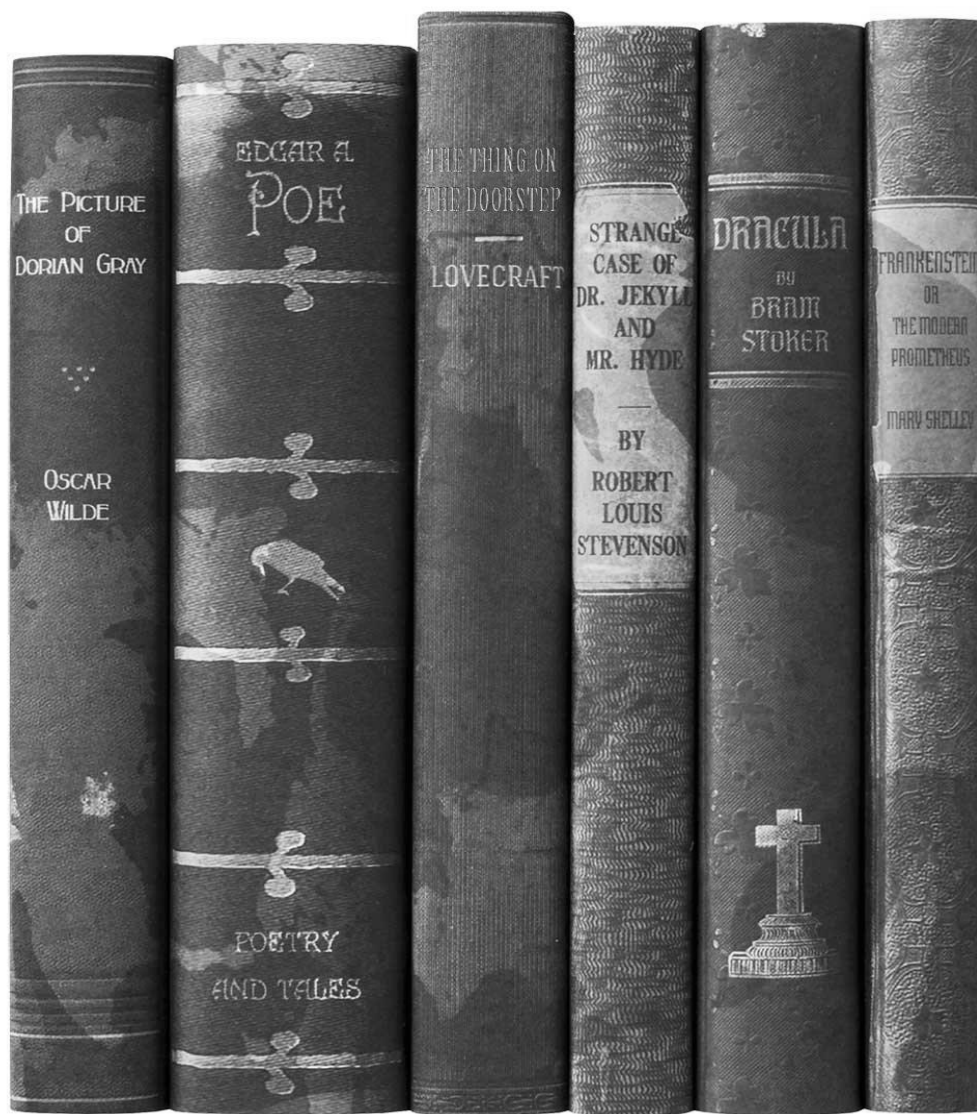


An Optional Course





Assoc. Professor Luminita Elena TURCU, PhD.

CURRICULUM

I. Introduction: A Fearful Discourse on Fear

II. The Generic Gothic Novel

Horace WALPOLE – **The Castle of Otranto**

III. The Monstrous Creature/ Creator

Mary SHELLEY – **Frankenstein**

IV. The Horror of the Split Sign

Robert Louis STEVENSON – **Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde**

V. The Horror of Degeneration and Alienation

Oscar Wilde – **The Picture of Dorian Gray**

VI. Exploring/ Exploiting the Territory of the *Other*

Bram Stoker - **Dracula**

VII. Gothic Survival through Dispersion, Fragmentation and Leakage in Modernist and Postmodernist Culture



I. GOTHIC

Introduction

FRAGMENTARINESS, EXCESS, MONSTROSITY

Oscar Wilde writes in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that “Art, like Nature, has her monsters, things of bestial shape and with hideous voices” (1973: 156). Allegedly prompted by dreams, the Gothic novels are made of “the stuff of dreams” and are such monsters of art with their discontinuous, fragmented narrative structure. The Gothic writers’s own hysteria testifies to the dismay they themselves experience, and also to the Gothic’s subterranean nostalgia for order and homogeneity. Commenting on some defective examples of the 19th-century novels, on their serious lack of compositional pattern, arbitrariness of form and ambiguity of meaning, Henry James viewed them as “some loose baggy monsters” (the Preface to *The Tragic Muse*, 1907). Gothic novels are undoubtedly “loose” and “baggy” with their painful convoluted plot full of sudden and perplexing transitions, also “monstrous” with their maximum of impact and their extended lingering suspense. All literary works under analysis reveal the same gapped structure and disrespect towards the sequential level.

The sense of “unfinishedness, uncertainty, otherness and unimaginableness” (JOHNSON in TINKLER – VILLANI & DAVIDSON, 1995: 8) haunts Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto*, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, as well as Stoker’s *Dracula* or R. L. Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The chaotic exfoliation of nested stories or hidden subplots, the dizzying digressions reduplicate the central topos of the Gothic novel – the labyrinth, where the protagonists get lost and readers fail to remain in control of the moral message of the fable.

The framing device – an aspect of the moral rhetoric of the Gothic novel – is designed to both distance the “author” from the often rebellious message of the text, to multiply authors and thus suspend authorial responsibility, but also to “authenticate” what David Punter names the Gothic “questionable source” (1995: 33). This and other devices – the fragment, the found or locked



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manuscript, the diary and letter – are stable badges of the Gothic novel and the thesis traces them at various points in the evolution of the genre.

CHARACTERS

As for Gothic characters, since Walpole's *Manfred* to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or R. L. Stevenson's *Jekyll*, they are deliberately built on excess and their majestic failure is illustrative of their descent from the Jacobean or Elizabethan tragic heroes – the odd offsprings of some undignified hereditary "disease". Angela Carter best describes them in the Afterword to *Fireworks*, when she comments on her own fictional beings that have inherited conspicuous Gothic traits: "Characters are exaggerated beyond reality, to become symbols, ideas, passions" (q. in DUNCKER, 1986: 227). Beginning with Horace Walpole's generic novel, the Gothic protagonists constitute a gallery of portraits of passions. The contribution of the Gothic to allowing sexuality to enter the discourse of the 18th century, an age when passion was either held in check or simply ignored, has been underlined in the thesis that has also traced this influence in the Victorian fiction, demonstrating how the exploratory Gothic discourse of passion insinuated itself in the Realist novels of the age.

The Gothic incorporates all forms of violent otherness into "a discourse of differences, which simultaneously implies inclusion and exclusion, recognition and discrimination" (BAUDRILLARD, 1990: 128). All aspects of otherness and all aspects of abnormality are fearfully explored by the Gothic novels that customarily project their spectres on exotic settings. Horror – "the perception of something incredibly evil or morally repellent" (TIGGES, 1995: 251) – adds to the paraphernalia of the Gothic novel.

IDEOLOGY

The recent interest in the ideological positioning of the Gothic novel could not be ignored, so the thesis attempts to demonstrate that the Gothic reemergence during periods of transition and cultural stress speaks of its function as "an instrumental genre" (HURLEY, 1996: 5), designed to negotiate the fears caused by sudden change and epistemological crisis. The Gothic novel's ideological message is often confusing and the critical debate on the either "radical" or "reactionary" significance of the genre is still intense. Yet, the analysis of some major novels in the thesis tends to favour the opinion according to which the Gothic novel is, in terms of ideology, an instrument of control, enabling the dominant order to name its opponents, to give them monstrous embodiments,

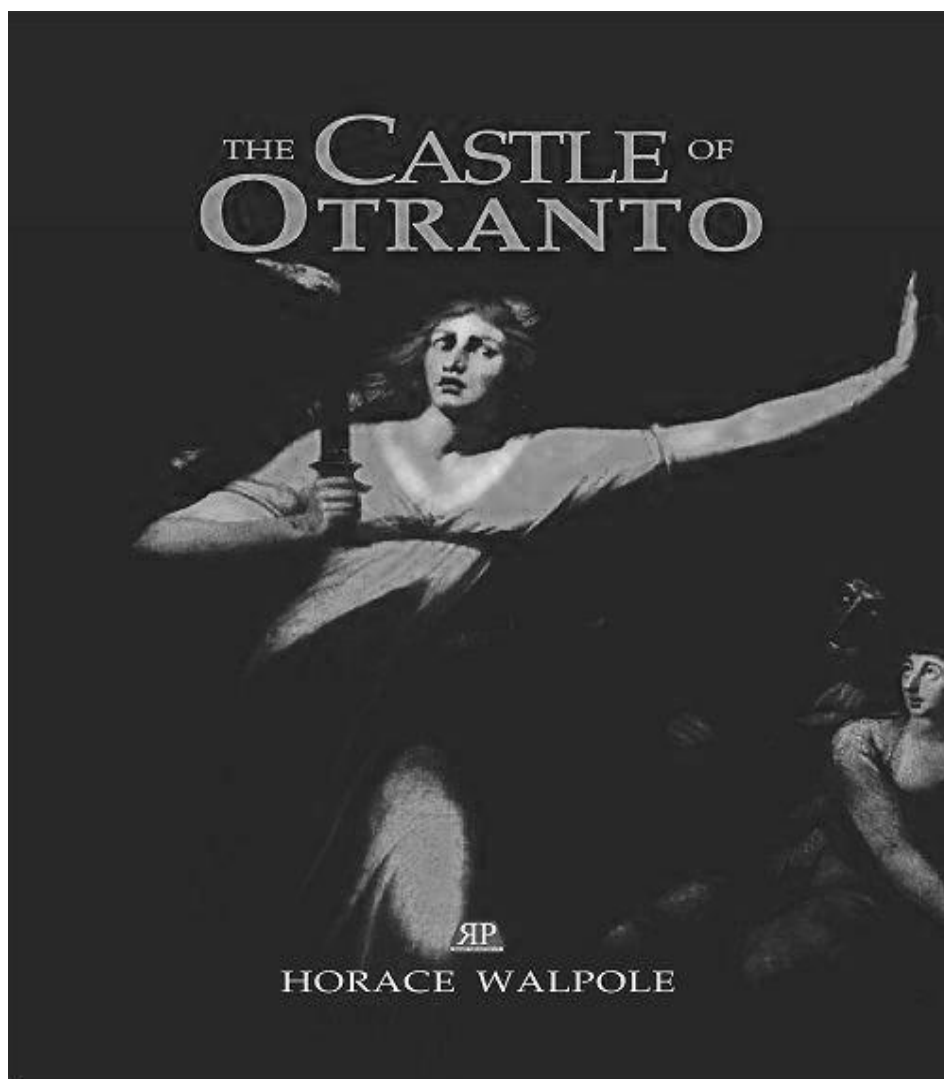


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“to demonise or monster/ise them” (D’HAEN, 1993). Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* exploits this tendency of the Gothic to impose closure on the story of the other, who is fictionally pulverised or subjected. The exploration and possession/passivisation of the woman is paralleled in Stoker’s novel by the subjection of the Easterner other, thus rendering harmless, in the conclusion of the story, both alien territories - the woman’s body and the East of Europe.

WOMEN

Woman’s marginal status in the Gothic novels under analysis is reflected in the omission of a distinct feminine voice in the chorus of narratives (in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*), in a ventriloquised one (in Stoker’s *Dracula*) or in its complete silencing (in R. L. Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*).





I.2 HORACE WALPOLE

The Castle of Otranto

1. SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The generic Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* was published anonymously in 1764 as an attempt to blend "the two kinds of romances, the ancient and the modern" (7). This combination of medieval romance with realistic narrative represented the embodiment of an aesthetic urge to surmount the constraints of both genres. The new literary form was soon met with the scholars' highbrow derision but also with unprecedented popularity among the gallery, though the warning it encapsulated was mainly addressed to the former. The Gothic novelistic tradition is thus founded in a turbid age, somewhere in between the two major poles of anxiety, past and future, the English Revolution of 1688 and the forthcoming French Revolution of 1789. Undoubtedly, it is Walpole's merit to have ushered in the new literary genre for, until 1764, "the ghost did not venture into the English novel" (BIRKHEAD, 1963: 12).

2. THE GOTHIC TRADITION

Born in the midst of the 18th century, the new literary form survived as such a little more than a century, until the 1880s and even while still alive it was seldom perceived as a serious aesthetic movement with a clearly uttered doctrine backed up by faithful disciples.

However, when Clara Reeve published in 1777 the next major Gothic novel, *The Old English Baron* (first under the title *The Champion of Virtue*), she could already take the Walpolean tradition for granted and the new novelistic form, concocting realism with the ingredients of romance, was to become prevalent in the 18th century. In 1794 William Godwin published *Caleb Williams*, two years later Matthew Lewis published his celebrated novel *The Monk* (1796), while the end of the century (1789-1797) was almost completely dominated by Ann Radcliffe's five novels which were to both consecrate and saturate the genre.



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After Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, the Gothic novel irretrievably declines so that R. L. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) already signal the fact that its structural and thematic identity will experience interesting leakage into various genres, such as ghost stories, historical romances, vampire tales, detective novels or science fiction.

