BLASPHEMOUS BODIES: TRANSGRESSIVE MORTALITY AS

CULTURAL INTERROGATION IN ROMANCE FICTION

OF THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

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by
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ABSTRACT

The long nineteenth century was characterized by advances in medical, biological and technological knowledge that often complicated definitions of human life and blurred the lines between life and death. These changes impacted both beliefs and practices surrounding the human body and epistemological concepts relating to human nature and the cosmos.   British fiction of the period participated in an interdiscursive tradition that was deeply informed by these discussions of the body. Romance writers in particular often engaged with these ideas in imaginative and innovative ways.

Among the more provocative forms of engagement with these ideas is one that arises among romance writers who mingled new scientific knowledge with a

popular tradition of physical immortality. These writers produced an array of texts treating a theme I have identified as "amortality", a form of bodily immortality that is characterized by a transgression of death's bounds either through artificial prolongevity or reanimation. These texts posit a normative standard of mortality, and the amortal characters—figures who have avoided or escaped the grave—are presented as disruptive and often destructive, their unnatural or "blasphemous" bodies locating them outside the bounds of the religious, medical and/or socio-political orthodoxy and allowing them to serve as a locus for social examination and critique.

The Western cultural imagination has long found immortality an intriguing and problematic subject for exploration. Both idealized and horrific visions of immortality have served as a locus for reflecting, legitimating, and contesting cultural values. Amortality continues and complicates this tradition of immortality as a cultural signifier. Arguing that amortality or transgressive mortality serves to mark the limits of the permissible—socially, politically, medically or religiously—whether in order to reinforce and naturalize those limits or to illuminate them as arbitrary and unjust, I examine these characters and texts as participants in the social issues of the time.

Using an eclectic combination of approaches, including literary close reading, genre analysis, feminist criticism, and post-colonial theory, I examine a range of canonical, moderately well-known and unfamiliar texts and authors. Texts examined include William Godwin's <u>St. Leon</u> (1799), Edward Bulwer-Lytton's <u>Zanoni</u> (1842), Mary Shelley's <u>Frankenstein</u> (1818) and "The Mortal Immortal" (1833), Bram Stoker's <u>Dracula</u> (1897) and <u>Jewel of Seven Stars</u> (1903), Jane Webb Loudon's <u>The</u>

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<u>Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century</u> (1827), H. Rider Haggard's <u>She</u> (1887) and <u>Ayesha: The Return of She</u> (1904-5), and Ludwig Achim von Arnim's <u>Isabella of Egypt</u> (1812).

Despite the significance of embodied immortality as an imaginative construct, this aspect of romance fiction has been neglected or treated as a peripheral characteristic of the genre, adding to the uncanny effect of the texts, but without critical significance. My study attempts to rectify this oversight by demonstrating the prevalence of this motif throughout the period and its adaptability to a wide range of critical purposes.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, have examined a dissertation titled "Blasphemous Bodies: Transgressive Mortality as Cultural Interrogation in Romance Fiction of the Long Nineteenth Century," presented by Lorna Anne Condit, candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of three family members whose lasting impressions on my life are inestimable.

To my grandmother, Izetta Mae Condit (1899-1998). Your independent spirit, endurance of hardship, and vibrant character were an inspiration to all of your grandchildren. Thank you.

To my father, Harold Lloyd Condit (1918-1991). Your gentle manner, integrity, dedication to service, and ability to recognize the value in everyone you met remain my models for living. I am blessed to be your daughter.

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Though you are no longer physically in my life, you will always be a part of me. Know that I will cherish your legacy and honor your memory. This dedication is a token of my pledge to do my best to fulfill your faith in me.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: INTIMATIONS OF AMORTALITY

"Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the
notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. . . . But it was
not so much from feelings of animal vivacity that my difficulty came as
from a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit within me. I used to
brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost to persuade
myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated,
in something of the same way, to heaven." --William Wordsworth,
1807[1]

From a purely biological standpoint, at least at the present, mortality is a

given. At the time of conception, a process of cellular growth and division begins

that, with time, inevitably succumbs to a process of cellular decay and death. For

some individuals, this biological reality of death is the only reality. For others, like

Wordsworth above, the idea of death as a (personal) ending is inconceivable; and

immortality, variously conceived, is its "conquerer." And for some, mortality and its

partner/opponent immorality occupy a sort of conceptual fissure where biology,

metaphysics and culture intermingle. Located at a central place in human

experience, mortality and immortality offer an ideal locus for exploring and critiquing

that experience.

In Western society, the cultural imagination has long found immortality not

only an intriguing but a problematic subject for exploration. At times, immortality has

been portrayed as the pinnacle of human hopes and desires, while at others it has

appeared as a monstrous perversion of the natural and/or divine order. It has been

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[1] From Wordsworth's preface to "Ode: Intimations of Immortality."

variously dream and nightmare, reward and punishment. From the Greek myth of Tithonous to the legend of the Wandering Jew to Christian visions of eternal life in paradise (or hell), immortality has been a locus for identifying and representing what individuals and cultures value and what they reject.

During the long-nineteenth century, the idea of immortality as cultural signifier took on a distinctive form in British romance literature. An increasing knowledge of the anatomy of death led to an increasing fascination with the anatomy of immortality, both its potential and threat. Michel Foucault writes in <u>The Birth of the Clinic</u>, "It is when death became the concrete a priori of medical experience that death could detach itself from counter-nature and become *embodied* in the *living bodies* of individuals" (196). I would argue that this awareness within the medical establishment had its counterpart within the literary world that manifested not only in literature of illness and invalidism, although these were also important in the nineteenth century, but in a literature of mortality transgressed.

Where earlier gothic fiction often included phantoms and specters as challenges to death's absolutism, such figures were typically disembodied spirits. More corporeal challenges to death—vampires and other revenants, for example—tended to remain in the realm of folklore rather than published literature.   As the nineteenth century progressed, however, these characters of folklore increasingly infringed on the pages of romance, challenging the popularity of the ghost as the premier sign of death's permeable bounds. Increasingly, romance writers populated their pages with characters I have identified as "amortals"—figures whose "natural" mortal state has been transgressed, either through artificial prolongevity or reanimation. These amortals are embodied challenges to normative values, concrete manifestations of contemporary social concerns. Their bodies define them

as biological and spiritual transgressors in society, outsiders whose very existence threatens to disrupt cultural and political norms; but these bodies also serve as sites for cultural critique and interrogation. Arguing that amortality serves to mark the limits of the permissible—socially, politically, medically, religiously—whether in order to reinforce and naturalize those limits or to illuminate them as arbitrary and unjust, I examine the discourses that are used to construct, define, judge and contain transgressive immortals, as well as the social and political structures and customs that rely on these discourses for validation.

The Body of Scholarship: Rationale and Literature Review

The context for this study is multifaceted, both temporally and across disciplines. The foremost temporal context is the long-nineteenth century which fostered the romances under discussion and gave transgressive life to the amortals I will examine. Of perhaps equal importance, however, is the contemporary scholarship that has established the (inter)disciplines and conventions of inquiry that have shaped my analysis. While my thinking has been shaped by disciplines as diverse as feminist criticism, genre analysis, post-colonial studies and medical history, it is the interdisciplinary field of scholarship on the body that undergirds my entire project.

Why the body? Bodies are a bother. As most of us are aware, our bodies are a bother in the physical sense. They sag and protrude; they itch and ache and bruise. They emit unpleasant odors and obtrusive noises at inopportune times. They age and die and decompose. Many of the products and activities of contemporary society—from herbal supplements to cosmetics to medical treatments to exercise facilities—are built around managing and maintaining our bothersome,

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but inescapable bodies. These bodies possess, or seem to possess, an innate

biological and chemical "reality."

The body of scholarship is bothersome in another fashion. Academically,

"the body" is a bother and thus a fascination intellectually and epistemologically. It is

paradoxical and problematic. It resists definition. It acts and is acted upon. It lays

claim to autonomy while being enmeshed in webs of interdependency. It grounds

our sense of self, while opening space for the awareness of the Other. It enables our

perception of the world via senses that may be all too easily confused or deceived. It

possesses a seemingly concrete materiality, yet is inexhaustibly open to

interpretation. Rather than being managed and maintained, this body must be

conceptualized and interpreted.

The idea that the body is open to interpretation—that it is readable—is hardly

new. The concept of bodily humors that controlled health, character and behavior

was one such interpretive schema that dominated Galenic medical thought.[2] Other

schema have arisen at various times. Phrenology read the body by feeling bumps

on the head[3], while Cesare Lombroso's theory of the criminal man focused on

physical stigmata that revealed "atavistic" traits.[4] Different though such theories

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[2] Galen (129-c216) identified four humors that dominated human health and behavior. Imbalances in the amount of phlegm, blood, yellow bile, and black bile were believed to be the source of disease and behavioral disorders. Galenic theory or humoralism was central to European medical thought through the Middle Ages.

