge is now complete. But before he does so, Victor's nightmares, as Walton writes to Margaret, are once more transformed to dreams:

he enjoys one comfort, the offspring of solitude and delirium; he believes that when he dreams he holds converse with his friends and derives from that communion consolation for his miseries or excitements to his vengeance, that they are not the creations of his fancy, but the beings themselves who visit him from the regions of a remote world. This faith gives a solemnity to his reveries that render them to me almost as imposing and interesting as the truth. (200)

The fact that Walton distinguishes between Victor's dreams and reality is the only real argument against the whole of Victor's narrative as a dream transformed to a nightmare. Walton, with this disclosure, assures his reliability as a narrator. When the Monster appears at the end of the novel, Walton can confirm the validity of Victor's tale because Walton has a certain credibility.

The Monster also echoes the dream-like quality of Coleridge's poem through many of the events in *Frankenstein*. He is capable of many of the finer human sensibilities; among them is dreaming. When he sleeps in the hovel next to the De Lacey family's cottage, the Monster dreams of his friends. He tells Victor that "When I slept or was absent, the forms of the venerable father, the gentle Agatha,

and the excellent Felix flitted before me" (109). But, like Victor, he also has nightmares. After his confrontation with and rejection by the De Laceys, the Monster's pleasant dreams of his 'protectors' change to horrible replays of the rejection scene:

' . . . in the afternoon I sank into a profound sleep; but the fever of my blood did not allow me to be visited by peaceful dreams. The horrible scene of the preceding day was forever acting before my eyes; the females were flying and the enraged Felix tearing me from his father's feet. I awoke exhausted . . . .' (131)

The Monster's request to build him a female mate sends Victor back into the dreamstate he previously occupied. "The prospect of such an occupation," says Victor, "made every other circumstance of existence pass before me like a dream, and that thought only to me had the reality of life" (142).

The dreamstate and nightmare have their analogs in the architecture evident in *Frankenstein*. As seen previously here and, as with Gothic tales like *Ernestus Berchtold* and some of the tales in the *Fantasmagoriana* collection, *Frankenstein* has vaults and enclosures that serve as symbols of the characters' psychological states. The physical isolation of the characters also facilitate nightmarish states of mind. This is evident from the Monster's hovel outside the De Lacey cottage. He occupies this space during a time of seclusion from the outside world; his rejection by humans time after time sends the Monster into hiding, both physically and

psychologically. The laboratories (on the Orkney Islands and at Ingolstadt), and the prison at Ireland are symbolic of Victor's mind and they connect to both his solitary and dreamlike states. There is also a connection to be made with architectural structures and scenes of the destruction of the two potential mates - the female monster at the laboratory in the Orkneys, and Elizabeth at the inn at Evian. Victor's nightmares take the form also of him being engulfed in a dungeon. This nightmare dungeon is symbolic of Victor's suffering and descent into madness. In these examples, Mary Shelley uses contemporary versions of ruined castles, crumbling abbeys and subterranean vaults in her novel, thereby reshaping another Gothic convention.

The Gothic preoccupation with electricity, lightning and other forms of electro-magnetism found in "The Fated Hour" and "The Death's Head" from *Fantasmagoriana* recurs in *Frankenstein* and is associated with fire. This fire as the generator of life ties in with the use of the intertext of the ancient Hermeticists. Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and Albertus Magnus are these ancient scientists who are links to scientific endeavors, witchcraft, and necromancy. This is clearly connected to the concerns surrounding supernaturalism and mysticism found in *Fantasmagoriana*, Byron's "Fragment," and Polidori's two works. Marie Mulvey Roberts states that "Mary Shelley invoked alchemy as a distorting mirror capable of exposing the destructive aspects of modern science" (69). In her use of these

elements, Mary Shelley extends the metaphor into a scientific realm. Whereas in previous Gothic tales like *Fantasmagoriana* science was probed merely as an explanation for the irrational, in *Frankenstein* it is science that actually becomes the irrational. This irrationality of science manifests itself in the Monster. "The Frankenstein monster," Mulvey Roberts asserts, "is the hideous progeny of the darkness of science instead of the offspring of hermetic traditions concerned with the harmony of opposites, universal correspondences, and cosmic sympathies" (71). And it is these "forgotten alchemists" who are the link to Victor's Promethean quest; their ideas, as lauded by Professor Waldman ("walled man," if we are to credit name symbolism), spark Victor's journey to discover what is yet unknown to humanity - the secrets of creation (46). Waldman's lecture expounds on Victor's earliest training:

The ancient teachers of this science," said he, "promised impossibilities and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted and that the elixir of life is a chimera. But these philosophers, whose hands seem only to dabble in dirt, . . . have indeed performed miracles . . . . They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows. (47)