3. ARCHITECTURE

The term "Gothic" is primarily an architectural one, denoting the type of building which flourished in the European Middle Ages, free of either Greek or Roman influence. Gothic architecture, with its pointed arches and its fear of empty spaces, was revived in England somewhere in the middle of the 18th century. The fascination that the Gothic architecture exerted on a large scale in the age was also due to the associations with the medieval romances and ivy-covered ruins. Graveyard Poetry with its insistence on mortality enhanced this interest in ruins and graves decorously haunted by owls and washed by moonlight.

4. INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The last decades of the 18th century may also be summarized by the generic formula "Industrial Revolution". When compared to the previous ages, the mid-18th century appears as cataclysmic and demoralized. Robert Walpole's absolute mastery of the government (1721-1742) had allowed England to indulge in ideals of stability and prosperity. This age created new markets and an increased demand for productivity. The unprecedented development of technology both fostered the invasion of industrial capitalism and widened the gap between the rich and the poor. However a third more positive effect was that of a growing mobility among classes since property became the sole mark of individual worth.

5. THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND

This social upheaval, along with the spread of literacy (originated in the 17th-century Protestant demand that every individual should read the Scripture by oneself), the growth of a mainly female and middle-class reading public, as well as the emerging power of the press, are considered by Ian Watt the ferments that gave a decisive impetus to the development of an adequate literary form – the novel (1967). Indeed, the novel is one of the many 18th-century "innovations". However, 18th-century novels represent what John Richetti calls "the prehistory of novelistic development" (1996:



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9). "Novel" is but one of the numerous names, accompanying "true/secret history" and "romance" that tried to grasp something of the elusive nature of the new narrative form, which had not been yet completely solidified.

5. THE GOTHIC NOVEL VERSUS REALIST AND SENTIMENTAL NOVELS

The major issue at stake here is why the mid-18th-century readers' expectations were already diverted from both sentimental novels and realist narratives, which had but recently gained a literary status. First, it may be argued that realist novels, for all their apparent effect of reflected reality, produce the readers' immersion in the fictional world, a world that seems safe and comfortable. The immediate implication might be that their own world was safe and comfortable. This escapist quality of the novel was regarded as malignant and the fact that reading had become a private dubious process did not help ratify the novel's respectability. Besides, what was going on outside the fictional realm was far from being cozy and harmless. The ugly Fear was invading the 18th-century England and its specters insidiously contaminated the fiction it produced.

The Gothic message has regularly been contrasted with that of the Realist novel or of the emerging Romantic Movement. Moreover, it seems that the Gothic was more forcibly a response to the artificiality and mediocrity of the sentimental novel, to its spectacle of benign generosity that dissolved class conflict by sentimentalising it. Sentimentalists negotiated the distance between blue-blood inborn worth and the pretence of the middle class to upward mobility. The authors of sentimental novels did not devise new class confines; they simply made them as elastic as to accommodate all the litigants. A writing of social compromise, the sentimental novel represented the actual target for the Gothic writers who were voicing their own fears, the fears of the privileged class that they represented.

6. GOTHIC IDIOSYNCRASIES

The Gothic signals a crisis, a sudden change of direction, even more frequently, it announces that the road is not safe. The fears that the Gothic utters are multiple and violent and will be discussed later.

The first Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, will represent a blueprint for the new genre. Though its basic framework has gradually suffered significant changes when handled by later writers, *The Castle of Otranto* is still seen as an idiosyncratic Gothic sample as it introduces



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some of the central ingredients of the genre, along with the familiar techniques of deferral and ellipsis. Indifferently of the alteration in form or substance, the Gothic narrative has remained an outlet for panic, the projection of a mind in the process of reconstructing a golden age, simultaneously contrasting it with the deformity of the emerging one. The many anxieties evoked by the Goths are uttered by means of certain stock features that are symptomatic for the Gothic novel as a “writing of excess”, as Fred Botting names it (1996: 1):

- labyrinthine segmented narrative structures;
- nested plots and subplots;
- patterns of repetition;
- climactic disintegration and partial reconstruction towards the conclusion of the story;
- unexplained incidents triggering an storm of ridiculously violent responses;
- dark secrets discovered at the most appropriate of moments;
- strange creatures: skeletons marching in deserted chambers, ghosts, vampires and

monsters.

The ingredients that deliriously construct the Gothic maize belong to what Northrop Frye calls “demonic imagery”. Opposed to the “apocalyptic symbolism”, where the categories of reality are in the form of human desire, demonic imagery describes the world in a way that human desire holds in abhorrence, “the world as it is before the human imaginations begin to work on it and before any human desire, such as the city or the garden, has been solidly established; the world of perverted or wasted work, ruins and catacombs, instruments of terror and monuments of folly” (1990: 147). If the Romanticism will venture outside the walls, its emblem being the garden and the vast scenery of wildness, the Gothic remains captive within the edifice of perverted imagination. If it goes in the open, it does so only transiently and only to fetch additional narrative energy and transfuse it to the artificial edifice.

The dark cloisters and the subterranean passageways of the Castle of Otranto vaguely elucidate the cloisters of the subconscious as well as the fragility of aristocratic prerogatives:

“The lower part of the castle was hollowed into several intricate cloisters; and it was not easy for one under so much anxiety to find the door that opened into the cavern. An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of winds that shook the



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doors she had passed, and which grating on the rusty hinges were re-echoed through the long labyrinth of darkness" (61).

The woman is easily victimized as she is entrapped in between these two poles of oppression: the Castle, the embodiment of man's mastery over her, and the Convent/ Church which is but another prison, since "no other means of deliverance was offered" (Ibid.)

A realm of darkness, the Gothic Castle exerts a necrotic spell on characters because darkness is the locus of incestuous propensities and mental disorder. It is in the dark that the despicable loses its inertia:

"It was now evening; the servant who conducted Isabella bore a torch before her. When they came to Manfred, who was walking impatiently about the gallery, he started and said hastily, 'Take away that light and begone'. Then, shutting the door impetuously, he flung himself upon a bench against the wall and bade Isabella sit by him. She obeyed trembling." (58)

The Gothic narrative is uncommonly eloquent about the unspeakable and the uncanny. As David Punter has suggested, here it is the fear of "evolutionary reversion" (1980: 85), the silent realization that a civilized man implacably shelters within himself the type of the untamed he has supposedly got rid of. Simultaneously, here it is the fear of what once used to be homely and native has now turned into the exotic and the uncanny for, the uncanny, as Freud remarks, is in reality nothing new or alien but something that has been alienated from our mind through perpetual repression and denial.

The gallery of Gothic characters inevitably comprises a villain-figure, the tyrannical master of a gloomy castle; an effortlessly abused maiden, entrapped in the menacing darkness of the castle, and lacking the support of a father, who is invariably and symbolically missing when most needed; a mother-figure, benevolent but completely ineffectual; the femme fatale, sadistic and vicious; the domestics, sometimes intriguing conspirators, some other times candid companions in the protagonist's suffering; and last (and certainly least, as he usually is the most unmotivated and equivocal character), the young hero who, though totally non-heroic, is sure to bring forth a benign change after having been victimized himself.

Enchantments, secret niches, dimness, ghosts, animate objects, terror, consternation and horror are also stable ingredients of the Gothic novel. Messengers from the past, the revenants claim



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vengeance or speculate futures and are as insubstantial as the Evil in the Apocalypse, “the Beast that was, and is not, and yet is”.

7. A FEARFUL/ FEARED DISCOURSE ON FEARS

A. FEAR OF THE SOCIAL OTHER

First of all, the Gothic was an enabling discourse by which the conventionally respectable classes could justify and articulate their fear of and hostility to the deviant and the subversive. It is in the 18th century that, suggestively enough, the concept of class is first coagulated. Of course, it does not yet indicate a noticeable social division in England. However, as Raymond Williams observes, it already designates “a changed social structure and feeling, an England which was passing through the Industrial Revolution, and which was at critical point in the development of political democracy” (1990: XIII). Of late, the 18th-century under-class has been re-evaluated by historians and it appears surprisingly unbendable, assisted by a rebellious traditional culture, disrespectful and sarcastic concerning social stratification. As inextricably intertwined with the apprehensions for the upper classes’ stability, one of the major fears that the Gothic novel encoded was the one regarding social transgression. The spectre of a fatal dislodgement of the traditional hierarchy is still at home in the 20th-century Europe. Ortega y Gasset’s account of the “crowd’s” aggressive mediocrity sounds deliciously Gothic-like:

“The characteristic note of our time is the dire truth that the mediocre soul, the commonplace mind, knowing itself to be mediocre, has the gall to assert its right to mediocrity, and goes on to impose itself wherever it can... The mass crushes everything different, everything outstanding, excellent, individual, select, and choice” (in LECHTE, 1996: 224).

Certainly, something has dramatically changed in the discourse of elitist partisanship. A semantic shift has occurred from “crowd / mob” as social usurpers to that of “crowd / mob” as abolitionists of a cultural hierarchy. Mutatis mutandis, the uneasiness of the privileged is basically the same.

CHARACTERS: Whereas, as John Richetti emphasises, in the Realist and sentimental novels of the age the dominated are securely placed, through an inevitable process of reflexive representation, in a position of “comic inferiority”(1996: 85), in the Gothic novel they are subversively eager and, at times, more lucid than their masters. Again, while the former set of works limits their status to the



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repetition of hackneyed phrases and gestures, in the Gothic novel their responses are unpredictable and immodest. Gothic domestics are no longer domesticated. Walpole himself empowers them with an undeniable capacity of disclosing and inferring which is extremely suspect. In the Preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* the “author” dismisses the “belief in any kind of prodigy”, in “miracles, visions, dreams, and other preternatural events”, but announces that “he must represent his actors as believing in them” (Ibid.). However, he instantly initiates a sort of contract with the “subalterns” since it seems that it is only they and the “author” himself who share this skepticism: “Some persons may perhaps think the characters of the domestics too little serious for the general cast of the story; but besides their opposition to the principal personages, the art of the author is very observable in his conduct of the subalterns. They discover many passages essential to the story.” (40-1)

While the “author” associates them with the comic representations of Shakespeare’s servant figures, he simultaneously places them in the midst of events, not simply as a farcical chorus, but as supervisors and *maîtres de jeu*. When the huge helmet collapses and kills Conrad in a literal mockery of *deus ex machina*, it is a young peasant who notices that “the miraculous helmet was exactly like that on the figure in black marble of Alfred the Good, one of their former princes, in the Church of St. Nicholas”(54). This young peasant coming from a “neighbouring village” – therefore a chance observer – actually is the rightful heir of the castle, but at this point of the story he is but a subject, not yet the usurper of the usurper’s authority and estate. And the portrait he mentions is both Alfredo’s and his own as the servant will turn into the master.

Domestics are the ones who see and hear everything and they hear and see it first. The sense of terror arrives at the protagonists almost in every case via their subjects, and never the other way round. They spread the toxin of dread all around in an apparently candid manner. The strange apparition in the castle is extremely subtle and immaterial and yet, it is only the servants who sense it. Manfred too, but he is finally revealed to belong to a poisonous line, therefore a “servant” himself: “What, cried Manfred breathless – dost thou see nothing...? Is this ghastly phantom sent to me alone? ...To me who did not...” (116).

Hippolita can not see it since she is safely placed on the social scale, respectful towards the values of social elite she always belonged to, while Manfred obviously “did not”. Domestics are



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insolent, ironic and much too familiar with their masters. As J. P. Carson notes, "paternalistic relations of deference and subordination are yielding to those of contract and cash nexus" (in RICHETTI, 1996: 263). Additionally, the danger they sense outside actually lies within them. At some point Bianca utters a claim to social climbing that should have thrilled her mistress more than the ghost upstairs: "If love levels ranks, it raises them too" (77). And it is Bianca again to divulge something of the perverse mechanism of fear, her words being illustrative of anything else than "naiveté and simplicity" (41):

"A by-stander often sees more of the game than those that play... There is more in it than you great folks are aware of" (79).

While the writers of the mid-century who followed Defoe fix firmly their narratives in what John Richetti names "social inevitability and class stratification" (in NUSSBAUM & BROWN, 1987: 85), those following Walpole employ characters of the type of Bianca, characters who assert the interchangeable nature of social roles. Such characters are still the products of their masters' "processed experience" (Ibid.) and yet, they have turned into the threatening neighbour, the other who makes his/her claims with superiority.

B. FEAR OF THE COLONIZED OTHER

The other is not only the under class threatening to shatter the status quo. Imperialism and its aftermath set off travel, exploration and exodus. The immediate literary consequence was that of the assault of the exotic. The exotic in fiction is the mediation of an abroad to an audience assumed to be placed at home, but also the mediation of the other to an audience that is safely and "logically" superior. The 18th century is also the age of the largest slave trading in history, when millions of people were moved from one continent to another as a massive and cheap work force. In the eve of the 18th century, anti-slavery works had been published in England, Aphra Behn's *Oroonoke*, or the *Royal Slave*, recently recovered by Anglo-American feminist criticism, being an example. The Gothic novel, and especially William Beckford's *Vathek* will propose a different kind of discourse, that of "incorporated orientalism", which in Edward Said's view is "a discourse of power", a "distribution of geopolitical awareness" into a literary form (1979: 13). Its basic aim is, as a consequence, "to control, to manipulate, and even to incorporate the Oriental other" (Ibid.).