[3] Developed by German anatomist and physiologist Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828) at the end of the eighteenth century, phrenology claimed that mental faculties were manifested in distinct parts of the brain. The skull reflected the development of these mental faculties, which could then be identified by touch. Co-founder of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society, George Combe was the great popularizer of phrenology in Britain. His Of the Constitution of Man and Its Relation to External Objects (1828) was one of the best sellers of the nineteenth century. For an analysis of the influence of phrenology in Britain, see Roger Cooter's The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain.

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were, they shared an assumption of the body as an essential material form. Interpretation centered on the body's structure and makeup, its physicality. Its "reality." This is the physical body that John O'Neill, in his important study <u>Five Bodies: The Human Shape of Modern Society</u> (1985), identifies as one of our two "inseparable" bodies. My own conception of the body when I initially conceived of this study was largely such a "common" sense understanding, with contemporary medical knowledge filling many of the spaces vacated by humorism, phrenology and their like.

Contemporary scholarship, by contrast, places the body at the center of a web of cultural, political, and popular practices and ideologies and seeks to understand how these practices and ideologies help to constitute, define and control the body. O'Neill identifies this as our "communicative body," a second "learned" body. This "communicative body we learn to think and have is the general medium of our world, of its history, culture, and political economy" (17). As Bryan Turner explains, "we cannot take 'the body' for granted as a natural, fixed and historically universal datum of human societies. The body has many meanings within human practice, and can be conceptualized within a variety of dimensions and frameworks" (17). Scholarship on the body then attempts to explore not only the physical body, but the dimensions and frameworks that have been/are used to conceptualize it, both within and without the academy—the communicative body.

If we are honest, the academy is no more immune to trends and fads than the rest of society, and "the body" is one of the hottest topics in current scholarship. This is perhaps unsurprising in the social and biological sciences, but it is also true in the

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[4] An Italian professor and criminologist, Lombroso (1835-1909) was the founder of the Italian School of Positivist Criminology. His classic work <u>The Criminal Man</u> (1876) identified physiology as the source of much criminal behavior and provided a list of identifying physical characteristics for the atavistic criminal.

humanities. Its very ubiquity in current scholarship, however, can make the body a problematic concept to study. What or whose framework does one apply? What or whose definition(s) can be considered authoritative? Caroline Bynum points out that the traditional move of "surveying the literature" is likely to "[turn] up only a welter of confusing and contradictory usages" ("Why?" 3). She adds that "despite the enthusiasm for the topic, discussions of the body are almost completely incommensurate—and often mutually incomprehensible—across the disciplines" (5).

O'Neill's two bodies model scarcely makes a dent in this plethora of scholarship[5], so where do we turn? Bryan Turner's identification of four scholarly approaches to the body is a useful starting point for making sense of this welter of usages. Turner explains that body scholarship variously conceptualizes the body as 1) "an effect of deeper structural arrangements of power and knowledge," following Foucaultian lines of inquiry, 2) "a symbolic system which produces a set of metaphors by which power is conceptualized," 3) "a consequence of long-term historical changes in human society," and 4) a phenomenological entity best understood "in the context of the lived experience of everyday life" (15-16). Although Turner's categories are geared toward scholarship in the social sciences, they are also important within the humanities, and I would add a fifth category that is particularly prominent in humanities scholarship: representations of the body.

How do these approaches manifest in literary study? Literary bodies are, of necessity, discursive bodies; that is, they are constructed through language informed by various patterns of discourse.[6] The bodies that inhabit British literature are

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[5] O'Neill's study is, in fact, more nuanced than this initial model suggests. He also addresses the cosmological body, social bodies, the body politic, consumer bodies and medical bodies.

[6] For a useful introduction to discourse analysis, see Norman Fairclough, Discourse and Social Change (1992).

shaped by medical, aesthetic, religious, class, and gender discourses among others; and as Foucault argues, such discourses are inevitably engaged in issues of power construction, distribution and maintenance.[7] Through these discourses, certain understandings and treatments of the body are often naturalized, so that they seem to disguise the power structures at play. One of the roles of scholarship, then, involves denaturalizing and foregrounding the power struggles that underlie bodily discourses in texts. The amortal bodies that I explore in this study are excellent sites for such a project of denaturalization, as these anomalous bodies challenge "natural" categories.

It is hardly surprising that the symbolics and metaphoric uses of the body interest literary scholars, as symbol and metaphor are familiar tools in the literary workbox. The "body politic,"[8] for instance, has long intrigued literary scholars, while metaphors of disease, invasion, cartography, and technology have increasingly come to the attention of scholars examining the intersection between body and culture.[9] Thus, we see "cancers" and "plagues" of society and geographical maps

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[7] For examples of this category of scholarship, see not only Foucault's own seminal texts, but Judith Butler, Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex (1993); Elizabeth Grosz, Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism (1994); Maxine Sheets-Johnstone. The Roots of Power: Animate Form and Gendered Bodies (1994); Susan Bordo, Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body (1993); Zillah Eisenstein, The Female Body and the Law (1988); Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller, and Sally Shuttleworth (eds) Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science (1990); and Elaine Scarry The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World (1985). In addition, Randi Patterson and Gail Corning provide a helpful bibliography of research on the body (1997).

[8] See, for example, David Hale The Body Politic: A Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature (1971); Antoine de Baecque The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800 (1997); and John O'Neill Five Bodies, chapter 3 "The Body Politic."

[9] See, for instance, Laura Otis Networking: Communicating with Bodies and Machines in the Nineteenth Century (2001) and Membranes: Metaphors of Invasion in Nineteenth-Century Literature, Science and Politics (1999).

that replicate aspects of the body.[10] Mary Douglas tellingly writes, "Just as it is true

that everything symbolizes the body, so it is equally true . . . that the body

symbolizes everything else" (122), and this pliability of the body ensures its ongoing

symbolic utility. In addition, linguistics informs this approach to the body by exploring

the body in semiotic terms: the body may be understood in various relations of sign,

signifier and signified.[11]

As Talal Asad notes, however, "signs are not *sui generis*; they are intrinsic to

the social practices of human bodies, and acquire their interpreted sense and

reference as part of the historicity of those practices" (44). This historicity of the

body is another central concept of scholarship of embodiment. For literary scholars

focusing on historical periods, such as the long nineteenth century, overlooking the

historically-bound nature of the body is an unforgivable oversight. Understanding the

body(ies) occupying Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) or Bram Stoker's Jewel of

Seven Stars (1903), for instance, demands a recognition of the status of bodies,

living and dead, during the nineteenth century—bodies that are in the process of

being reconceptualized from "sign[s] invested with transcendent meaning" (Garland

Thompson 11) into "object[s] of scientific study" and eventually "of commercial

exchange" (Richardson 51). Historiographies of the body are thus among the most

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[10] For a particularly vivid example of the cartographic metaphor, see H. Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines (1885) that explicitly renders a portion of Africa in terms of the female body.

[11] For useful discussions of semiotics in relation to corporeality, see Vicki Kirby's Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal, chapter 1 (1997); Frederik Stjernfelt, "The Signifying Body: A Semiotic Concept of Embodiment" (2007); and Alan Radley, "The Elusory Body and Social Constructionist Theory" (1995).

valuable resources for literary scholars seeking to be historically informed and to avoid the pitfall of anachronistic readings of the past.[12]

Turner's fourth category, the "lived experience of everyday life" (16), is derived largely from anthropological study and, at first glance, may seem the least applicable (and accessible) to literary scholars, especially those studying the past. How can we access the "lived experience" of a Victorian housewife or a Romantic author? What can we know of the ritualization surrounding the mending of a pen or the ways that laundry demands infringed on reading and writing practices? In recent scholarship, however, such questions have become less a rhetorical acknowledgement of the impossibility of the task and more a challenge to seek access to daily life through alternative sources such as letters and diaries and popular magazines, long neglected as ephemera. The products of research into nineteenth-century lived experience have been varied. It has produced, for example, studies of the effects of corsetry on Victorian women and examinations of leisure activities from flower collecting to bicycling. However it may be foregrounded or backgrounded, the role of the body is an inherent aspect of all such studies.