Supernaturalism, then, is transformed through these early scientists into something tangible and, as a result, something far more frightening. This god-like power appeals directly to Victor's inflated

sense of purpose: "So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein - - - more, far more, will I achieve; treading the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation" (47). From here, Victor goes on to question from where "did the principle of life proceed?" (50). He becomes, in effect, a scientific necromancer: "After days and night of incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation of life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter" (51). This "painful labour" produces an offspring, much in the fashion of a pregnancy. Victor, in one single act of creation becomes a god and a father. Which role credits the most response depends upon the interpretation favoured; however, the implication is that Mary Shelley has created a new space for supernaturalism within the Gothic genre: supernaturalism becomes the new religion of the scientific age. This association with fire, then, recalls the Promethean significance of fire as the initiator of life and ideas, as well as the *Paradise Lost* purgatorial fire associated with Satan's domain. Victor recalls: "vivid flashes of lightning dazzled my eyes, illuminating the lake, making it appear like a vast sheet of fire" (73). So, too, does science facilitate a limitless range of potential illumination, the dangers of which *Frankenstein* makes us painfully aware.

From its narrative technique to its use of irrational phenomena, *Frankenstein* can be considered as a presentation of alternative realities. The intersection of the supernatural and the scientific carries these Gothic patterns far beyond the tales read by the Diodati group in 1816. In the tales from *Fantasmagoriana*, oftentimes the elements ungoverned by material or physical laws become a reality (such as Shurster's ghost in "The Death's Head"). Lord Byron and Polidori delved into these possibilities in their contributions to the ghost story competition (as seen with Darvell in the "Fragment," the demon in *Ernestus Berchtold*, and Strongmore in "The Vampyre"). However, it is in *Frankenstein* that these elements gain precedence. The physical and material laws are here manipulated by a human being who wishes to pursue his personal designs in becoming a benefactor to a new race. Here, the supernatural possibilities become scientific realities, realities that are enmeshed with human ego and hubris, a combination which turns out to be disastrous. The unfolding of this uncomfortable marriage of the supernatural and the scientific, and of the coexistence of different levels of 'reality,' makes Mary Shelley's novel the most innovative and enduring of the works emanating from the Diodati competition. The primary reason for its enduring qualities is the fact that her use of intertext is a radical act in itself; it reshapes old myths into new ones, and asserts *Frankenstein* as a revised form of the Gothic novel.



## CONCLUSION

That the four fictional works that emanated from the Diodati ghost story competition in 1816 were inspired by the reading of *Fantasmagoriana* is indisputable. The focus of this thesis has been the extent of that influence. The discussions held during the many stormy evenings of that summer speak to the "congeries of pleasing horrors" (Polidori's "The Vampyre," 34) both read and produced by the Diodati group: topics ranged from the supernatural, to electricity and magnetism, and to speculations on reanimation, all subjects dealt with in various ways in *Fantasmagoriana*. From the discussions to the works the Diodati group embarked upon, reverberations of literary motifs and thematic patterns from this text of influence are evident. One can conclude, then, that the reading of the ghost stories in *Fantasmagoriana* not only inspired the writing of these four pieces of fiction, but actively determined their shape and substance. While part of this may be attributed to a mutual sharing of a common Gothic tradition, a case can be made for a more direct and specific influence. It is part of this contention that the writings of the Diodati group participate in a process of Gothic intertextuality.

A history and overview of the tales found in an English rendition of the *Fantasmagoriana* collection reveals a distinct set of narrative and thematic patterns: 'tale-within-the-tale,' temporal and spatial boundaries, narrative links (pacts, secrets, curses), the exploration of the supernatural, and the consideration of phenomena

such as the spectral lover and the doppelgänger. What is significant, however, is the way these patterns are adopted, modified and expanded in the four texts that resulted from Byron's challenge. The case for intertextuality is evident not only in the recurrence of these patterns in the subsequent texts, but in how they are reshaped and transformed by each of the writers. The overall effect is the positing of the supernatural as a challenge to prevailing rationalism - the essence of the Gothic mode. Byron, in his "Fragment," initiates what Polidori actually manifests in "The Vampyre": an enduring Gothic literary archetype of the Undead that revamps the supernatural from *Fantasmagoriana* into a tangible, albeit frightening, reality. Even in Polidori's *Ernestus Berchtold* the supernatural is extended into a more complex intertextual dialogue. However, it is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* that explodes the concept of the supernatural by reshaping the nature of 'reality' in her presentation of a multiplicity of surreal alternatives through pseudo-scientific and scientific discourses. Her revisioning of the patterns found in *Fantasmagoriana* asserts an expanded textual space for her Gothic novel. In this, *Frankenstein* is an overt subversion of Enlightenment rationalism and a radical transformation of the Gothic genre.

The reading of *Fantasmagoriana* and the subsequent contest have given us two of the most enduring Gothic myths which resonate to the present day: the literary vampire and the Frankenstein monster. One can speculate as to whether these two literary archetypes would have come into being had it not been for the

fortuitous reading of *Fantasmagoriana*. But there can be little doubt that the book of ghost stories with its "congeries of pleasing horrors" not only shaped four significant texts, but opened up a whole new avenue of Gothic discourse.

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