C. FEAR OF THE SEXUALLY DIFFERENT

The Gothic novel has always been unable to deal with what Todorov calls “the argument from alterity” (1984: 4). Yet the Gothic text is crucial for the necessary connection of race and gender, a model text that illustrates the interaction of the positions of the oppressed in the literary discourse. The study of women figures in the literary form inaugurated by Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* offers an almost self-activating conjunction of race and gender, and the Hegelian dualism master/slave best describes the position of women in this typically patriarchal cultural pattern.

The Gothic narrative moves between a revolutionary and a reactionary perspective on woman. This ambivalence is perhaps due to an inherent contradiction that the Gothic text encapsulates: beginning with the heroic romance (which Walpole desired to revive) the woman has represented the motivating prize for brave manliness. The Realist newly established tradition, “the new romance”, was also characterized by woman’s centrality. “Blending” the two types of “romances” consequently means the perpetuation of the woman character as a pivotal principle that ensures structural and thematic coherence. Yet, the presence of women characters in a central position forces the Gothic writer to equally accept “a plot of feminine subversion” (KILGOUR, 1995: 225). The Gothic text thus becomes an escapist means of resolving feminine rebellion and also an indirect critique of the status of women in the 18th-century England. Through the technique of Romantic defamiliarization, the Gothic castle enables women readers to see “the home as prison, in which the helpless female is at the mercy of ominous patriarchal authorities” (KILGOUR, 1995: 9). However, through the fair distribution and the reward of chastity and obedience in the conclusion of the story, the Gothic novel attenuates this rebellious message.

The Gothic indecision regarding the woman issue is preceded and accompanied in the middle of the century by the uproarious attack of the so-called “scandalous memoirs” against the authorised versions of “woman identity”. The voyeuristic reader, already demystified by Sade (“Hypocrite lecteur – mon semblable – mon frère!”), is forced to accept a new perspective upon femininity. Obviously, the celebration of feminine sexuality in these writings is perceived as horrific and obscene. The feminine identity is newly grasped as multiple, changing, irregular and secreting and the Gothic novel will transmogrify it into the monstrous. The Gothic primordial substance, Fear, extends to sexuality, particularly fear of female sexuality by men. Bram Dijkstra in *Idols of Perversity* (1986) demonstrates



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how fear of sexual temptation and of loss of control resulted in the dread of the vampire. His collection of images from art and literature closely follows the logic according to which the mystery of female desire is shaped in states of animalism and abnormality as early as the beginning of the 18th century.

The association of misogyny and the monstrous has its source in the mid-18th century, too. The fear of the compromised masculinity also reflected the erosion of traditional social and moral values. Later Gothic works will represent both sensual experiences of pain and of pleasure taking place within a master-slave power structure. For instance, in Stoker's *Dracula* both parties are equally victim and violator. Vampirism obliterates any clear-cut reading of gendered power-relations, since it betrays the possibility that pleasure is dangerous, and the victims might well be violators. As we move forward following the evolution of the Gothic we see these positions more and more mixed up and, simultaneously, more and more extreme.

With Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, therefore back to the origin of the Gothic novel, we need not worry ourselves about this annihilating sexual drive. Woman's submission to the man/master is still the norm. In Walpole's novel, women, feared for their sexual ascendancy over men, are fearful themselves, as if sensing the danger of sexual freedom as but another type of imprisonment. Bianca says to Matilda:

"Your mother knows that a husband is better than no husband at all".

To accept a traditional type of confinement may at times mean, paradoxically, to free oneself of other, more dangerous incarcerations. Hippolita is however nothing more than a caricature of selfless womanhood. Manfred treats her as such, disdaining her obedience mainly because it seems to have no sexual connotation at all:

"She is, I allow, a faultless woman: her soul is set on heaven, and scorns the little grandeurs of this world; you can withdraw her from it entirely. Persuade her to consent to the dissolution of our marriage, and to retire into a monastery" (84).

No matter how harmless she may seem, in Horace Walpole's novel the woman is the other, the one against whom violence is directed since the other is, as Luce Irigaray underlines, "that which differs sexually from me" (*Ibid.*: 172).



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Manfred's adulterous and incestuous intentions are in fact the expression of his profound mistrust in the son's potency, in the son's capacity to reproduce his line, to reproduce him, that is, the father. That is why the son is killed, symbolically castrated, from the very first page of the novel. This overturned Oedipal complex is extensively relevant for the social and cultural context of Walpole's work, for the young generation's fear that, faced with such explosive social changes, they will not be able to preserve their fathers' Establishment. On the other hand, the Oedipal plot may be decoded in terms of the author's own uncertainty concerning his ability to keep up with his father's prominence. Manfred voices all these fears:

"I have lost the hopes of my race! But Conrad was not worthy of thy beauty. Think no more of him...he was a sickly puny child, and heaven has perhaps taken him away that I might not trust the honours of my house on so frail a foundation. I hope in a few years to have reasons to rejoice at the death of Conrad..." (58).

This passage epitomizes what we may call the dark oedipal subtext, a rather inverted and perverted oedipal fantasy of self-perpetuation. It also introduces us to another stage of our demonstration that the Gothic deals with inescapable fears that made the 18th century the voice and recipient of the fragmented and elusive Gothic narrative.

D. FEAR OF POWER

The figure of Manfred, the typical victim, the pharmakos in Northrop Frye's terminology (1990: 41) is ambiguously depicted. Initially, he is neither innocent nor guilty, he is "like the mountaineer whose shout brings down an avalanche" (Ibid.: 41). Walpole's protagonist is rendered speechless when overwhelmed with a type of hostility that he can not understand:

"The horror of the spectacle, the ignorance of all around how this misfortune happened, and above all, the tremendous phenomenon before him, took away the prince's speech. He seemed less attentive to his loss, than buried in meditation on the stupendous object that had occasioned it" (53).

Manfred is fascinated with his own disaster, trying to find a logical commonsensical explanation of it: "He touched, he examined the fatal casque..." (53). However, the natural drive to solve the mystery is frustrated by the realization that some obscure adverse power humiliates human understanding. This power is a rather terrestrial authority – the social and political Power.



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The Gothic novel constitutes “a critical sociology of Power operating in several ways: through institutions founded in the past and now outmoded (in ruins), but nevertheless dangerous for the outsider to understand, or master (secret entrances, passages, labyrinths, pitfalls); through social conventions (conspiracies, secret orders) unrecognized or not understood by their victims; through application of hidden laws and instruments of force (the Inquisition); through an unsuspected, inward working transformation (magic); and through alien, not truly English values and practices (Mediterranean, Catholic, Oriental)” (DAY, 1996: 202). Undoubtedly, the Gothic novel encapsulates further concentrations of metaphors, the labyrinth appearing as the winding entrails inside a sinister monster, a mechanism that has been premeditatedly designed to confuse. The huge casque too, seems to belong to a much too earthly craftsmanship. It seems quite “unreasonable” that the preternatural should appeal to such mechanical devices when it “reasonably” could employ revenants, grinning spectres and walking skeletons with less risible effects. The monumental armour, symbolically empty and yet driven by an enigmatic force, typifies a general perception of the political power in the 18th-century England.

The Gothic narrative mimics this lack of transparency of governmental designs in its conclusive explanation of the mystery, which actually deepens the enigma.

E. FEAR OF DEATH

Above all the fears analyzed so far - the fear of social insecurity and transgression, the fear of the colonised other (but also of the neighbour), of the newly discovered female sexuality, the fear of the young generation’s inability to preserve and consolidate a status quo, the fear of political power - above, around and beyond all these fears and many others, the voracious and unfathomable fear of death hovers. Although this fear is inextricably linked with human condition, it seems that the 18th century is markedly obsessed with it.

The study of Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (1977), provides a useful perspective upon the complex relationship between life and death in the 18th-century mentality. He diagnoses this age as the source of an unprecedented revolution in feeling, a cognitive mutation in Western popular culture. Ariès claims that the 18th-century popular culture commences a profound aversion toward death and mortality at large. This attitude might be interpreted in terms of the amplified individualism of the age as well as of the Enlightenment rationalism that offered all the disadvantages



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of doubting any given norm with none of the soothing effects of religion. The result was a universal concern to mystify death, to embellish it, to mummify it, to conceal any sign of decrepitude, and to make dying a discreet private affair. This effort seems justified since it is death alone that disturbingly undermines the conceited self-portrait of the 18th-century individual. As Terry Castle comments, “in contrast with the earlier centuries, the dead were increasingly segregated from the living. Cemeteries were removed from their once–central locations, and their necrological function obscured” (in NUSSBAUM & BROWN, 1987: 243). Much of our “primitive fear of the dead that is so strong in us”, as Freud describes it in *The Uncanny* (q. in WILLIAMS, 1997: 365), is partly due to the 18th-century shifting sensibility, to the annihilation of the promise of an afterlife.

The fear of loss and separation is transmogrified in the Gothic novel in a naive denial of mortality, populating the Gothic castle with “living” human beings as well as with equally vivid spectres of the dead. Thus, these death narratives represent a means of resolving the potential conflict between past and present, between the self and the other, between the privileged and the oppressed.

Whereas in Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* the dead are still there, in the domestic universe, waiting for their descendants to recognize and be recognized by them, later Gothic narratives, such as Ann Radcliffe’s, would take further steps toward the “spectralization of the other” (CASTLE, in NUSSBAUM & BROWN, 1987), dead and alive altogether. This desire to reconstruct the defunct in otherworldly forms will be carried out in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* by the technological embodiment of the 19th-century’s idolatry of science (also of pseudo-science, such as mesmerism and ventriloquism), especially of combustion and electricity. The Gothic novel explores simultaneously with the Enlightenment science various areas of marginal scientific knowledge. Bordering on the occult, the Enlightenment science offered a nutritious substance to the Gothic novel that mixed it up with magic. The result was, as Terry Castle notices (*Ibid.*), an unexpected impulse toward technological experiment that finally led to the invention of photography, holography and cinematography – all of them incontestable evidence that scientists took visions and spectres quite seriously.

The Gothic writer assumes the huge responsibility, and he fearfully does it, of uttering the fears haunting his age. Yet, the primordial fear he utters is that of extinction. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick



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notes, “we have accustomed ourselves to finding hidden sexual plots in Gothic fiction (and indeed delight in them); we have still not reconciled ourselves, however, to its far more obvious concern with death and dissolution.” (1980: 308)





II. MARY SHELLEY

Frankenstein

1. THE AUTHOR'S "AUTHORS"

Mary Shelley, as a biographer's subject, has often been interesting simply on the account of her relationship with illustrious figures of the literary canon. This interest has recently deflected in a circuitous way to demonstrate how both Mary Shelley and her major work, *Frankenstein*, were produced and, to a certain extent, controlled by a complex set of family relationships. As the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, Mary Shelley was compelled very early in her life to live up to the standards imposed by the potent yet highly demanding role models of her parents. This grew even more problematical after the posthumous publication of her mother's *Memoirs* in 1797, in which the feminist radicalist shocked the public opinion from beyond the grave as she had constantly done in her tumultuous lifetime. The daughter had to reject the scabrous hostility that infested the memory of the mother, whose name she had inherited, and also to intimately oppose the overwhelming pressure that the image of her yet idealised mother exerted on her identity. Reminiscences of this tension would be brought to life by the husband too, who was "very anxious", as Mary confesses in the 1831 Preface, "that I should prove myself worthy of my parentage and enrol myself on the page of fame" (260).

Mary Wollstonecraft: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Maria or the Wrongs of Woman*

WILLIAM GODWIN: *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), *Caleb Williams* (1794), *St. Leon*.

2. GENESIS OF THE STORY

In 1816 Mary and Percy Shelley as well as Mary's half-sister, Claire Clairmont, spent part of the summer with Byron and his physician, Polidori, in the Villa Diodati, on the shores of Lake Geneva. On the occasion of a visit paid by M. G. Lewis they read from *Fantasmagoriana*, a French translation of a German collection of tales.¹

¹ The collection was also published in English in 1814, under the title **Tales of the Dead**



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These tales so excited them that Byron suggested that they all write and narrate a supernatural story, thus triggering one of the most famous literary competition. Because of the gap in Mary Shelley's *Journal* for the very period between May 1815 and July 1816, Polidori's *Diary* remains the only eyewitness account of what happened then. Mary Shelley herself mentions in the *Preface* (1831) to her novel the words Byron presumably uttered in the small hours of June 19, 1816: "We will each write a ghost story" (216)

Doctor Polidori elaborated a tale of vampirism, later to become the major source for Stoker's *Dracula*. His macabre tale, *The Vampyre* (1819). Percy Shelley's contribution tends to be omitted chiefly because it was more "a case history of a hysterical attack rather than a supernatural narrative. Byron himself composed part of a "tale of terror", published three years later as *A Fragment*. As Mary Shelley writes in the *Preface* (1831), she "busied [herself] to think of a story" that she finally completed and published in 1818, under the title *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*.