Of particular interest to literary scholars, moreover, is the phenomenology of writing—the embodied experience of bearing the pen—and reading—the experience of consuming a text. Studying texts from previous centuries—the works of "dead white men" as the old truism says (although the canon has thankfully been expanded beyond their realm)—makes it all too easy to overlook the embodied nature of writing

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[12] See, for example, the following historiographies of the body in Victorian culture: William Cohen, Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses (2009); Rogert Cooter, The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain (1984); Laura Otis, Membranes: Metaphors of Invasion in Nineteenth-Century Literature, Science, and Politics (1999); Ruth Richardson, Death, Dissection and the Destitute (2000); Pamela Gilbert, Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels (1997); Anna Krugovoy Silver, Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body (2002); and Alison Winter, "Harriet Martineau and the Reform of the Invalid in Victorian England" (2009).

and the realization that writing is a bodily practice, as much as an intellectual endeavor. Likewise, it is simple to anachronistically apply our own reading practices to the past and assume that reading is reading, without historicizing it, to assume "that everyone reads (or ought to) as we do professionally, privileging the cognitive, ideational, and analytic mode" (Long 192). Both pitfalls can result in skewed scholarship. William Graham points out, for example, that "the inclination of modern hermeneuts such as Paul Ricouer to see the written text as utterly independent of its author is an extreme but logical expression of the autonomy of the written word" (15). There is, in the words of Erich Schön, a "'loss of sensuousness'" in such approaches (qtd. in Fabian, "Keep Listening" 83). The restoration of such sensuousness, of the relationship between the body and its outpourings and intakings, is central to a phenomenological understanding of writing and reading.[13]

Finally, representations of the body are central to literary study. Richard Dyer defines representation as "the organization of the perception of [actual bodily differences] into comprehensibility, a comprehensibility that is always frail, coded, in other words, human." Literary bodies are inherently representations; they exist solely as words on a page; and the words selected create "pictures" that reside in the intersection of authorial imagination, text and the reader's reception. To assume that they are "mere" fictions, however, downplays the significance of representation in both reflecting and shaping our experience of the world. As William Cohen argues, representations of bodily exteriors are also, in many cases and ways, representations of interiors. What is seen on the surface reveals much of the

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[13] Among the most notable scholarship in this vein is the French school of "*l'ecriture feminine*." Advanced by Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous and Monique Wittig, l'ecriture feminine privileges experience over language and explores the way that texts are inscribed with female experience and embodiedness.

authors' (and often their society's) understandings of what is occurring beneath the surface.

Many studies of representation focus on aesthetics: the beauty (or lack thereof) of bodies. Others may explore depictions of disability or "monstrosity." Race, ethnicity, class and gender are likewise elements of representation. What such representations typically share is an implicit understanding of an ideal or norm against which bodies are judged. Thus, literary heroines may be judged in relation to an aesthetic standard of beauty, while "monsters" may be recognized by their divergence from aesthetic, medical and even moral norms. Garland Thompson codifies this concept in the neologism of the "normate" which she defines as a "figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate's boundaries. . . [it] designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings" (8). And the somatic norm serves likewise as an indicator of normative behavior. As Paul Youngquist explains in the introduction to Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism (2003), "norms of embodiment coordinate the agencies of the flesh, directing their energies toward normal behaviors" (xiv).   Thus, organizing perceptions into comprehensibility, to revisit Dyer's definition, is a powerful act with real consequences.

Of course, these classes of body scholarship are not mutually exclusive; typically, they are deeply intertwined. Certainly all of them inform my own study in this project, though in varying degrees according to the focus of individual chapters. Nonetheless, this review of the literature downplays an important aspect of my own interest in the body: its interconnection with religious thinking and, especially, its transcendent aspect. Sarah Coakley points out that "current secularized debates" about bodies often repress religious understandings of the body in Western culture

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(2). At best, religion is seen as one of the discourses of power that seek to control the body. "Devoid now of religious meaning or of the capacity for any fluidity into the divine, shorn of any expectation of new life beyond the grave, [the body] has shrunk to the limits of individual fleshliness" she writes (4). For all its intellectual sophistication then, such scholarship does, in fact, emphasize the body in its materiality. It is a dualism shorn of its second half.

As a student of religious studies as well as literature, however, the religious meaning of the body is of central importance to my study. And for many of the nineteenth-century authors I examine, the body retains its relation to the sacred, although this sacred may be variably conceived and represented. In fact, amortality, as I have defined it is essentially a religious category: it is a transgression of a sacred relationship between mortality and immortality. Within my study, it is the mortal body that serves as the primary "normate," to use Garland Thompson's term. While this normative body may be complicated and extended in various texts, the essential qualification for humanness is physical mortality. Immortality refers to a spiritual state or to bodily resurrection. To transgress this state through artificial prolongation or reanimation (an act distinct from Christian resurrection) is to challenge not only social norms, important as these are in my study, but a sacred relationship of body and soul.

Gerald Gruman in his extensive study of prolongevity, which he defines as "the significant extension of the length of life by human action," argues that there have always been two threads running through humanity's perception of physical immortality (6). The first thread, a desire to prolong physical existence, perhaps permanently, results in various strategies for promoting prolongevity, ranging from religious prolongevitism, focusing on propitiating supernatural powers, to hygienic

and medical approaches (8-9). In contrast, the second thread, which Gruman

identifies as an apologetic tradition, assumes that such prolongation is neither

possible nor desirable (10). From the apologists' perspective, the quest for physical

immortality appears as a transgression of nature and/or the divine order. It is this

apologetic thread dominates and informs nineteenth-century fictions of amortality.

Though they posit the possibility of physical immortality, its desirability proves

wanting, in large part because it ignores the spiritual component of human existence.

Blasphemous Bodies: Transgressing the Sacred

In his study of transgression, Chris Jenks suggests that there is something

inherently intriguing in the idea of transgression, something that "magnetises, that

touches the shadow side in us all" (2), something that may help explain the

fascination of the romances I examine in this study. They entertain because they

cross boundaries and stretch the limits of possibility. Beyond the entertainment

factor of transgression, though, Jenks argues for its intellectual and cultural value (2).

Defining transgression in terms of excess, an incapacity for being contained within

recognized limits, he claims that it is "a dynamic force in cultural reproduction—it

prevents stagnation by breaking the rule and it ensures stability by reaffirming the

rule" (7). Transgression, he explains, has an "artistry," a "diagnostic role," and value

as a "touchstone of social relations" (33).

The amortals of my study are embodiments of excess. Quite literally, they

possess an excess of life. Bodies that should be dead and buried are instead motile

and mobile, having either avoided or escaped the grave. Transgression is thus at

the heart of the form of embodiment I explore. Further, my description of amortal

bodies as "blasphemous" bodies in the title to this study deliberately evokes a

particular type of transgression, one commonly associated with an offense to

religious mores. In its most basic definition, blasphemy is a "word crime," as the title

of Joss Marsh's study <u>Word Crimes: Blasphemy, Culture, and Literature in</u>

<u>Nineteenth-Century England</u> (1998)[14] emphasizes. In biblical terms, blasphemy

referred to the offense of profaning the name of God, and by extension, it eventually

came to apply to any speech or writing that seemed disrespectful of the faith. The

linguistic aspect of blasphemy seems suitable to a study of bodies that are

themselves linguistic productions; however, I have extended the meaning of

"blasphemous" here to include the embodied aspect of their transgression: it is not

simply in speech and act that these amortals are blasphemous, but in their excessive

mortality. It is their existence and essence that offends sacred Judeo-Christian

norms.

　　　Like other forms of transgression, blasphemy has a "diagnostic role" in

society. Leonard Levy explains that blasphemy is "a litmus test of the standards a

society feels it must enforce to preserve its unity, its peace, its morality, and above

all its salvation" (xiii), and Marsh adds that it "marks the moving boundary line

between the permissible and the prohibited" (7). Amortal bodies then place pressure

on social boundaries and reveal at once the arbitrariness of such boundaries and

their susceptibility and resistance to change.

　　　Perhaps most essential to my understanding of blasphemy in this context is

that it indicates a living religious awareness. Alain Cabantous defines blasphemers

as "those in defiance of a sacredness that continues to live on" (157). Blasphemy

has no relevance for a nonliving faith; where no emotion or belief is invested,

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[14] The use of blasphemy also seemed appropriate because of its prevalence in nineteenth-century Britain. Marsh points out that there was a surge of blasphemy trials during the nineteenth century, following a long period during which blasphemy was out of fashion. Blasphemy thus has a cultural cachet during the period under study that makes it a fitting term for conceptualizing amortality.

blasphemy is a hollow concept. Levy, in a discussion of T.S. Eliot's <u>After Strange</u> <u>Gods</u> (1934), points out Eliot's lament that humanity is no longer capable of genuine blasphemy. Levy suggests that Eliot "used blasphemy like a compass, only to take a fix on the religious direction of our culture." Existing only in "an age of reverent belief,'" blasphemy is "a symptom that the soul is still alive'" (570). The authors I address in this study are also concerned with an ideal of living sacredness in defiance of spiritual stagnation. For them too, the fascination with blasphemous bodies reveals a desire to preserve a sense of the transcendent in an increasingly materialist world.

Moreover, Cabantous argues that the concept of blasphemy is not inherently conservative or reactionary. Like the broader category of transgression, it is polyvalent and "constitute[s] a highly variable interpretive space" (7). Blasphemy can potentially be constructive and productive (5). This is also true of the blasphemous bodies in this study; they open interpretive space for criticizing culture, as well as reinforcing its values.

As I stated above, immortality has never figured as unproblematic in the cultural imagination. Even its most idealized version—Christian eternal life in heaven—is offered in contrast to a much darker vision—eternal damnation for the unredeemed sinner. And it is a de-idealized perception of somatic immortality—or amortality—that dominates nineteenth-century romance fiction. The behavior and fates of amortals suggest that, when immortality becomes localized in the physical body, the result may be personal and social chaos.