Percy Shelley's contribution to the text of Frankenstein:

Mary Shelley's own words in the *Preface* to *Frankenstein* of 1831, therefore after the death of the poet, which in fact represents the assertion of authorship/ownership of the text:

- "I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband...From this declaration I must except the preface. As far as I can recollect, it was entirely written by him." (264)
 - "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 forgot- something very shocking and wrong of course, but when she was reduced to a worse condition...he did not know what to do with her." (261)
 - "And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I have an affection for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words which found no echo in my heart." (264)
 - "Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creation out of void, but out of chaos." (262)
- "Married to a romantic poet and living near another, Mary Shelley at the time she was writing *Frankenstein* experienced with great intensity the self-contradictory demand that daughters embody...the mother whose death makes language possible. At the same time, as a mother herself she is led to figure her writing as mothering and to hear or transmit the words of her husband." (in WU, 1996: 379)



3. THE TYRANNY OF SCIENCE

Virile male science is constantly faced with the feminine passivity of Nature in *Frankenstein*. Victor Frankenstein's Professor at Ingolstadt, M. Waldman, talks about the task of scientists to "penetrate" Nature, to pursue her in the intimacy of her "hiding places", and discover her geography in an orgasmic thrill:

- "They penetrate into the recesses of nature and show how she works in her hiding places. They ascend into the heaven..." (45)
- "It was the most beautiful season. Never did the fields bestow a more plentiful harvest, or the vines yield a more luxurious vintage. But my eyes were insensible to the charms of nature." (54)

(An anecdote about the Shelleys from a few days after the famous literary competition had started lends support to the idea that the Romantics were highly impressed by the more or less scientific discourse of their time: Percy Shelley experienced a nervous "transport" while Byron was reciting, deploying sexual ventriloquism, Coleridge's *Christabel*. Terrified, he ran out of the room and only later told Byron and Polidori that Coleridge's lines and Byron's reading "electrified" him and, on looking at Mary Shelley, he suddenly "thought of a woman who had eyes instead of nipples" (q. in WU, 1996: 387-8). This hallucination of disembodied femininity is again suggestive beyond the level of anecdote and paradoxically leads us again to the notion of sublimity, which was exclusively phallogentric.).

Frankenstein largely depends, of course, on the 19th-century scientific discourse of galvanisation, mesmerism and electricity.

Science imperatively imposed a new image of *reality*. The *a priori* conceptions of the Cartesians had already been shattered by the Newtonian description of the universe as a *plenum* in which particles of matter are in eternal motion, in turn generated by attraction and rejection. Irregularity, asymmetry, waste of energy, combination of disparate elements – this was the Newtonian picture that led to the perception of a malformed universe in perpetual motion and further configuration. *Frankenstein* could hardly escape the influence of the Newtonian model: the narrative voices intermingle, disparate fragments of discourse are aligned as if provisionally and the whole has the aspect of a chaotic game of attraction and revulsion.

Another influential voice in the age was that of Erasmus Darwin who, in his *Botanic Poems* of 1794 -6, asserted that environment could breed biological monstrosities. Combined with his phallogentric theory according to which the male genitor can determine gender and control heredity, Darwin's poems must have had their role in Shelley's novel in which a male "parent" actually determines the



male sex of his creation/child, while, on the other hand, he is able to destroy “in cold blood” the female “child”, just before she is completed/born. In the original preface to *Frankenstein* the name of Darwin is actually called upon to ratify the fact that reanimation is not “of impossible occurrence”.

The name of the title hero links the narrative also with the domain of alchemy, “Frankenstein” being the name of the castle that Dippel, the famous Rossicrucian who pretended to have discovered the elixir of life, gained in exchange for his panacea (ROBERTS, 1994: 95-110). Victor Frankenstein’s scientific enterprise is not ostensibly different from the work of alchemists and one implication may be that “modern science” allegedly detached from its history of groping in the dark may still produce the same errors of judgement and conception.

4. THE “HIDEOUS PROGENY” AS MONSTROUS TEXT AND TEXTUAL MONSTER

Frankenstein cannot be explicated through any single theoretical approach to what we call “literature”.

4.1. A MONSTRUOUS TEXT INHABITED BY TEXTUAL MONSTERS

The unspeakable is the locus where *Frankenstein* divorces from realist conventions, drawing the reader on the edge of non-existence and hallucination:

- “I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open. It breathed hard and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs. How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe...?” (57).

From the moment of creation onwards, the text takes increasingly on what Julia Kristeva calls “the rhetoric of abjection”. *Frankenstein* as a monstrous text governed by textual monstrosities exceeds those critical strategies that attempt to exact from it the meaning. However, each such attempt is valuable per se, though logically non-exhaustive. For instance, while Mary Poovey (1988) senses in Elizabeth’s selflessness a tinge of conservative ideology, James Carson (1996) considers *Frankenstein* a radical manifesto since Elizabeth’s selflessness is set in opposition to the bourgeois expansive mercantilism. Again, whereas Gilbert and Gubar (1979) decode the central conflict of the novel in terms of the frustrating experience of woman authorship in a phallogocentric tradition, Maggie Kilgour (1995) considers the novel as a deconstruction of male myths of personal autonomy.

4.2. ABERRANT STRUCTURE

Apart from their function of diffusing authority and thus authorial responsibility, the narrative frames in *Frankenstein* also function as a device of distancing the reader, who is made to understand that he is as far away from the meaning as the author herself. Still, the reader is not alone in his inefficacy to

grasp meaning. Walton too is a “reader” of Frankenstein’s story, Frankenstein himself is a “reader” of the monster’s odyssey, Elizabeth of Justine’s tale, the monster of De Lacey’s, and so on. All of them sense that they miss something crucial in the stories they read and pass over to the last but one addressee, Walton’s sister.

Margaret Saville, Walton’s sister, finally inherits the text, thus once more encircling it before she delivers it to the world outside the text. Since she has but a name and no story, she herself seems to half belong to that world outside the text and thus spread the toxin of artificiality in the “real” world, too. The thrilling implication might be that these dizzying circles generated by the text are propagated in the outside world that is nonetheless a Gothic one.

MOTION

- “I had gazed at him while unfinished. He was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived...” (59)



5. DEMYSTIFIED ROMANTIC MYTHOLOGY

Frankenstein re-enacts the Biblical myth of creation, and thus also *Paradise Lost*, in such a way as to perturb the edifice of Romantic male-centredness. In his attempt to dispense with femininity as the ultimate goal in male autonomy, Frankenstein fancies that he can produce a race no longer dependent on female sexuality and maternal affection. Isolated in a mockery of an ivory tower, “a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house” (54), where he keeps his “workshop of filthy creation”, the student disturbs “with profane fingers” the sacred secrets of life and death. Outside he can see what he abhors, instinctual and feminine Nature:

- “It was a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet.” (57)

Giving a definition of imagination, Keats considered that “it may be compared to Adam’s dream - he awoke and found it true” (q. in WU, 1996: 392). What Frankenstein “finds true” when he wakes up is an execrable literalisation of his desires:

- “He held up the curtains of the bed and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks.” (59)



- “I felt that I should survive to exhibit what I shall soon cease to be - a miserable spectacle of wrecked humanity, pitiable to others, and abhorrent to myself” (133)

6. EXONERATED MOTHERHOOD

The peculiar topology of Mary Shelley’s text as earlier described, with its framing devices that work against formal unity, namely to dis-originate it and to erode any distinction between *outside* and *inside*, further suggests the defining structure of the unconscious. In other words, the literary text can be viewed as being organised and behaving like the psychic unconscious through its eccentricity and self-exteriority. As a rewriting of the myth of creation, Frankenstein is simultaneously an inquiry concerning the position of woman in the androcentric myth.

If one reads Frankenstein symptomatically, paying attention to its gaps and lapses, the text shifts its meaning from the intention of the author to the versions of desire embodied in *logos*.

- “Dream that my little baby came to life again, that it had only been cold, and that we had rubbed it before the fire, and it lived. Awake and find no baby. I think about the little thing all day”
- The dramatic echo of this passage in the text of the novel is evident in Frankenstein’s desire “to animate the lifeless clay”, to “renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption”, also in the fulfilment of his projects:
- “I paused, examining and analysing...the change from life to death, and death to life, until from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me- a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple...” (50).

Western cultural mythology obstinately reduplicates images of the serene yet caring mother with the infant near her breast, icons of fertility and affection. Such images are so deeply rooted that they reject any other representation of woman, whose body, like that of the Holy Virgin, is univocally associated with that of the Mother. What is left aside is one of the common traumas in women’s life: the afterbirth collapse that comprises “fear, guilt, depression and anxiety as commonplace reactions to the birth of a baby, and well within the range of experience”

- Maggie Kilgour: “While for Wollstonecraft, mothering and writing are linked as tools for social information, for Shelley, who was both a child whose birth has caused her mother’s death and a mother who had watched her daughter die, both are equally ambiguous tools for creation” (1995: 217).



A striking detail is that the name of Mary Shelley's own boy, who was five months of age at the time she was writing the novel, was William, too. Helen Church pathetically exclaims:

- "It is almost inconceivable that Mary could allow herself to introduce a baby boy into her book; deliberately call him William; describe him in terms identical with those in which she portrays her own child in one of her letters and then let Frankenstein's monster waylay this innocent in a woodland dell and murder him by strangling" (Helen Church, in LEVINE & KNOEPFLMACHER, 1979: 93).

In the above-mentioned Western mythology of femininity always associated with tender-hearted maternity, the stock response to the cruelty of the mother is encapsulated in Church's term: "inconceivable". If the symbolic "killing" of the son in the novel is "inconceivable", then the mother has no responsibility in the actual "killing" of the daughter, either.

7. THE QUEERNESS OF DISCOURSE

- "But here were books, and here were men who had penetrated deeper and knew more. I became their disciple."

E. K. Sedgwick alludes in her study "Murder Incorporated" (in WU, 1996: 376-8) at the hypercharged relationship between men in *Frankenstein*, and generally in the Gothic paranoid tradition. Though she acknowledges the existence of motifs that might look *ex post facto* like homosexual thematics (the unspeakable, the anal).

Frankenstein as a writing on phallic panic and male hysteria plays upon the opposition between imposition/imposture and one of the many messages it transmits seems to be that if sexuality is culturally imposed, then imposture is assumed or denied according to each individual's strategy. Victor Frankenstein is threatened by the monster with the emblematic words: "I shall be with you on your wedding night." As Margaret Homans suggests, yet without following this trace, "there is something wrong about Frankenstein's sexuality" (in WU, 1996, 382).

- "I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a being like myself, (...) but my imagination was too much exalted and I resolved, contrary to my first intention to make the being of gigantic stature..." (52-3).
- "In other studies you go as far as others have gone before you, and there is nothing more to know. But in a scientific pursuit there is a continual food for discovery and wonder" (49).
- "I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself. The gratification is small but it is all that I can receive and it shall content me." (173)



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- “How they would each and all abhor me and hunt me in the world, did they know my unhallowed acts...” (223).
- “I knew well what would be my father’s feelings, but I could not tear my thoughts from my employment, loathsome in itself, but which had taken an irresistible hold of my imagination (...). I then thought that my father would be unjust if he ascribed my neglect to vice (...) but I am now convinced that he was justified in conceiving that I should not be altogether free from blame” (55).

The creation of the She-Monster:

- “Trembling with passion, I tore to pieces the thing on whose future existence [the monster] depended for his future happiness” (200).

What has initially been presented as a preposterous doubt in Elizabeth’s missive (“Do you not love another?”), or in his father’s letter (“You may have met with another whom you may love and considering yourself bound in honour to Elizabeth, this struggle may occasion the poignant misery which you appear to feel”) confirms now what Frankenstein has pitifully attempted to repress, namely that “the apple was already eaten.”

The last instance of the confrontation between Frankenstein and the monster actually represents the victory of repression of homosexuality, rendered in the male pietà, that symbolically allows a final embrace of the two male bodies.

8. WOMAN’S VOICE OF DISIMILITUDE

- “Explanation! You may possibly say. What can Elizabeth have to explain?”

The public woman, of the type of Mary Wollstonecraft - irrevocably monstrous, approaching the symbolic extreme of the brothel in a Protestant society. She was much more horrid when her transgression was not motivated by lack of material support, no matter how meagre the rewards for her writings actually were in the age.

- *How to Suppress Women Writing* (1984) by Joanna Russ:

“She didn’t write it.

She wrote it, but she shouldn’t have.

She wrote it, but look what she wrote about.

She wrote it, but she isn’t really an artist, and it isn’t really serious, of the right
e. really art.

genre, i.



She wrote it, but she wrote only one of it.

She wrote it, but it's only interesting/included in the canon for one limited reason.

She wrote it, but there are very few of her"

Elizabeth is the only woman character in the novel who manages to remain alive halfway through the novel and, to a certain modest extent, to wrinkle the male-centred fable of creation and destruction.

Victor's mother and Elizabeth's protector - Caroline Beaufort –

- "He strove to shelter her, as a fair exotic flower is sheltered by the gardener, from every rougher wind, and to surround her with all that could tend to excite pleasurable emotion in her soft and benevolent mind" (25).

The conjunction marriage/Bastille is ostensibly defamiliarising here the domestic sphere where women are controlled by the Law of the Father. The vicious Gothic husband and father in Walpole's and Radcliffe's novels has evolved to an even less optimistic figure of a "gardener". The discourse of Humanitarianism is permeated by a sexual imagery in which reason is modelled on the phallus: the "gardener" with its connotations of fecundation, thrusting tools for the work of the passive "soil" and an erect position in contrast to the horizontal submissive position of the "garden".

One day she solemnly declares, referring to Elizabeth:

- "I have a pretty present for my Victor. Tomorrow he shall have it" (28).

A serious accusation implicit in this episode is directed to the woman's own involvement in the elaboration of her own oppression. Women themselves, in Mary Shelley's view, contribute to preserve rigid incarceration and submissiveness of other women. The hidden logic of Power, one that should be exposed and undermined, paradoxically radiates from the suppressed too, in a demonstration of the grotesque ways in which it functions. Woman's perplexing endorsement of inimical ideological patterns is emphasised in Victor Frankenstein's treatment of the "gift":

- "I, with childish seriousness, interpreted her words literally, and looked upon Elizabeth as mine to protect, love and cherish. All praises bestowed on her, I received as made to a possession of my own, my more than sister, since till death she was to be mine only" (28).
- "She looks forward to our union with placid contentment, not unmingled with a little fear that what now appeared certain and tangible happiness might soon dissipate into an airy dream and leave no trace but a deep and everlasting regret" (231).



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Obviously linked with what Moers calls “Female Gothic”, Frankenstein focuses on the conventional ideologies of the family that present women, as already mentioned, always in connection with the body of the mother, the sacrificial body, open to exploration and, equally, to mutilation. That is why the story of Frankenstein turns, to a certain extent, into the story of woman’s perishable nature, of her unavoidable, often accepted, violation. Indeed, after he details the murder of Elizabeth, Frankenstein no longer seems interested in his own confession, as if this murder has been the telos of the entire narrative. Now that the woman has been killed, Frankenstein is willing to conclude:

- “Mine has been a tale of horror. I have reached their acme and what I must now relate can be but tedious to you. I must tell you in a few words what remains of my hideous narration” (238).

The woman’s story is always one of terror. Pursued herself and finally destroyed, Elizabeth is more a victim of her social status than of the monster, herself a horrid creature in her independence of spirit for, as Angela Carter rightly observes, “a free woman in an unfree society is a monster”:

- “I feel as if I were walking on the edge of a precipice, toward which thousands are crowding and endeavouring to plunge me into the abyss” (104).

9. MONSTERIZING THE COLONIAL SUBJECT

Since the early 1800s trade and commerce have become serious sources of profit and privilege, therefore such journeys of “discovery” could be performed neither “gradually”, nor with “a peaceful mind”. The middle-class economically enforced by commercial activities announced the bourgeois hegemony to be installed all over the continent. This class, dangerously affluent, soon came under the upper-class’s ideological assault. The Romantic age of individualism, dwelling on the illusion of inherited merit, intellectual value and idealistic prospects concerning the human race, was now beginning to face a class less interested in humanist ideals and more in immediate gain. The age already heralds the Victorian social stage of contest between the traditional land-owners and the new commercial bourgeoisie. As the locus of social inscription, Frankenstein reduplicates this contest between competing ideologies, especially in Clerval’s story. The young man desires to assist “materially the progress of European colonisation and trade” (189), but comes in this ambitious project with non-pragmatic assumptions.

- “He turned his eyes toward the East”

Engaged in a scientific voyage of discovery, Walton has a discourse charged with such vindictive allusions to inimical entities, i.e. inimical to the social community he represents. It is not by chance



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therefore that his route will intersect that of Victor Frankenstein who also declares that the aim of his apparently absurd journey is “to see one who fled from me” (Ibid.). Thus, the vocabulary of colonialism gradually erodes the narrative of scientific adventure. Their story is expressly one of exploration of “unvisited regions” (12) and subjection of “foes”, “enemies”, of the *other* appears to be the actual cause of their feverish search.

- “You, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty toward me, and I will do mine toward you and the rest of mankind.” (112)
- “Slave! I before reasoned with you, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you!” (200)
- “I imagined that they would be disgusted until, by gentle demeanour and conciliating words, I should win their favour (...) and love. These thoughts exhilarated me and led me to apply with fresh ardour to the acquiring the art of language.” (132)
- “Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me. We are enemies.” (132)

The consolidation of Power relies on the ideological basis of separateness which urges the colonists to define the *other* as monstrous (“the slothful Asiatic”, in the novel), basically in contradiction to its normalising institutions.

10. GIVING NAMES

Presumably, in his desire to perpetuate the mother’s existence, William Godwin gives his daughter the name Mary Wollstonecraft to which his own name is added as a socially logical sign of his undeniable “ownership”. The resulting name, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, is never her own and neither is exclusively her own the name that she acquires when she gets married: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. The redundancy of names that masks the *unnamed* conceals a fragmented agglutinative identity.

The “name” of the novel is also the name of a character in the novel, Victor Frankenstein, the “student of unhallowed arts”, that manufactures a horrid creature. Evading any authorial control, Frankenstein has transgressed generic boundaries and its name has become in popular culture a byword for “thriller”. Immediately staged in 1823 by Richard Brinsley Peake, the novel has experienced innumerable re-writings in melodramatic, parodic, burlesque or any other possible forms thus making the name “Frankenstein” simultaneously stand for the famous film made in 1931, for the



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series of later films, comedies or horrors, for the cartoons and comics that, in an over-accumulation of divergent representations of the same myth, have finally managed to totally blur any sense of identity. Even more, in a hilarious yet logical way, the name “Frankenstein” has come to be used to refer to the creature in the novel rather than to its creator.

- “You, my creator, would tear me to pieces and triumph...you would not call it murder if you could destroy my frame, the work of your own hands” (172).
- “You are my creator, but I am your master. Obey!” (201).
- “I am thy creature and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the one which you owest me” (113).
- “How can you, who long for the love and sympathy of man, persevere in this exile? You will return and again seek their kindness, and you will meet with their detestation. Your evil passions will be renewed...” (173-4)
- “But now, when I appeared almost within grasp of my foe, my hopes were suddenly extinguished, and I lost all trace of him more utterly than I have ever done before” (Ibid.)

11. THE ORIGINAL SIN OF WRITING

At one point in the story, while Frankenstein pursues his creation with the alleged purpose of destroying him, the reader faces one of the many instances of the aberrant logic of the text. Afraid that Frankenstein/ the hunter might lose trace of him, the monster/ hunted would leave “marks in writing on the barks of trees or cut in stone that guided [Frankenstein] and instigated [his] fury” (248). Apart from menaces, some of these messages simply inscribe practical information of the type:

- “You will find near this place, if you follow not too tardily, a dead hare; eat and be refreshed” (Ibid.).

Even though such an inscription is immediately doubled by the actual production of food and drink, Frankenstein interprets those gifts as signs of divine protection. The marks carved in wood and stone, as a suggestion of the originally univocal “natural” meaning of words, refer to objects “near this place”, their ostensive function being supported by the literalisation of the promise. However, Frankenstein prefers to “interpret”, to “follow tardily” and enter a metaphor that he himself elaborates.

A second incident takes place within the same structure of concealment, the hunting scene. Seeking “the everlasting ices of the north”, the monster is followed for days on end by Frankenstein, the “enemy”. Just at the moment when Frankenstein thinks he is about to catch him, the demon is abruptly transformed from “a dark speck”, a mark on the white page of snow, into a “form”,



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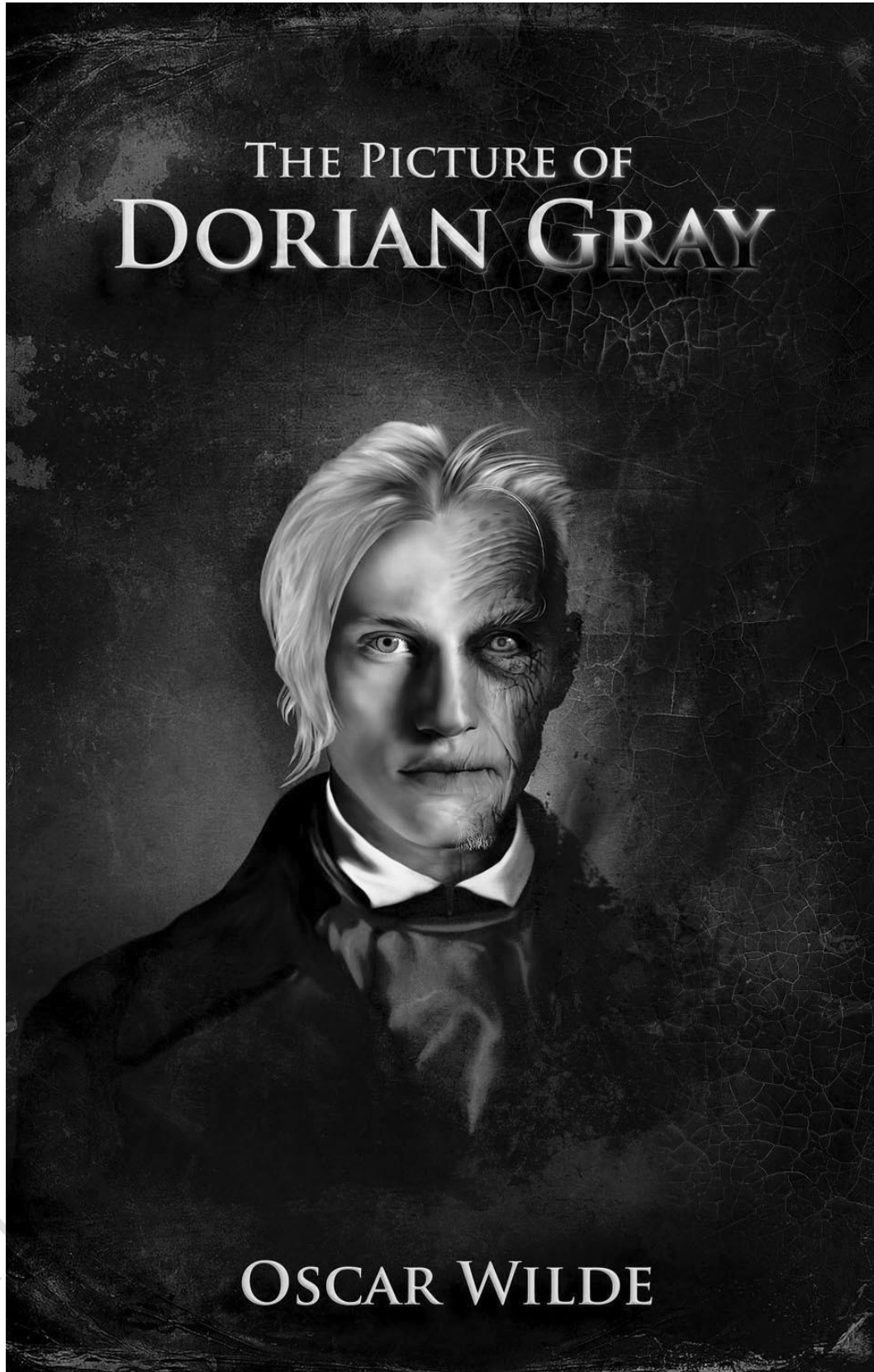
therefore a tangible body: "Suddenly my eye caught a dark speck upon the dusky plain" (251). With a "wild cry of ecstasy" he tells to himself that "this was not the time for delay" and follows it until he distinguishes "the distorted proportions of a well-known form" (Ibid.). His paradoxical response, in terms of causality, is to take an hour's rest, "which was absolutely necessary" (252). Keeping at safe distance, namely the distance that ensures deferral of self-knowledge, Frankenstein continues his journey for a couple of days in this way until he loses sight of the creature in an unexpected way:

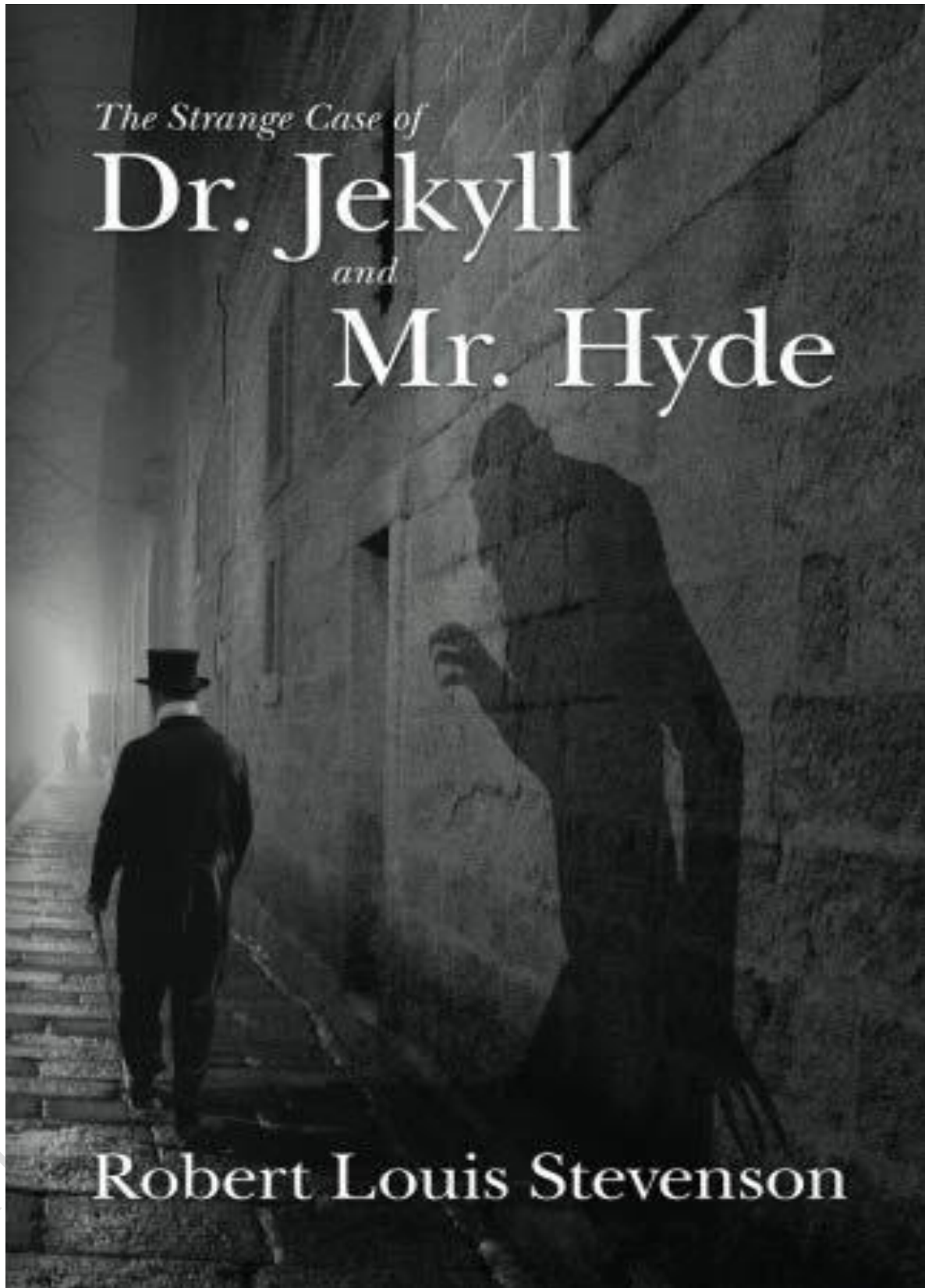
- "But now, when I appeared almost within grasp of my foe, my hopes were suddenly extinguished, and I lost all trace of him more utterly than I have ever done before" (Ibid.).