Lawrence Poston notes that the gothic "dramatizes transgressive states" (146), and in the form of amortality, it does more than dramatize, it literally embodies them. Amortals' bodies locate them outside the bounds—of divine order, of nature, of

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society. Simply by defying the limits of mortality, they become somatic (re)markers of

cultural limits, placing them at the heart of critical discourses across the nineteenth

century. Mary Douglas asserts that "the body is a model which can stand for any

bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened

or precarious" (116). Likewise, Paula Cooey argues that the body, embedded as it is

within a web of cultural meanings, can be understood "as a testing ground or

crucible, indeed in some cases a battleground, for mapping human values, as these

are informed by relations of and struggles for power" (9). Romantic[15] apologists use

amortal bodies in just such a manner, as a model for bounded systems and as a

testing ground for mapping human values. By exploiting the disjunction between the

ideal of immortality and its embodied "reality," these writers provide a locus for

interrogating, if not directly challenging, social, political, scientific, and religious

ideologies. Because blasphemy is only definable in terms of the standard against

which it is being judged (whether that standard is assumed to be biblical "truth,"

nature, social norms, etc.), such a characterization of the amortal body allows it to

function as a marker of the limits of the permissible, whether in order to reinforce and

naturalize those limits or to illuminate them as arbitrary and (potentially) unjust.

In addition, my use of the terms amortality and transgressive mortality reflects

a need to distinguish the somatic state of the characters I am studying from more

orthodox uses of the word "immortality." Stated simply, not all romantic immortals

are immortal. Or to be more precise, absolute immortality, in the sense of being

impervious to death, is an inaccurate descriptor for the transgressive mortals who

populate the pages of the nineteenth-century romance. Vampires, for instance, as

the "undead," are defined as much by their relation to the grave as by their simulation

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[15] My use of the word "romantic" refers to writers of romance in general, not simply to those
writing during the period designated as Romanticism.

of life and can with the proper knowledge and tools be "killed"; while the Frankenstein monster, as a reanimated conglomeration of dead scraps, certainly transgresses normal expectations of mortality, but may nonetheless be subject to biological processes of disease, death, and dissolution. Even drinkers of the elixir-of-life may, in fact, simply be experiencing extreme prolongevity rather than immortality. While all of these bodies fall outside the bounds of traditional mortality, immortality as a catch all term erases certain important aspects of this discourse.

For the purposes of this study, I will use immortality advisedly as a limiting term to support my conceptual strategy. In order to foreground the blasphemous aspect of the bodies I am discussing and to acknowledge the range of extraordinary bodies employed by various authors, I will restrict my use of the term immortality to the discussion of immortality as an ideal (for instance, what a specific character believes he/she is seeking/attaining) and to the religious formulation of the soul and/or the transfigured body of the Christian saved. I will use either "transgressive mortality" or "amortality" to designate the excessive life of the characters I examine.

If amortality offers a fruitful locus for examining nineteenth-century culture, what questions might it be useful to ask? In approaching these texts, I developed several questions to guide my thinking. 1. How and why does amortality become available as a conceptual category for nineteenth-century romance writers? 2. How does/can amortality function as a social and political metaphor, mirroring contemporary conerns? 3. How, when and why may the amortal body prove recalcitrant to interpretation? 4) What is the relationship between amortality and gender or other demographic classifications? 5. How does amortality affect interpersonal relations, and what may it reveal about human relationships? 6. How are memory and history implicated in discourses of immortality/amortality, or

conversely, how do discourses of immortality illuminate/complicate ideas of memory, history and historiography? I have not set out explicitly to answer each of these questions for each of the works I studied; rather I used them as an underlying base for conceiving the study as a whole. Some questions will therefore be more relevant to certain chapters than others. By the end of this study, nonetheless, I hope that some answers to these questions will begin to emerge.

Pinning the Butterfly's Wings: Selection and Handling of Texts

My success in answering my research questions naturally depends to a significant extent on my selection of appropriate texts for analysis and my approach to those texts. This was a more significant challenge than I initially expected. In his autobiography, H. Rider Haggard refers to the spirit of romance as a "beautiful butterfly. . . [that] is rarely to be caught" (Days vol. 2, 95).   I found this metaphor unexpectedly evocative of my own experience during this project. My selection of texts might well be described as an attempt to capture the butterfly (sometimes, I suspect, with a torn net) and my organization and methodology as an attempt to pin the butterfly's wings and put it on display.

Let me begin describing my plan at the point I began developing it. I first conceived the idea for this study while reading Marie Roberts' Gothic Immortals: The Fiction of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross. Roberts' text opens with a statement that "the image of the Gothic immortal has been overshadowed by one of its more unsavoury varieties: that of the deathless vampire" and continues by noting the "stigma borne by the unhallowed tribe of Gothic immortals" (1). While I found her study of Rosicrucian immortality fascinating, I was most intrigued by the recognition of the ubiquity and variety of gothic immortals. What I discovered was that these figures tended to be segregated for study. There were studies of vampires,

Wandering Jews and alchemists, but each was treated as a separate class without any regard for an overarching pattern of mortality/immortality in the scholarship.

As I continued to read, I began to suspect a unifying interest in the boundary between life and death that emerged during the long nineteenth century in connection with shifting understandings of the body and scientific conceptions of the world. I discovered in the pages of romances, beginning with gothic fiction but extending to other forms of romance, a shared interest in this boundary and developed the conceptual category of amortality as a way to address this polyvalent and fruitful collection of texts. One of my first decisions, thus, was to focus not on a single amortal type, but to select texts that represented a cross-section of amortality, both among those who had avoided the grave through prolonged life and those who had escaped the grave through some form of reanimation. In doing so, it is not my intention to erase distinctions between figures, but to highlight certain shared preoccupations among these diverse authors and works.

Before I discuss the specific texts chosen, I want to elaborate on romance as the genre of choice for fictions of amortality. Romance writers across the long nineteenth century demonstrated a powerful and prolific fascination with amortality, but why? I would argue that one reason is inherent to the nature of romance as a genre. Walter Scott defines romance as "a fictitious narrative in prose or verse; the interest of which turns upon marvelous and uncommon incidents."[16] Likewise, Clara Reeve, in her literary history The Progress of Romance (1785), writes that "The Romance in lofty language describes what never happened nor is likely to happen."[17]

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[16] Sir Walter Scott, popular Scottish writer of romances, drama and poetry, (1771-1832). Scott's influential "Essay on Romance" was first published as a supplement to the Encyclopedia Britannica in 1824.

Marvelous, uncommon and never likely to happen. These and similar words tend to

suffuse critical writing about the romance during the nineteenth century. For some

critics, such words are used pejoratively, as indicators of failed verisimilitude in

romance writing—a perception that long influenced scholarship on the romance. For

others, however, such language signals the capacity of romance to explore ideas

that are beyond the bounds of realism to adequately engage or to treat with

emotional resonance. It is to this higher "reality of romance" with its "arduous . . .

enthusiastic and . . . sublime licence [sic] of imagination" that romance writers appeal

(Godwin, "Of History and Romance").

Contemporary scholarship on the romance further develops this picture. Ben

Robertson describes the romantic project as "moulding [reality] into something

between the actual and the imaginary as a better way of portraying moral 'truth'"

(77), while Ian Duncan points out that romance is, in fact, the guiding principle of all

fiction, "its *difference* from a record of reality, of everyday life" (2). From this

perspecive, what distinguishes Romance from other fictional forms is that the image

of reality it attempts to record allows greater distance from common and customary

experience. For Duncan, "realism is not a revelation of nature but a rhetoric and an

ideology" (6). Romance writers adopt a rhetoric and ideology that foregrounds

different truths about "reality" than "realists," but one that is not thereby necessarily

less true to life as they conceive it. The choice of romance as a rhetoric may, in fact,

be understood as an assertion of "an alternative version of reality" (Duncan 21).

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[17] English novelist (1729-1807). Best remembered for her Gothic novel, The Old English
Baron (1777), Reeve's The Progress of Romance examined the development of the epic into
the romance and eventually into the novel. Like Scott and other writers, Reeve was
concerned with the relationship between the romance and the novel and how to understand
and justify their respective values.

It is in this context that the use of romance as a venue for exploring ideas about life and death, prolongevity, and reanimation must be understood. These ideas do not exist only in the pages of romance. Popular and even "serious" scientific writings (the dividing lines in the nineteenth century were often imprecise) explore these ideas, as I examine in more detail in my upcoming chapters. Such writings lack the romance's capacity to "galvanize" these ideas in the imagination, to use one of the popular concepts of the period. It is in the pages of romance, freed from demands for common sense verisimilitude, that these ideas can emerge from a cocoon of theory and become characters capable of capturing the imagination of writers and readers alike.