In like manner, Frankenstein constantly employs language with the evident purpose of discentring meaning, perpetually making use of arbitrary elements of signification when indexes would suffice. Gradually, his narrative reveals symptoms of duplicity and doubt:

- "At such moments vengeance (...) died in my heart and I pursued my path to the destruction of the demon more as a task enjoined by heaven (...) than as the ardent desire of my soul." (Ibid.)

The desperate confession, no longer affected by gaps and deferral, is constantly dismissed as delirious and Frankenstein's story as a whole becomes an ironic reflection on the multitude of possible concretisations of his single "meaning". The readers of his story, Walton included, will work imaginatively to supply the gaps, will eliminate the points of indeterminacy and elaborate their own outcome. Consequently, Frankenstein's story is ultimately the story of writing, the story of what deconstructivists call "the endless displacement of meaning which both governs language and places it for ever beyond the reach of a stable self-authenticating knowledge" (NORRIS, 1991: 29). Ultimately, *Frankenstein* is the story of the original sin of writing, the confession of which is never believed since it is itself part of the precarious, arbitrary and excessive nature of writing.







III. OSCAR WILDE and ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

The Picture of Dorian Gray and Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde

The *fin de siècle*, when the shadow of Queen Victoria's reign started to grow diffuse, has constantly been discussed in connection with several key-words that can hardly be synonymous with the multiple essential cultural attitudes of the nineties. Among these misleading terms, we could mention the **Aesthetic Movement**, the **Age of Decadence** or that of the artificial and rather unconvincing figure of the **Dandy** (that histrionically masked a generalised sense of perplexity).

Undoubtedly, the last decades of the 19th century represented a break with established Victorian attitudes. Though often defined as a combination of physical indolence and psychological and moral perversity –as exemplified in J. K. Huysman's novel **À Rebours** (much admired in the age and clearly imitated by Wilde in his **Picture**) – the individual of the 1890s belonged to an age of confusion and dramatic loss of certainty. The end of the century was fervidly anticipated and fearfully waited for, its prophets expressing both their distrust in a more serene future and their disappointment in the past. This attitude is clearly uttered in **The Picture of Dorian Gray**:

"*Fin de siècle*", murmured Lord Henry.

"*Fin du globe*", answered his hostess.

"I wish it were *fin du globe*," said Dorian with a sigh. "Life is a great disappointment."

Such a new attitude – so far away from the self-aggrandising portrait of the early Victorian who could climb social hierarchies and could be offered the chance of a happy ending to his/her own disparate story – an attitude that dismantled any moral or social certainty and conventionalism required new attitudes in life and art.

- Since Art can not be held responsible for the fatigue of an entire century, the former should be regarded as completely autonomous; hence, *the aesthetic doctrine* or *art for art's sake*.
- Since human life is fleeting and uncertain, man should refine and purify his sensations and experience; hence, the reinforcement in this age of the traditional *carpe diem*.



- It is *sensation* and *impression* that deserve improvement, the images and the instants of brief illumination that count; hence, the **mistrust of theory and system**.

One writer actually absorbed all these lessons –perhaps not too wisely, but definitely honestly – gaining a tragic celebrity for his name, which has gradually turned into an emblem for the entire fin de siècle. Oscar Wilde is for all these reasons a problematic literary figure because, as he himself confessed, he dedicated his genius to his life rather than to his art. The first critic of Wilde's work, Arthur Symonds, keenly describes him:

"His intellect was dramatic, and the whole man was not so much a personality as an attitude."

Wilde was born in 1854 in Dublin and soon in his life proved to be a brilliant scholar and a familiar name in the literary world. After his marriage in 1884 he published several books of stories for children, then his only novel, ***The Picture of Dorian Gray*** (1891), also verse – most of it drawing heavily on a variety of greater Victorian poets. If one wishes to find out what is most enduring in Wilde's work one is likely to turn to his comedies, ***Lady Windermere's Fan***, ***A Woman of No Importance***, ***An Ideal Husband***, ***The Importance of Being Earnest*** as they combine wit with melodrama, farce with morality.

The fatal year for Wilde was 1895 when he brought a defamation action against the Marquis of Queensberry; he lost the case and was himself sentenced to two years' imprisonment for homosexual offences with hard labour. As a result of this experience he wrote ***De Profundis*** (1905) – a long work cast in the form of a letter to Lord Alfred Douglas ('Bosie') – and the highly decorous poem, ***The Ballad of Reading Gaol***. Relying on the generosity of his friends, he went to live in France, adopted a new name and died there in 1900.

When ***The Picture of Dorian Gray*** first appeared in 1890 it was greeted with scandalised protest; Wilde's own *Preface* to it contained the line of response:

"There is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all."

Even if morality seems to have had no stifling effect on Wilde's work, it however had a destructive one on his life and career. Recent literary historians consider Wilde's trial a flashing example of the power of the Law to demonise an (abhorrent, in the age) form of sexuality. Although a great deal of Wilde's writing has a fatalistic ring to homosexuality, the writer seems to have been convicted due to

circumstantial evidence only. As Alan Sinfield emphasises in his recent study, *The Wilde Century* (1994), “homosexuality was **not** manifest from Wilde’s style. Even if he was renowned for adopting a dandiacal and flamboyant effeminate manner, he had not led either his friends or strangers to regard him obviously, even probably, ‘queer’. Sinfield concludes that the real issue here is that an effeminate manner was immediately associated in the 1890s with homosexuality. There is no doubt that Wilde’s trial brought about –due to the fame the writer had already gained all over the Continent –a *modern understanding of sexuality* at large. Up to this moment, sexual deviance had been unnamed; it had been the “Love that dare not speak its name”. This historic shift in the perception of human sexuality smashed Wilde’s life to pieces, his quick fall from fame and a respectable social position being described by the writer himself in a letter to his publisher from 1897: “Neither to myself, nor others, am I any longer a joy.”

In *De Profundis* he deplores the narrow-mindedness and cruelty of his contemporaries, their eagerness to vilify and punish, never to sympathise and tolerate:

“How narrow and mean, and inadequate to its burdens is this century of ours: it can give to success its palace of porphyry, but for sorrow and shame it does not keep even a wattled house in which they may dwell: all it can do for me is to bid me alter my name into some other name, where even medievalism would have given me the cowl of a monk or the face of a leper behind which I might be at peace.”

The inescapable triumph of the Norm and of Normality that cripples the individual is bitterly commented upon in his poem, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*:

“I know not whether Laws be right,
Or whether Laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in gaol
Is that the wall is strong;
And that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long.”

The association he constantly makes in this poem between *killing* and *loving* may have its explanation in repression of homosexual desire as it has its roots in **de Sade’s** visions of **hedonistic sexuality**, but it may also be regarded as a commonsensical observation on human “normality”, since

loving seldom stands for anything else but the annihilation of one's self, for the necessary adjustment of the other's self –i.e. perhaps it always stands for *mutilation*:

“And all men kill the thing they love,
By all let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!”

COMPARISON WITH *JEKYLL AND HYDE*

In Stevenson's novel, the apparently uncompromising antagonism between Jekyll and Hyde is troubled by Jekyll's frequent pulsation of admiration for the latter's vitality, finally identified with an ideal image of the self. Therefore, by the logic of the mirror stage in which narcissism is inextricably linked with rivalry, the ego ideal is the one he has to kill. The transformation is subtly rendered:

“And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself” (Stevenson, *Jekyll and Hyde*, 44)



SUICIDE, the symbolic murder of the double/other, as the paradoxical solution for the paranoiac fear of extinction of the narcissist, both puts an end to this unbearable anxiety and gratifies his desire to survive his own death because what he “actually” kills is his double and not himself. **FEAR OF DEATH** This hyperbolic fear of death will take the conjoined form of the fear of growing old, of the decrepitude of the self-as-image.

INDIVIDUAL DEATH/ OLD AGE but also the END of the WORLD

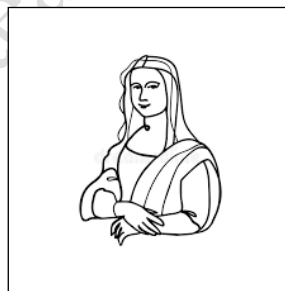
“Written at and about the *fin de siècle* and nervously anticipating the *fin du globe*, Wilde’s novel reviews the literary tradition of which it is the terminus, just as Dorian synopsis within himself ‘the whole of history’ “ (CONRAD, 1987: 535).

Dorian’s dread when confronted with the prospect of old age bespeaks the same narcissistic love Jekyll felt, the love for the central ego of his individuality which enchains him for ever. The perspective of losing this supreme love-object that the hero equates with “youth and beauty” becomes unbearable to Dorian Gray.

“When I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself!” (34), he exclaims, for, in the narcissistic overestimation of the self, “youth is the only thing worth having” (29).

1. ALIENATION

Resembling Walter Pater’s *Mona Lisa* (1873), Dorian Gray is the ideal embodiment of the **androgynous wholeness** before any frustrating and afflicting split has occurred: “older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times and learned the secret of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her” (Pater, 1980: 98-9).



Oscar Wilde’s **Dorian Gray** ushers in **the worst form of alienation**, which, in **Baudrillard’s** view, is “not to be dispossessed *by* the Other, but to be dispossessed *of* the Other, that is to have to produce the Other in his absence, and thus to be continuously referred back to oneself and to one’s image”.

Dorian Gray prefigures this postmodernist limit of alienation that focuses upon the self as on the sole object of love, desire and affliction. In Baudrillard’s opinion, this **short-circuiting of the other** inaugurates our post-modern age of *transparency*. The fetishised body, which becomes a projection of the self – like in the visionary **Picture of Dorian Gray** – experiences alterity in the form of illness,

old age and death. Thus, the postmodernist epitome of the exorcism of the *alterité* harboured by the human body is, in Baudrillard's opinion, plastic surgery.



2. INBETWEENNESS

"All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beyond the surface do so at their peril."

(Oscar Wilde - **The Picture of Dorian Gray**)

Oscar Wilde's **Dorian Gray**, exploiting the motif of the *double* and hovering on the borders of Gothic fiction, is culturally and historically at the margins of Realist fiction, also at the margins of what has come to be called "modernism". This *inbetweenness* allows it to bear a marginal relationship to both the canon, through the literary reputation of the author, and to the less respectable yet wildly read species of popular fiction, especially the so-called "sensation novel". Such an undecidability, as a spatial and temporal form, turns **Dorian Gray** into a Derridean *hymeneography*, a text that records in its tissue "a series of temporal differences without any central present, without a present of which the past and future would be but modifications" (in WOLFREYS & BAKER, 1996: 210). And, above all, it is *hymeneal* in its occupying the non-place of the margin, of the very borderline that disconnects *inside* from *outside*, rendering, through the game of reversion and mirroring between what is painted and what is "real", what is written and what is read, both categories – of the "imaginary" and of the "real" – artificial. They are both but textual worlds, fragments of the same artefact.

The portrait motif has often been read as a spectre haunting multiple borderlines at once. Thus, the inset painting in any piece of fiction ***instantly urges interpretative performances*** as it induces a sense of panic in the reader and it clearly signals the demand that he do something, participate in exactly the same manner in which the characters who look at the painting have at least the duty of translating image into words. The *mise-en-abyme* grows alarmingly vertiginous: the characters looking at the painting, the reader looking at the characters looking at the painting...On the brink of



this vortex of repetitive images, the reader experiences the anxiety of being himself looked at, of the catoptric game prolonged somewhere behind or beyond his insecure insignificant being. Consequently, when Dorian Gray examines his portrait and exclaims, "I am a little jealous of the picture for being a whole month younger than I am" (67), the reader's pitiable status of anonymous gazer is aggravated by the apprehension of his/her own transience. It is the role of the inset painting in **Dorian Gray** to remind us that "our personal lives are perhaps not worth very much in the light of that higher beauty, that formal perfection" (DOODY, 1998: 404). A logical side effect of this ontological pluraliser is that it justifies the reader's "wish for signs of imperfection, of subjugation to time" (Ibid.).

When the portrait regains its splendour, the reader is forced to channel his interpretative capacity in a different direction. The reader, continually harassed and enticed in a labyrinthine catoptric game eventually discovers the exit, which confronts him with the spectre of his/her own death. And if the painting is but a modernist version of the Gothic monster - ageless like the *vampire* and bodily fluid like the *double* - the terror it induces is of a different species: it forces the reader to acknowledge his/her own role and complicity "in the creation of virtual reality, the virtual painting that word-painting evokes" (DOODY, 1998: 404).

The chain of voyeuristic acts comprises the whole "company": the writer who knows his text is being "looked at", the painter who has his painting examined by both characters and reader, the character who is watched while he is looking at the painting, and, ultimately, the reader, who knows his/her own "self" is "visibly knowable" (Ibid., 403) since it is itself an artefact.

3. THE ACT OF READING

The act of reading becomes thus an effort to erase all these supplements and advance towards the original *one* that has no double. For this, the reader is forced to treat the text as if it were a palimpsest: under each layer that he has to erase there is another layer that hides fragments of yet another painting and so on *ad infinitum*. Whether this reading process is virtually endless, it however has a terminus point for each reader. When Basil Hallward wants to examine the portrait he has painted, Dorian ironically warns him: "You will not have to read long" (177). Indeed, when faced with the work of art he acknowledges "the horror" of its transformation that has turned it into something strangely unfamiliar, therefore "unreadable":

“He seemed to recognise his own brushwork, and the frame of his own design. The idea was monstrous, yet he felt afraid. He seized the lighted candle, and held it to the picture. In the left-hand corner was his own name, traced in long letters of bright vermillion.” (179)

The moment he is able to read his own name under the horrific spectre of decrepitude and corruption of the flesh, Basil meets his death. For, in reading the palimpsest-text, in the effort to go beyond successive layers of meaning, the reader is doomed to eventually discover on one of these layers the inscription of his own name, i. e. of his own death, the conclusion of his reading. Ironically, one reader’s extinction no longer entails successive mirroring extinctions. The portrait is found intact “hanging on the wall” (256), a portrait of “exquisite youth and beauty” (Ibid.), or at least this is the perception of those who discover it – other readers, already entrapped in its contemplation and in the inescapable compulsion to read/interpret it. Because, as Oscar Wilde concludes, **“it is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors”** (5).



Reading the Gothic Novel



I. Horace Walpole: "The Castle of Otranto" (1764)

1. Under the Title, in the original: "A STORY. Translated by William Marshal, Gent. From the Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto."

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE following work was found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529. How much sooner it was written does not appear. The principal incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of christianity; but the language and conduct have nothing that favours of barbarism. The style is the purest Italian. If the story was written near the time when it is supposed to have happened, it must have been between 1095, the æra of the first crusade, and 1243, the date of the last, or not long afterwards.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE favourable manner in which this little piece has been received by the public, calls upon the author to explain the grounds on which he composed it. But before he opens those motives, it is fit that he should ask pardon of his readers for having offered his work to them under the borrowed



personage of a translator. (...) It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life.

Characters

MANFRED, prince of Otranto, had one son and one daughter: the latter, a most beautiful virgin, aged eighteen, was called Matilda. Conrad, the son, was three years younger, a homely youth, sickly, and of no promising disposition; yet he was the darling of his father, who never showed any symptoms of affection to Matilda. Manfred had contracted a marriage for his son with the marquis of Vicenza's daughter, Isabella; and she had already been delivered by her guardians into the hands of Manfred, that he might celebrate the wedding as soon as Conrad's infirm state of health would permit. Manfred's impatience for this ceremonial was remarked by his family and neighbours. (...) Hippolita, his wife, an amiable lady, did sometimes venture to represent the danger of marrying their only son so early, considering his great youth, and greater infirmities; but she never received any other answer than reflections on her own sterility, who had given him but one heir.

The Omen

His tenants and subjects were less cautious in their discourses: they attributed this hasty wedding to the prince's dread of seeing accomplished an ancient prophecy, which was said to have pronounced, That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it. It was difficult to make any sense of this prophecy; and still less easy to conceive what it had to do with the marriage in question. Yet these mysteries, or contradictions, did not make the populace adhere the less to their opinion.

The Uncanny

Young Conrad's birth-day was fixed for his espousals. The company was assembled in the chapel of the castle, and every thing ready for beginning the divine office, when Conrad himself was missing. Manfred, impatient of the least delay, and who had not observed his son retire, dispatched one of his attendants to summon the young prince. The servant, who had not staid long enough to have crossed the court to Conrad's apartment, came running back breathless, in a frantic manner, his



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eyes staring, and foaming at the mouth. He said nothing, but pointed to the court. The company were struck with terror and amazement.

The unutterable

The first thing that struck Manfred's eyes was a group of his servants endeavouring to raise something that appeared to him a mountain of sable plumes. He gazed without believing his sight. What are ye doing? cried Manfred, wrathfully: Where is my son? A volley of voices replied, Oh, my lord! the prince! the prince! the helmet! the helmet! Shocked with these lamentable sounds, and dreading he knew not what, he advanced hastily— But what a sight for a father's eyes!—He beheld his child dashed to pieces, and almost buried under an enormous helmet, an hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being, and shaded with a proportionable quantity of black feathers.

The Horror & the Incomprehensible

The horror of the spectacle, the ignorance of all around how this misfortune happened, and above all, the tremendous phenomenon before him, took away the prince's speech. Yet his silence lasted longer than even grief could occasion. He fixed his eyes on what he wished in vain to believe a vision; and seemed less attentive to his loss, than buried in meditation on the stupendous object that had occasioned it. He touched, he examined the fatal casque; nor could even the bleeding mangled remains of the young prince divert the eyes of Manfred from the portent before him. All who had known his partial fondness for young Conrad, were as much surprised at their prince's insensibility, as thunderstruck themselves at the miracle of the helmet. They conveyed the disfigured corpse into the hall, without receiving the least direction from Manfred. As little was he attentive to the ladies who remained in the chapel: on the contrary, without mentioning the unhappy princesses his wife and daughter, the first sounds that dropped from Manfred's lips were, *Take care of the lady Isabella.*

Darkness

It was now evening; the servant who conducted Isabella bore a torch before her. When they came to Manfred, who was walking impatiently about the gallery, he started and said hastily, Take away that light, and begone. Then shutting the door impetuously, he flung himself upon a bench against the wall, and bade Isabella sit by him. She obeyed trembling. I sent for you, lady, said he, — and then stopped under great appearance of confusion. My lord!—Yes, I sent for you on a matter of



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great moment, resumed he:—Dry your tears, young lady—you have lost your bridegroom:—yes, cruel fate, and I have lost the hopes of my race!—But Conrad was not worthy of your beauty. —How! my lord, said Isabella; sure you do not suspect me of not feeling the concern I ought? My duty and affection would have always— Think no more of him, interrupted Manfred; he was a sickly puny child, and heaven has perhaps taken him away that I might not trust the honours of my house on so frail a foundation. The line of Manfred calls for numerous supports. My foolish fondness for that boy blinded the eyes of my prudence— but it is better as it is. I hope in a few years to have reason to rejoice at the death of Conrad.

The Subterraneous Maze

The lower part of the castle was hollowed into several intricate cloisters; and it was not easy for one under so much anxiety to find the door that opened into the cavern. An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which grating on the rusty hinges were re-echoed through that long labyrinth of darkness. Every murmur struck her with new terror;—yet more she dreaded to hear the wrathful voice of Manfred urging his domestics to pursue her. She trod as softly as impatience would give her leave, —yet frequently stopped and listened to hear if she was followed. In one of those moments she thought she heard a sigh. She shuddered, and recoiled a few paces. In a moment she thought she heard the step of some person. Her blood curdled; she concluded it was Manfred. Every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind.

The Non-heroic Hero and the Supernatural

The door was a-jar; the evening gloomy and overcast. Pushing open the door gently, he saw a person kneeling before the altar. As he approached nearer, it seemed not a woman, but one in a long woolen weed, whose back was towards him. The person seemed absorbed in prayer. The marquis was about to return, when the figure rising, stood some moments fixed in meditation, without regarding him. The marquis, expecting the holy person to come forth, and meaning to excuse his uncivil interruption, said, Reverend father, I sought the lady Hippolita. —Hippolita! replied a hollow voice: camest thou to this castle to seek Hippolita?—And then the figure, turning slowly round, discovered to Frederic the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl. Angels of grace, protect me! cried Frederic recoiling.



II. Mary Shelley: "*Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*" (1818)



Motto: Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay

To mould Me man? Did I solicit thee

From darkness to promote me?

Paradise Lost [X. 743-5]

LETTER IV

To Mrs Saville, England

August 5th, 17...

So strange an accident has happened to us, that I cannot forbear recording it, although it is very probable that you will see me before these papers can come into your possession.

Last Monday (July 31st), we were nearly surrounded by ice, which closed in the ship on all sides, scarcely leaving her the sea-room in which she floated. Our situation was somewhat dangerous, especially as we were compassed round by a very thick fog. We accordingly lay to, hoping that some change would take place in the atmosphere and weather.

About two o'clock the mist cleared away, and we beheld, stretched out in every direction, vast and irregular plains of ice, which seemed to have no end. Some of my comrades groaned, and my own mind began to grow watchful with anxious thoughts, when a strange sight suddenly attracted our attention, and diverted our solicitude from our own situation. We perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on towards the north, at the distance of half a mile: a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge, and guided the dogs. We watched the rapid progress of the traveller with our telescopes, until he was lost among the distant inequalities of the ice.

This appearance excited our unqualified wonder. We were, as we believed, many hundred miles from any land; but this apparition seemed to denote that it was not, in reality, so distant as we had supposed. Shut in, however, by ice, it was impossible to follow his track, which we had observed with the greatest attention.



CHAPTER V

IT was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured; and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of

forgetfulness. But it was in vain: I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. 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 thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed: when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down stairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited; where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance. 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 such as even Dante could not have conceived.



Chapter XVII

What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself; the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me. It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another. Our lives will not be happy, but they will be harmless, and free from the misery I now feel. Oh! my creator, make me happy; let me feel gratitude towards you for one benefit! Let me see that I excite the sympathy of some existing thing; do not deny me my request!

I was moved. I shuddered when I thought of the possible consequences of my consent; but I felt that there was some justice in his argument. His tale, and the feelings he now expressed, proved him to be a creature of fine sensations; and did I not, as his maker, owe him all the portion of happiness that it was in my power to bestow? He saw my change of feeling, and continued—

‘If you consent, neither you nor any other human being shall ever see us again: I will go to the vast wilds of South America. My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment. My companion will be of the same nature as myself, and will be content with the same fare. We shall make our bed of dried leaves; the sun will shine on us as on man, and will ripen our food. The picture I present to you is peaceful and human, and you must feel that you could deny it only in the wantonness of power and cruelty. Pitiless as you have been towards me, I now see compassion in your eyes; let me seize the favourable moment, and persuade you to promise what I so ardently desire.’

‘You propose,’ replied I, ‘to fly from the habitations of man, to dwell in those wilds where the beasts of the field will be your only companions. How can you, who long for the love and sympathy of man, persevere in this exile? You will return, and again seek their kindness, and you will meet with their detestation; your evil passions will be renewed, and you will then have a companion to aid you in the task of destruction. This may not be: cease to argue the point, for I cannot consent.’



CHAPTER XX

I SAT one evening in my laboratory; the sun had set, and the moon was just rising from the sea; I had not sufficient light for my employment, and I remained idle, in a pause of consideration of whether I should leave my labour for the night, or hasten its conclusion by an unremitting attention to it. As I sat, a train of reflection occurred to me, which led me to consider the effects of what I was now doing. Three years before I was engaged in the same manner, and had created a fiend whose unparalleled barbarity had desolated my heart, and filled it for ever with the bitterest remorse. I was now about to form another being, of whose dispositions I was alike ignorant; she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate, and delight for its own sake, in murder and

wretchedness. He had sworn to quit the neighbourhood of man, and hide himself in deserts; but she had not; and she, who in all probability was to become a thinking and reasoning animal, might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation. They might even hate each other; the creature who already lived loathed his own deformity, and might he not conceive a greater abhorrence for it when it came before his eyes in the female form? She also might turn with disgust from him to the superior beauty of man; she might quit him, and he be again alone, exasperated by the fresh provocation of being deserted by one of his own species.



I trembled, and my heart failed within me; when, on looking up, I saw, by the light of the moon, the dæmon at the casement. A ghastly grin wrinkled his lips as he gazed on me, where I sat fulfilling the task which he had allotted to me. Yes, he had followed me in my travels; he had loitered in forests, hid himself in caves, or taken refuge in wide and desert heaths; and he now came to mark my progress, and claim the fulfillment of my promise.

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 I 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. I left the room, and, locking the door, made a solemn vow in my own heart never to resume my labours; and then, with trembling steps, I sought my own apartment. I was alone; none were near me to dissipate the gloom, and relieve me from the sickening oppression of the most terrible reveries.



In a few minutes after, I heard the creaking of my door, as if some one endeavoured to open it softly. I trembled from head to foot; I felt a presentiment of who it was, and wished to rouse one of the peasants who dwelt in a cottage not far from mine; but I was overcome by the sensation of



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helplessness, so often felt in frightful dreams, when you in vain endeavour to fly from an impending danger, and was rooted to the spot.

Presently I heard the sound of footsteps along the passage; the door opened, and the wretch whom I dreaded appeared. Shutting the door, he approached me, and said, in a smothered voice—

‘You have destroyed the work which you began; what is it that you intend? Do you dare to break your promise? I have endured toil and misery... I have endured incalculable fatigue, and cold, and hunger; do you dare destroy my hopes?’

‘Begone! I do break my promise; never will I create another like yourself, equal in deformity and wickedness.’

‘Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master;—obey!’