David Richter tellingly writes that

> A world in the grip of change has two nightmares: the past and the future. And the Gothic novel was a way of embodying in fantasy both the nightmare of control by the principles of hierarchy and order and the nightmare of uncontrolled individual desire, nightmares from which one can escape only by waking up. (19)

Amortality is a way of exploring both of these nightmares—the past and the future, control and anarchy—for a society in the grip of epistemological change; and romance, in its Gothic or other forms, provides amortality with imaginative rhetorical space. As individual texts and as a genre, then, romance offered me a starting place for my selection of texts.

The genre may have been effectively self-selecting. Not so the individual texts. I have already mentioned my desire to include a variety of amortals, a choice that only added to the difficulty of limiting my scope. My first two limits were temporal and geographical: I focused on the long nineteenth century, as the period that seemed to see the emergence and blossoming of amorality literature. My earliest text then is William Godwin's St. Leon (1798) while the latest is H. Rider Haggard's

Ayesha: The Return of She (1904-05), included as it is a sequel to his 1888 novel She, also included. Geographically, I restricted myself to British texts, with one exception: my inclusion of Ludwig Achim von Arnim's German novella, Isabella of Egypt (1812) is a tacit acknowledgement of Avril Horner's "challenge [to] the tyranny of Anglo-American narratives" of romance (1). I could not, without being overwhelmed, do justice to the theme of amortality as either a transatlantic or European phenomenon, but including Isabella of Egypt allows me both to demonstrate that the interest in amortality is not a uniquely British phenomenon and to acknowledge the profound impact of German literature on British romance.

A second important decision was to use a combination of canonical texts and authors, moderately well known texts, and unfamiliar or neglected texts. This allows me to build on an established body of scholarship in some areas, while breaking new ground in others. I also believe that this range of texts provides greater depth and complexity to my study. In addition, in most cases, I selected authors for whom immortality/amortality seemed to be an ongoing interest. Thus, of the seven authors I study, five—William Godwin, Mary Shelley, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Bram Stoker and H. Rider Haggard—revisit the ideas of immortality in more than one work. The two exceptions, Jane Webb Loudon and Ludwig Achim von Arnim, were chosen because their works offer particularly intriguing contributions to the literature of amortality, Loudon exploring multiple temporal levels as an ancient mummy is revived into an imagined twenty-second century and Arnim producing an array of amortals within his novella.

Once I had selected my texts, deciding how to organize them was equally demanding. Each chapter pairs works by two authors, determined by several considerations. My first decision was to avoid periodizing the texts by proceeding in

chronological order, so in each chapter, I pair texts from earlier and later in the century to minimize the effect of preconceptions regarding Romantic and Victorian norms. Likewise, with the exception of the first chapter, each chapter engages more than one amortal type to avoid the segregation that has dominated previous study of such characters. Most importantly, each chapter is organized around a unifying theme or social context that provides a link between the texts examined. Admittedly, the pairings are somewhat arbitrary, as many of the texts share themes. In most cases, the texts could easily be arranged differently and still provide interesting insights. Nonetheless, I tried to use a somewhat organic approach; rather than approaching the texts with a plan in mind and imposing that model on the texts, I read the texts and tried to let them "speak" to me, seeing what themes and concepts seemed to arise and intersect most naturally.   My methodology is equally organic and eclectic, applying, along with literary close reading strategies, the lens(es) that seem most productive for approaching the works covered in each chapter, whether these are feminist analysis, genre criticism, post-colonial theory or another approach.

Chapter two explicitly adopts and expands Gruman's concept of an apologetic tradition in prolongevity theory. In it, I argue that the gap between imagined immortality and its actualization opens ironic space for social critique. Focusing on two "elixir of life" novels, William Godwin's St. Leon (1799) and Edward Bulwer-Lytton's Zanoni (1842), I examine amortality as a parallel to and metaphor for revolutionary change, where the idealized vision proves untenable and/or threatening. Noting the significance of the French Revolution as a historical context for each author, I focus on Godwin's critique of revolutionary scientific advancement undertaken without adequate caution and forethought, while for Bulwer, violent and chaotic political revolution is the primary concern. I examine how, for both authors,

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the protagonists' amortality allows them to serve as a focal point for the authors' social critique.

My third chapter explores the concept of amortality in relation to gender issues, arguing that reanimation fiction has a particular resonance with female experience in the nineteenth century. Examining four key critical concerns—1) an epistemological shift in concepts of death and life, 2) the objectification and commodification of the body, 3) the medical and popular association of the female body with death and the grave, and 4) the status of women under coverture law as a form of "civil death"—I apply feminist analysis, particularly Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, to Mary Shelley's novel <u>Frankenstein</u> (1818) and her short story "A Mortal Immortal" (1833), arguing that these works together serve as an attempt to redefine woman's role in society. Likewise, I treat Bram Stoker's <u>Jewel of the Seven Stars</u> (1903) as a complex examination of female status, one that both affirms and questions the value of female empowerment.

Unlike the preceding chapters, the scientific context of chapter four is not directly related to the body. Rather it focuses on advancements in geological knowledge and changing conceptions of time, which I argue necessitate a shift in conceptualization of the human (including the human body) as a standard for meaning. The extended life possessed by amortals parallels the extended life of the earth recognized by geologists and provides an avenue for thinking through these new concepts of time and meaning. Thus, Jane Webb Loudon's <u>The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century</u> (1827), with its multiple temporal levels, and H. Rider Haggard's <u>She</u> (1887) and <u>Ayesha: The Return of She</u> (1904-05), with their ancient and threatening heroine, reveal intriguing ideas of time and its relationship to embodied experience. By relating these works to the concept of "chronopolitics" I

develop an analysis of the political and theological ideologies and assumptions of the novels.

My final chapter uses as a scientific context emerging debates about language and philology and what they reveal about the nature of the human. I argue that both Achim von Arnim in <u>Isabella of Egypt</u> and Bram Stoker in <u>Dracula</u> (1897) make specific connections between bodies, including amortal bodies, and language; and I examine how they develop an understanding of the human species as a sort of *homo logos* in order to maintain a relationship to the transcendent or numinous through bodies that use language rightly.

Each of these chapters, then, explores a different facet of amortality. This kaleidoscope of images together illuminate the quality that makes amortality such a useful tool in the writer's hand: its protean ability to adapt to a variety of social concerns. I believe that the significance of embodied immortality as an imaginative construct has typically been neglected. At best, it has been treated as a peripheral characteristic of romance, especially in its gothic manifestation, adding to the uncanny effect of the texts, but without critical significance. My study seeks to rectify this oversight by demonstrating the prevalence of this motif throughout the period and its adaptability to a wide range of critical purposes. Taken together, these various approaches to amortality weave a richly textured and intricately patterned tapestry across the pages of the long nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 2

THE FLAWED IDEAL: IMMORTALITY, IRONY, IMPATIENCE

AND THE CRITIQUE OF REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

"Within the whole range of the wide world's literature we find no more
constant theme than this disparity between man's possibilities and
aspirations on the one hand, and the narrow scope afforded them in
the brief space of the present life on the other."
                                                        --James Ward, *Realm of Ends*, 1911[1]

The premise of Bryan Turner's third category of embodiment is that bodies are

historically bound. For the two authors I examine in this chapter, William Godwin and

Edward Bulwer-Lytton, it might be argued that bodies are historically haunted by an

event that helped shape the British cultural imagination throughout the long nineteenth

century. This event? The French Revolution. In How Societies Remember, Paul

Connerton explains that "our experience of the present very largely depends upon our

knowledge of the past" (2), identifying the French Revolution as a significant "historic

beginning" in the modern imagination. He writes that "Revolutionary imagining

reached beyond the European heartland; since the late nineteenth century we have

lived the myth of the Revolution much as the first Christian generations lived the myth

of the End of the World" (7). How much more true must this be of writers writing within

living memory of the French Revolution?

On the Victorian Web's French Revolution page, David Cody argues that

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[1] Presented as part of the Gifford Lectures in 1911.

> The French Revolution was . . . perhaps the single most crucial
> influence on British intellectual, philosophical, and political life in the
> nineteenth century. In its early stages it portrayed itself as a triumph of
> the forces of reason over those of superstition and privilege, and as
> such it was welcomed not only by English radicals like Thomas Paine
> and William Godwin and William Blake, who, characteristically, saw it as
> a symbolic act which presaged the return of humanity to the state of
> perfection from which it had fallen away — but by many liberals as well.
> . . as it descended into the madness of the Reign of Terror, however,
> many who had initially greeted it with enthusiasm . . . had second
> thoughts.

Not surprisingly, the importance of this context cannot be ignored for William Godwin, whose political masterpiece, An Enquiry into Political Justice, was published in 1793 just as Louis IV's execution was preparing to transform the promise of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" into the Reign of Terror, nor for Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who published a history of the Terror in 1842, the same year as his novel Zanoni, set during the French Revolution, appeared.

What, though, does this mean for their ideas of embodiment? Ludmilla Jordanova points out that use of the guillotine during the French Revolution raised important conceptual questions regarding the definition of life and death (Nature 129). Co-invented by two physicians, the guillotine was not simply an instrument of death, but, inadvertently, an epistemological measuring tool as well. Movements of the head after decapitation suggested continued consciousness, complicating materialist assumptions about the moment of death, and physiognomic theory indicated that facial movements of guillotine victims could reveal insights into consciousness, possibly even the state of the soul (Jordanova, Nature 119, 122). To an extent, then, Godwin's and Bulwer's amortals can be understood as shaped, implicitly or explicitly by the French Revolution and its problematizing of death. Their bodies, like the decapitated heads of the victims of the Terror, challenge conventional understandings of the body's state and of the relationship between life and death.

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Before I continue with my analysis, I need to introduce Godwin and Bulwer, who are not among the better known authors in my study. For years, it has been a commonplace of scholarship to begin a study of Godwin or Bulwer with an apology and a defense to prove to one's audience that Godwin, long overshadowed by his wife, daughter, and son-in-law,[2] and Bulwer, best known in contemporary circles for the infamous Bulwer-Lytton wretched writing contest,[3] deserve serious scholarly attention. This tradition of neglect has an illustrious history, beginning with Godwin's and Bulwer's contemporaries. As B.J. Tysdahl points out, Godwin has often been regarded as nearly unreadable, and Tory critics of his day could "ridicule his politics by debunking his language" (3). Nor have contemporary critics always been much more favorable. For instance, Gary Kelly claims that Godwin's second novel St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century (1799) "debased" his talent: the "extravagance of language and repetitiveness of psychological description . . . wholly undermined the originality of his grand design" (212). As for Bulwer, although in 1916, G. K. Chesterton's The Victorian Age in Literature could claim without irony that "'you could not have the Victorian Age without him'" testifying to Bulwer's position as one of the most prolific, well-paid and popular writers of the Victorian Era, by 1944, V. S. Pritchett could describe him equally fairly as "'the totally unread Victorian,'" a title confirmed by publishers' ongoing disinterest in reprinting his work (qtd in A. Brown 29). Fortunately,

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[2] Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Percy Bysshe Shelley respectively. The exception in Godwin's case has generally been in relation to his novel Caleb Williams (1794), widely considered his best work, and in some circles, his political treatise Political Justice.

[3] For those unfamiliar with the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest, it is perhaps sufficient introduction to note the slogan of the contest's webpage: "Where WWW means Wretched Writers Welcome." The contest, sponsored since 1982 by the San Jose State University English Department, challenges writers to "compose the opening sentence to the worst of all possible novels" (www.bulwer-lytton.com).

recent scholarship has made strides toward recuperating these authors' reputations,[4] and I will forgo the standard justification for my attention. With Allan Christensen, I will treat the prolific and (once) popular Bulwer "as dedicated artist rather than facile opportunist" (New Regions x), and with Tysdahl, I will assume that Godwin's sometimes overloaded style "reflects a powerful ambiguity," a complexity of ideas where "terseness . . . the sparkling and witty [would] represent dangerous simplifications rather than short-cuts to truth" (6). In other words, I will begin with the premise that Godwin and Bulwer deserve attention on their own merits as novelists and social critics.

This premise being stated, I would be remiss to ignore one of the primary consequences of several decades of scholarly neglect: the relative obscurity of both St. Leon and Zanoni. Since I cannot assume my readers' familiarity with these novels, I will begin with brief synopses. Both novels follow the fortunes of their eponymous heroes, alchemists whose use of the elixir of life has granted them physical immortality. Reginald St. Leon is a young cavalier whose early experience of chivalry colors his life, causing him to place exceptional value on glory and splendor. Idle in Paris following a failed military campaign, he becomes addicted to gambling and nearly comes to ruin. Rescued by marriage to Marguerite de Damville, he enjoys a pastoral idyll with his wife and precocious children until he revisits Paris, relapses into

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[4] For biographical studies of Godwin, see Peter Marshall, William St. Clair and B.J. Tysdahl. For discussions of the psychological aspects of Godwin's work, see William Brewer and Gary Handwerk. For studies of St. Leon's participation in the social debates of Godwin's day, see Handwerk, Ellen Levy, Gregory Maertz, Peter Shaw, and Tysdahl. For Godwin's narrative style and modes of discourse, see Pamela Clemit, Handwerk, Levy and Tysdahl. For Godwin's transitional status between Enlightenment and Romantic epistemologies, see Brewer and Handwerk. For Godwin's treatment of immortality, see Marie Roberts and Siobhan Ni. Useful extended studies of Bulwer include Robert Bulwer, James Campbell, Allen Christensen, Leslie Mitchell, and Robert Lee Wolff for biographical information; Christensen and Edwin Eigner for the social and political aspects of his works; and Eigner, Joscelyn Godwin, and Wolff for his supernatural and metaphysical ideas. In addition, The Subverting Vision of Bulwer-Lytton: Bicentenary Reflections, a collection of articles edited by Allen Christensen, offers a number of insightful articles on Bulwer.

gambling and loses the (Damville) family fortune. Forced into exile by his debts, the

family lives relatively comfortably as peasants until a storm destroys their livelihood.

Narrowly avoiding starvation for his family, St. Leon is vulnerable when a stranger

named Francesco Zampieri arrives and offers him the secret of the philosopher's stone

in exchange for his silence about Zampieri's own existence and death. St. Leon

agrees, despite reservations over deceiving his family.

Endowed with sudden inexplicable wealth, St. Leon comes under suspicion for

the stranger's death and is arrested. He eventually escapes, but his reputation and

family have been devastated: his son Charles leaves to make his own way in the

world, unburdened by the family name; his home is burned by a mob; and Marguerite

dies of heartbreak. Finally, St. Leon leaves his daughters to the care of a guardian and

fakes his own death. Even using a new identity, suspicion and persecution continue to

pursue him, and he is eventually arrested and tortured by the Inquisition, only to

escape during transport to be burned at the stake. At this point, he finally drinks the

elixir and is rejuvenated, his changed appearance allowing him to evade recapture.

His personal life in ruins, St. Leon assumes a new identity and undertakes an

unsuccessful humanitarian project to rebuild the economy of war-torn Hungary.

Unwisely placing his trust in the misanthropic Bethlem Gabor, St. Leon finds himself

imprisoned in Gabor's dungeons, where Gabor tries to extort the secret of his wealth.

He is finally freed by soldiers under the command of his son Charles, who fails to

recognize his father, but befriends the unfortunate prisoner. He then tries to help

Charles by paving the ground for a marriage between Charles and his love Pandora,

only to alienate them by unwittingly convincing Charles that Pandora is unfaithful. The

novel ends as St. Leon finally acknowledges the necessity of cutting the last of his

familial ties. He must be satisfied with knowing that Charles and Pandora eventually reconcile, though he can have no part in their (human) happiness.

Like its predecessor St. Leon, Zanoni examines the domestic and social consequences of bodily immortality. Zanoni has already lived several thousand years by the time the novel opens. Bulwer's narrative only traces the last few years of his hero's life. Zanoni enters the story as a mysterious counselor and protector to a young Italian opera singer, Viola Pisani. He tries to ensure her safety and happiness by facilitating her marriage to an English artist, Clarence Glyndon, but both young people prove recalcitrant. Viola insists on loving Zanoni, and Glyndon insists on being initiated into Zanoni's alchemical craft. Zanoni reluctantly concedes, marrying Viola himself and turning Glyndon over to Zanoni's own teacher Mejnour for training. Not unlike St. Leon and Marguerite, Zanoni and Viola have an idyllic period of marriage on a Greek island, including the birth of their child, but are eventually forced to leave because of a plague outbreak. Unwilling to lose his beloved to death, Zanoni tries unsuccessfully to interest her in his art.

In the meantime, Glyndon's impatience has led to his failure as an initiate. Ignoring Mejnour's instructions, he drinks the elixir vitae prematurely, achieving not immortality but a sufficient physical transformation to open his eyes to a demonic entity, The Dweller on the Threshold. His attempts to escape the fiend lead him into a decadent lifestyle and eventually into support of the French Revolution. He encounters Viola, while Zanoni is away consulting with Mejnour, and warns her against Zanoni's "unholy" practices. Terrified for her baby, Viola flees and falls into the hands of the Revolutionaries. Zanoni saves her life by trading himself for her in prison, but Viola has a vision of him at the guillotine, as the gates of heaven open before him. She dies in this state of beatitude, and readers are left with the assurance that their child will be

in the care of God. Glyndon, horrified by what has happened, discovers the courage

to banish the Dweller, renounces his decadent life, and resumes painting. As with St.

Leon, we are left with a picture of life continuing in its "natural" path—once the amortal

has been painted out.