‘The hour of my irresolution is past, and the period of your power is arrived. Your threats cannot move me to do an act of wickedness; but they confirm me in a determination of not creating you a companion in vice. Shall I, in cool blood, set loose upon the earth a dæmon, whose delight is in death and wretchedness? Begone! I am firm, and your words will only exasperate my rage.’ ...

All was again silent; but his words rung in my ears...’ I will be with you on your wedding-night.’ That then was the period fixed for the fulfilment of my destiny. In that hour I should die, and at once satisfy and extinguish his malice. The prospect did not move me to fear; yet when I thought of my beloved Elizabeth, —of her tears and endless sorrow, when she should find her lover so barbarously snatched from her, —tears, the first I had shed for many months, streamed from my eyes, and I resolved not to fall before my enemy without a bitter struggle.

It is past; I am returning to England. I have lost my hopes of utility and glory;—I have lost my friend. But I will endeavour to detail these bitter circumstances to you, my dear sister; and, while I am wafted towards England, and towards you, I will not despond.



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SEPTEMBER 9TH, the ice began to move, and roarings like thunder were heard at a distance, as the islands split and cracked in every direction. We were in the most imminent peril; but, as we could only remain passive, my chief attention was occupied by my unfortunate guest, whose illness increased in such a degree, that he was entirely confined to his bed. The ice cracked behind us, and was driven with force towards the north; a breeze sprung from the west, and on the 11th the passage towards the south became perfectly free. When the sailors saw this, and that their return to their native country was apparently assured, a shout of tumultuous joy broke from them, loud and long-continued. Frankenstein, who was dozing, awoke, and asked the cause of the tumult. 'They shout,' I said, 'because they will soon return to England.'

'Do you then really return?'

'Alas! yes; I cannot withstand their demands. I cannot lead them unwillingly to danger, and I must return.'..

Great God! what a scene has just taken place! I am yet dizzy with the remembrance of it. I hardly know whether I shall have the power to detail it; yet the tale which I have recorded would be incomplete without this final and wonderful catastrophe.

I entered the cabin, where lay the remains of my ill-fated and admirable friend. Over him hung a form which I cannot find words to describe; gigantic in stature, yet uncouth and distorted in its proportions. As he hung over the coffin, his face was concealed by long locks of ragged hair; but one vast hand was extended, in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy. When he heard the sound of my approach, he ceased to utter exclamations of grief and horror, and sprung towards the window. Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome yet appalling hideousness. I shut my eyes involuntarily, and endeavoured to recollect what were my duties with regard to this destroyer. I called on him to stay. He paused, looking on me with wonder; and, again turning towards the lifeless form of his creator, he seemed to forget my presence, and every feature and gesture seemed instigated by the wildest rage of some uncontrollable passion.

'That is also my victim!' he exclaimed: 'in his murder my crimes are consummated; the miserable series of my being is wound to its close! Oh, Frankenstein! generous and self-devoted being! what does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me? I, who irretrievably destroyed thee by destroying all thou lovedst. Alas! he is cold, he cannot answer me.'



He is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish. I shall no longer see the sun or stars, or feel the winds play on my cheeks. Light, feeling, and sense will pass away; and in this condition must I find my happiness. Some years ago, when the images which this world affords first opened upon me, when I felt the cheering warmth of summer, and heard the rustling of the leaves and the warbling of the birds, and these were all to me, I should have wept to die; now it is my only consolation. Polluted by crimes, and torn by the bitterest remorse, where can I find rest but in death?

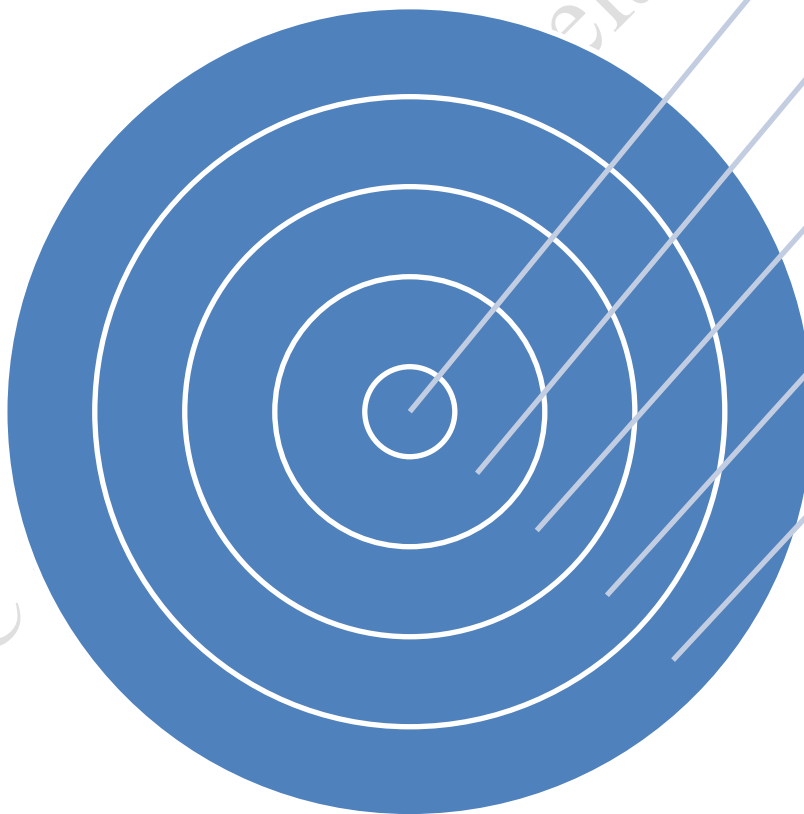
'Farewell! I leave you, and in you the last of human kind whom these eyes will ever behold. Farewell, Frankenstein! If thou wert yet alive, and yet cherished a desire of revenge against me, it would be better satiated in my life than in my destruction. But it was not so; thou didst seek my extinction, that I might not cause greater wretchedness; and if yet, in some mode unknown to me, thou hadst not ceased to think and feel, thou wouldst not desire against me a vengeance greater than that which I feel. Blasted as thou wert, my agony was still superior to thine; for the bitter sting of remorse will not cease to rankle in my wounds until death shall close them for ever.

'But soon,' he cried, with sad and solemn enthusiasm, '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 not surely think thus. Farewell.'

He sprung from the cabin-window, as he said this, upon the ice-raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance.



The Onion-like Structure of "Frankenstein"



**Justine's Story,
etc**

Safie's Story

**De Lacey's
Story**

**The Monster's
Diary**

**The Story of
Victor's Mother**

III. Robert Louis Stevenson: “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” (1886)

Chapter I

That evening Mr. Utterson came home to his bachelor house in sombre spirits and sat down to dinner without relish. It was his custom of a Sunday, when this meal was over, to sit close by the fire, a volume of some dry divinity on his reading desk, until the clock of the neighbouring church rang out the hour of twelve, when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed. On this night, however, as soon as the cloth was taken away, he took up a candle and went into his business room. There he opened his safe, took from the most private part of it a document endorsed on the envelope as *Dr. Jekyll's Will*, and sat down with a clouded brow to study its contents.... ‘I thought it was madness,’ he said, as he replaced the obnoxious paper in the safe, ‘and now I begin to fear it is disgrace.’

... ‘If he be Mr. Hyde,’ he had thought, ‘I shall be Mr. Seek.’



Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case

With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens. I, for my part, from the nature of my life, advanced infallibly in one direction and in one direction only. It was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that

contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved daydream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. If each, I told myself, could be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots were thus bound together- that in the agonised womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling. How, then, were they dissociated?



.... I hesitated long before I put this theory to the test of practice. I knew well that I risked death; for any drug that so potently controlled and shook the very fortress of identity, might, by the least scruple of an overdose or at the least inopportunitiy in the moment of exhibition, utterly blot out that immaterial tabernacle which I looked to it to change. But the temptation of a discovery so singular and profound at last overcame the suggestions of alarm. I had long since prepared my tincture; I purchased at once, from a firm of wholesale chemists, a large quantity of a particular salt which I knew, from my experiments, to be the last ingredient required; and late one accursed night, I compounded the elements, watched them boil and smoke together in the glass, and when the ebullition had subsided, with a strong glow of courage, drank off the potion.

The most racking pangs succeeded: a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death. Then these agonies began swiftly to subside, and I came to myself as if out of a great sickness. There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger,



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lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a millrace in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine. I stretched out my hands, exulting in the freshness of these sensations; and in the act, I was suddenly aware that I had lost in stature.

There was no mirror, at that date, in my room; that which stands beside me as I write, was brought there later on and for the very purpose of these transformations. The night, however, was far gone into the morning- the morning, black as it was, was nearly ripe for the conception of the day- the inmates of my house were locked in the most rigorous hours of slumber; and I determined, flushed as I was with hope and triumph, to venture in my new shape as far as to my bedroom. I crossed the yard, wherein the constellations looked down upon me, I could have thought, with wonder, the first creature of that sort that their unsleeping vigilance had yet disclosed to them; I stole through the corridors, a stranger in my own house; and coming to my room, I saw for the first time the appearance of Edward Hyde.



... And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter and younger than Henry Jekyll. Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides (which I must still believe to be the lethal side of man) had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay. And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human.....



About a week has passed, and I am now finishing this statement under the influence of the last of the old powders. This, then, is the last time, short of a miracle, that Henry Jekyll can think his own



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thoughts or see his own face (now how sadly altered!) in the glass. Nor must I delay too long to bring my writing to an end; for if my narrative has hitherto escaped destruction, it has been by a combination of great prudence and great good luck. Should the throes of change take me in the act of writing it, Hyde will tear it in pieces; but if some time shall have elapsed after I have laid it by, his wonderful selfishness and circumscription to the moment will probably save it once again from the action of his ape-like spite. And indeed the doom that is closing on us both has already changed and crushed him. Half an hour from now, when I shall again and forever reinduce that hated personality, I know how I shall sit shuddering and weeping in my chair, or continue, with the most strained and fearstruck ecstasy of listening, to pace up and down this room (my last earthly refuge) and give ear to every sound of menace. Will Hyde die upon the scaffold? or will he find courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows; I am careless; this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself. Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end.



TEST

Jekyll and Hyde - Plot summary test questions - AQA

1. At the beginning of the novella, Utterson and Enfield are taking a walk. They see, which is described as 'sinister'. (Dr Lanyon's house/ Mr Hyde's walking stick/ a strange building)
2. Enfield tells Utterson of how Hyde brutally attacked a member of the public by trampling on (Dr Jekyll/ a young girl/ Utterson)
3. Utterson feels ... when he finally meets Mr Hyde. (curious/horrified/pleased)
4. witnesses the murder of Carew. (a maid/ a young child/ Utterson)
5. Hyde uses to murder Carew. (his evil eyes/ his umbrella/ Dr Jekyll's walking stick)
6. Utterson goes to Lanyon as he is concerned about Jekyll. Dr Lanyon refuses to speak about Jekyll. Lanyon hands Utterson a which he says will explain everything. (will/ letter/ potion)
7. summons Utterson to Jekyll's house in the middle of the night. (Hyde/ Dr Jekyll/ Poole, Dr Jekyll's butler)



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8. Utterson breaks into Jekyll's laboratory and discovers (a dead man/ Dr Jekyll/ Poole)
9. Utterson takes with him from Jekyll's laboratory. (a will and a letter/ a will and a potion/ a letter and a key)
10. The letter reveals to Utterson that (Dr Jekyll is Mr Hyde/ Dr Lanyon is dead/ Poole is Mr Hyde)

Key plot details

- Utterson hears the story of how Hyde, Jekyll's friend, trampled on a girl.
- Utterson meets Hyde and is shocked. He wonders why his respectable friend could befriend such a person.
- A year later, Carew is murdered by Hyde. Jekyll is deeply affected by this and refuses to speak to anybody. Hyde goes missing.
- Utterson goes to speak to Lanyon because he is concerned about Jekyll. Lanyon refuses to speak about Jekyll and hands Utterson a letter that must only be opened at the disappearance or death of Jekyll.
- In the middle of the night, Utterson is summoned to Jekyll's house where he breaks down the laboratory door and discovers a dead man. Utterson reads Jekyll's newly amended will and takes Jekyll's confession to read at home.
- As Jekyll has disappeared, Utterson reads Dr Lanyon's letter which tells him the true nature of Jekyll's experiments.
- Utterson reads Jekyll's confession which reveals the true identity of Mr Hyde.

THEMES



In Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde there are many themes you can analyse.

- scientific development
- good vs evil and the duality of human nature
- nature and the supernatural



5.

“And all men kill the thing they love,
By all let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!”

6. “And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself” (Stevenson, *Jekyll and Hyde*, 44)



7. “Written at and about the *fin de siècle* and nervously anticipating the *fin du globe*, Wilde’s novel reviews the literary tradition of which it is the terminus, just as Dorian synopsis within himself ‘the whole of history’ “ (Peter Conrad, 1987: 535).

8. “When I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself!” (DG, 34)

9.

- Walter Pater’s *Mona Lisa* (1873): “older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times and learned the secret of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her” (Pater, 1980, 98-9).



- **Baudrillard** describes our world of *transparency* as the worst form of alienation, which is “not to be dispossessed **by** the Other, but to be dispossessed **of** the Other, that is to have to produce the Other in his absence, and thus to be continuously referred back to oneself and to one’s image.”

10. “All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beyond the surface do so at their peril.” (Wilde, DG)

11.

- “He seemed to recognise his own brushwork, and the frame of his own design. The idea was monstrous, yet he felt afraid. He seized the lighted candle, and held it to the picture. In the left-hand corner was his own name, traced in long letters of bright vermillion.” (179)

12. “It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.” (5)