As I suggested in my introduction, Gerald Gruman would identify these novels

as part of an apologetic literary tradition that rejects the desirability of enhanced

prolongevity, a tradition he considers "paralyzing. . . conformist. . . and passivist" since

it obstructs progress in lengthening human life (10). What Gruman's analysis

overlooks—and what these brief plot sketches can hardly demonstrate—is the critical

adaptability of "apologetic" immortality in the hands of a skilled writer. More than a

convenient plot device, physical immortality serves as the foundation for Godwin's and

Bulwer's socio-political commentary. Both authors present physical immortality as a

flawed ideal—delusively tempting, but ultimately proving destructive—that can be

discursively linked to their quite divergent ideological concerns. Ironically juxtaposing

what (an ideal) immortality could and should be with the limited amortality of their

protagonists, the authors likewise depict the gap between their visions of society as it

could and should be and society as it is—or is in danger of becoming. In exposing the

gap between a theological or socio-political ideal and its actualization, both authors

critically engage the values and assumptions of their cultures.

Ironic Space: Opening the Critical Gap

It is insufficient to say that such a gap exists, however. Rather I want to

examine how such a gap is established and how it functions. To do so, I want to

briefly examine another author, who arguably serves as a model for Godwin and

Bulwer: Irish satirist Jonathan Swift. Critical irony is one of the hallmarks of satire,

and Swift's satirical treatment of immortality in Gulliver's Travels (1726) illuminates

Godwin's and Bulwer's subsequent treatments of the theme.[5] Swift's narrator

introduces his immortals, the Struldbruggs,[6] with typical extravagance.

> I cried out as in a rapture; Happy nation where every child hath at
> least a chance for being immortal! Happy people who enjoy so many
> living examples of ancient virtue, and have masters ready to instruct
> them in the wisdom of all former ages! But happiest beyond all
> comparison are those excellent Struldbruggs, who being born exempt
> from that universal calamity of human nature, have their minds free
> and disengaged, without the weight and depression of spirits caused
> by the continual apprehension of death. (Swift 252-53)

Such was the ever-credulous Lemuel Gulliver's response on first learning of the

Struldbruggs. Credulity is an important concept here, reflecting not only the limits of

Gulliver's judgment, but my own approach to immortality in this chapter. Swift treats

physical immortality not simply with skepticism, but with a sense of critical irony.

Irony relies on a sense of disparity between ideas, and here it is not merely bodily

immortality itself, but naïve conceptions and expectations of immortality, that offer

the ground for critique. It is in the gap between assumptions and aspirations about

immortality and its flawed realization that Swift locates his criticism. That ironic

conception of the flawed ideal informs my analysis of Godwin and Bulwer who, less

overtly satirical than Swift, nonetheless narratively examine material immortality with

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[5] While it is not my intention to claim <u>Gulliver's Travels</u> as a direct "source" for either novel, its cultural resonance as well as its familiarity to both authors indicates its availability as an intertext, and the questions it raises will be significant to this and subsequent chapters of my study. Godwin's admiration for Swift is overt. While Peter Marshall's claim that it was Godwin's "life's task to inspire Yahoo humanity to imitate Houyhnhnm excellence" may be somewhat hyperbolic (49-50), Godwin does cite Swift in several instances in <u>Political Justice</u>. The <u>British Critic</u> (1793) unflatteringly characterized <u>Political Justice</u> as a "perfectly chimerical" attempt to "systematize" Swift's irony (qtd in Marshall 120-21). Bulwer's response to Swift is less concrete. It is not until the preface to <u>A Strange Story</u> (1862) that Bulwer acknowledges the "mighty mockeries of 'Gulliver's Travels'" as one of his inspirations for "form and fancy" in the Romance (iv). There is at least backhanded evidence, however, of a connection between Swift and <u>Zanoni</u>: Swift appears as a character in <u>The Peer's Daughters</u> (1849), Rosina Bulwer's parody of <u>Zanoni</u>, suggesting Rosina's recognition of her husband's debt to the satirist (Roberts, "Revenge 166, 170n).

[6] The Struldbruggs cannot accurately be identified as amortals, as it involves no form of transgression. Their immortality is a natural, though unfortunate, state that occurs randomly without any intent or intervention.

a critical eye and suggest the need to replace credulous admiration with a more ironic view.

Even in his initial rapture, Gulliver highlights the social and political, as well as personal, aspects of his vision of immortality. It is a "happy nation," a "happy people" who can benefit from the handful of immortals who will be at once examples of, and instructors in, virtue and knowledge. Although couched in personal terms—what "I" would do with immortality—, Gulliver's elaboration of his vision expands upon these communal benefits. The ideal immortal would play a significant public role. An embodied historical record, the immortal would remember "every action and event of consequence that happened in the [re]public. . . . the several changes in customs, language, fashions of dress, diet and diversions," enabling him to act as the "oracle of the nation" (254). An exemplary educator with the experiential wisdom of ages behind him, he would "instruct hopeful young men . . . of the usefulness of virtue in public and private life" (254). A virtual magnet for wealth, as he has centuries to procure (horde?) riches, he could provide economic benefits to the deserving (254-55). A scientist undeterred by temporal limitations, he could witness and assist "great inventions brought to the utmost perfection" (255). Further, working together as an "immortal brotherhood," the Struldbruggs would stabilize the culture, prevent its decay, and provide for its improvement (255). Gulliver's vision of immortality is utopian. While immortality itself would be possessed by few, even mortals would enjoy a world improved by immortal-generated scientific, educational, economic, and moral advancements.

Where then is the ironic disparity? Even in this idealized picture, darker undercurrents may strike the reader. We may question what place women have among this "immortal brotherhood" and among the "hopeful young men" who are to

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be instructed. We may also find ourselves somewhat unnerved by Gulliver's casual dismissal of those mortals (including we readers) "whom length of time would harden [him] to lose with little or no reluctance . . . just as a man diverts himself with the annual succession of pinks and tulips in his garden, without regretting the loss of those which withered the preceding year" (255). Swift does not, however, leave us with mere hints of the serpent in the tulip garden.

Having shared his vision with his Luggnaggian hosts, Gulliver is brought up short by the vastly divergent "reality" of materialist immortality. Gulliver has mistakenly presumed "a perpetuity of youth, health, and vigour" as a corollary of immortality (256). The unpleasant fleshly reality is the perpetuation of old age with all its miseries: physical deterioration; loss of memory; emotional, physical, and even linguistic isolation; and loss of dignity, respect, and self-sufficiency (256-259). No historians. No teachers. No scientists. Certainly no "oracles" for the nation. Far from the public benefactors of Gulliver's ideal, they are "dead-in-law" public dependents who, unless carefully controlled and contained, threaten to ruin society (258, 260). From rapturously described "reverend sages" (253), Gulliver's immortals have fallen to "the most mortifying sight [he] ever beheld" (259). Apparently, the reality of material immortality is, if not death, at least sterility and stagnation. A flawed ideal indeed.

With some justification, Gruman identifies Swift's Struldbruggs as an apologetic elaboration of the Tithonus myth recounting the death-in-life horror of an imbecilic and physically desiccated eternal life (13), but such a reading lacks depth. Rather than a simple recapitulation of the Tithonus myth, Swift's account might better be understood as a satirical reenactment of the Fall, even if the lost Eden is a fantasy located only in Gulliver's mind, a utopia in the most literal sense. It is in the

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process of Falling that critical insights are made available. Just as a physical fall can

cause disorientation, a sense that the world, not merely oneself, is shifting, the ironic

shift in mental space facilitated by Swift's account demands that one regain one's

balance in a new position and thus with a new perspective. Swift's irony acts as

metaphorical gravity, exerting its force on the readers' psyches.

In a few short pages, Swift presents and demolishes an idealized vision of

physical immortality in its personal and social dimensions, exploiting the disparity

between the potential state and its actualization. This disjunctive gap between the

ideal and the real effectively serves as ironic space, as a critical locus for examining

the effects of aging, the treatment of the aged, the unceasing obsession with

avoiding death, and, of course, a variety of political concerns.[7] Physical immortality

then is loaded with social and political valences that map onto the body. Paula

Cooey notes that it is useful to consider the "body lived in relation to the body

imagined as a testing ground or crucible, indeed in some cases a battleground, for

mapping human values" (9). While Cooey is not referring to fictional constructions,

but to the distinction between the person as agent—"the body lived"—and the body

as socially constructed and culturally embedded artifact, her view of the body as a

site of contestation over meaning is relevant to writers on immortality. By focusing

critical attention on a "body imagined," one that is physically immortal, they implicitly

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[7] It is no great stretch to perceive in the ancient Struldbruggs who are legally and thus politically marginalized (literally "dead-in-law"), who "eat and drink whatever they can get, without relish or appetite" and who, having been alienated by centuries of linguistic drift, "lie under the disadvantage of living like foreigners in their own country"(258) the marginalized Irish whom Robert Phiddian describes as "dependent beings . . . [who] live on a thin and unreliable gruel of grace and favor. . . .native speakers of a language that treats them as second-class citizens" (58). Nor is it difficult to recognize the resonances between the short memories of the Struldbruggs that "will not serve to carry them from the beginning of a sentence to the end" (Swift 258) and the Laputan governmental Ministers whose "short and weak memories" render them ineffectual in recalling even the simplest matters of state, no matter how briefly and plainly stated (233). I will discuss the idea of "civil death" in more detail in chapter 3, exploring its applicability to married women under the law of coverture.

interrogate the experience(s) of the "body lived," writers and readers whose realities

may be revealed, informed or transformed by discourses of immortality.

Provocative as Swift's account of the Struldbruggs is, for Swift, material

immortality is simply a brief stop in his satirical course, one landmark among many.

Godwin and Bulwer, however, fully exploit this ironic space of immortality in their

writings, adding to it the added complication of transgression, so that the flaw

becomes the result not of accident, but of action. Resisting in diverse and complex

ways what each saw as dominant and potentially harmful trends in society, their

apologetic approaches to immortality are anything but paralyzing, conformist or

passive.

It is easy to identify the flaw in Swift's account of the Struldbruggs. It is

literally a failure of the flesh. Marie Roberts notes that Enlightenment gerontology

was closely linked to degeneration theory—the basic assumption that eventually the

human body simply wore out. Mortality was assured by the "finite capacities of the

human body" (Roberts, Gothic Immortals 29). By retaining the physical effects of

degeneration, but divorcing it from its ultimate result—death—Swift literally embodies

his critique: Struldbrugg bodies are incapable of enacting Gulliver's socio-political

vision. The disjunction is more opaque in Godwin and Bulwer, however, as both

authors correct the physical flaw of endless aging. St. Leon boasts, "Decrepitude

can never approach me. A thousand winters want the power to furrow my

countenance with wrinkles, or turn my hairs to silver" (2). Zanoni, having attained

immortality "while youth was in its bloom," finds that "to breathe is to enjoy. The

freshness has not faded from the face of Nature" (316). Both men possess the

additional boon of limitless wealth. Here then is Gulliver's dream made flesh:

boundless wealth and eternal youth. Surely, these are a recipe for happiness?

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Certainly, St. Leon assumes that his readers will believe so. They will expect that "the history of a person possessed of advantages so unparalleled as mine, must be, like the history of paradise, or of the future happiness of the blessed, too calm and motionless, too much of one invariable texture and exempt from vicissitude" to provide his story with much drama (2-3). Yet St. Leon notes that an attentive reader will soon "perceive how far his conjecture is founded in sagacity and reason" (3). In fact, such conjectures prove to be a result of Gulliverian credulity, rather than sagacity. Bodily immortality provides neither St. Leon nor Zanoni protection in the face of human ignorance and violence. It is not merely physical immortality's insufficiency in countering all earthly suffering that is the source of ironic space in the novels, however. As with the account of the Struldbruggs, it is the flawed nature of physical immortality itself that is the source of critical irony—the sort of insightful Falling space that I identified in Swift. How then do Godwin and Bulwer ironize immortality itself? It is here that my concept of amortality becomes useful.

From Immortality to Amortality—Godwin's *Political Justice* and *St. Leon*

I will open with Godwin, the most direct descendent of Swift. For Godwin, the conceptual shift from immortality to amortality is from a natural prolongation of life to an overtly transgressive mortality. It is an ontological redefinition of the body as blasphemous by placing it outside the lawful bounds of moral order. To grasp the ironic disparity in Godwin's treatment of immortality, St. Leon must be placed in conversation with his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, [8] where he outlines his ideal vision of immortality, one based in natural, quasi-evolutionary human

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[8] References to Political Justice refer to an electronic facsimile of the first edition of 1793 unless otherwise noted. For ease of reference, citations will include book and chapter as well as page number.

progress.[9] In Political Justice, Godwin cannot be identified as a prolongevity

apologist, but as a proponent, not unlike many of his Enlightenment compatriots. By

contrast, the apologetic St. Leon presents the destructive possibilities of amortality. It

is this distinction between natural and unnatural immortality that underlies Godwin's

critical project. One is progressive, the other transgressive; one evolutionary, the

other (disastrously) revolutionary; one hopeful, the other cautionary. One is an

expression of faith in reason to transform society, the other an interrogation of

misplaced faith in shortcuts to social progress. If the first is "in some degree . . . a

[prophetic] deviation into the land of conjecture" (PJ VIII:7:393), the other is a

historical romance "mix[ing] human feelings and passions with incredible situations"

(St. Leon xxxiii). Each offers an important window on the other.

First, Godwin's ideal immortality. Godwin opens his speculation on

immortality in Political Justice with "the sublime conjecture of Franklin, that 'mind will

one day become omnipotent over matter.'[10] If over all other matter, why not over the

matter of our own bodies? . . . In a word, why may not man one day be immortal?"

(VIII:7:393). Godwin explicitly rejects the necessity of degeneration, arguing that the

mind has the potential to sustain the body virtually indefinitely: "We are sick and we

die, generally speaking, because we consent to suffer these accidents" (PJ

VIII:7:400). It would be easy to dismiss such a claim as merely "a moment of utopian

dementia on Godwin's part" (Ni 26), but as Gruman's study reveals, prolongevity

theories have a long and distinguished pedigree that extends for Enlightenment

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[9] Book VIII "Of Property": Chapter 7 "Of the Objection to this System from the Principle of Population"

[10] In a footnote, Godwin acknowledges his authority for Benjamin Franklin's statement to come from conversation with Dr. Price, confirmed by Price's nephew William Morgan. The full quotation comes from a letter from Franklin to Joseph Priestley dated 1780.

progressives at least to the verge of immortality.[11] In fact, Marie Roberts argues

that, "curing" mortality can reasonably be recognized as the "ultimate threshold of

Enlightenment meliorism" ("Physic" 151). So popular did the idea become during the

eighteenth century that commercialized life-extension became a cornerstone of a

newly consumer-oriented popular medicine (154-55). Clearly Godwin, far from being

an isolated fantasist, participates in an extended tradition of prolongevity thought,

one that held a privileged position in Enlightenment philosophy as well as popular

culture.

   Godwin's "ethical prolongevitism"[12] is predicated on his concept of the

mind/body relationship. Like many Enlightenment thinkers, Godwin's understanding

of mind and body was largely shaped by Lockean, Humean, and Hartleian empirical

psychology (Kelly 7; Brewer 37).[13] He generally accepts materialist premises that

mind must be conceived in relation to the organic operation of the brain and that

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[11] Important prolongevitists range from hygienists such as Luigi Cornaro, whose <u>Art of Living Long</u> (1558) was "the most widely read book on temperance in the last thousand years" (Rousseau 50), and Christopher Hufeland to seventeenth and eighteenth century *philosophes* such as Rene Descartes, Francis Bacon, Benjamin Franklin, and Antoine de Condorcet. While Cornaro ultimately accepts the necessity of death due to the exhaustion of vital forces, he writes that "bodies governed by the orderly and temperate life" enjoy near invulnerability to disease or accident (50-53). Condorcet argues that one day death will only result from accident or the "decay of vital forces," mere disease having been eradicated. And even degeneration, the exhaustion of vital forces, may be postponed "indefinitely. . . . Ultimately, the average span between birth and decay will have no assignable value" (Condorcet 200).

[12] Gruman identifies several categories of natural prolongevitism, meaning simply prolongation strategies that do not rely on supernatural intervention, including medical prolongevitism (i.e. Descartes, Bacon and Condorcet), hygienic prolongevitism (Cornaro and his followers), social prolongevitism (later nineteenth century utopianists), proto-scientific prolongevitism (alchemical philosophers and others who blend magic and science), and ethical prolongevitism. I will accept Gruman's classification of Godwin (9) with the provision that Gruman's taxonomy is somewhat arbitrary, tending to ignore the overlap between categories, and that Godwin's ethical prolongevitism is informed by discourses from the other categories. In fact, Godwin's position as an ethical prolongevitist is best understood in relation to his problematic engagement with and calculated distance from medical and biological discourses.

[13] John Locke 1632-1704; David Hume 1711-1776; David Hartley 1705-1757.

mental operations depend on the experience of our senses (St. Clair 111). Godwin

admits the likelihood that "mind cannot subsist without the body" but adds an

important qualification: "at least we must be very different creatures from what we

are at present, when that shall take place" (Godwin, "Of Body and Mind" 8). The

qualification is significant, not only because it suggests Godwin's sympathy towards

an evolutionary perspective, but because Godwin persists, against pure materialism,

in granting a level of autonomy to acts of the mind (Porter, Flesh 426). There may

be a "sublimity" to the corporeal form with its marvelous simplicity, beauty and

functionality, but the body remains subordinate to the mind ("Of Body and Mind" 3).

Godwin seeks to gain control of the body via the power of the mind, by encouraging

intellectual development and self-reflection. Retaining a dualistic perspective from

his Calvinist upbringing despite his atheism,[14] Godwin insists on the superiority of

mind to body. For Godwin, life is a mere "state of vegetation" when the intellect is

passive and organic function is dominant. Real life, "life in a transcendent sense,"

only exists where the rational mind is fully attentive, alert, and in control of the

subject's thoughts and actions (Godwin, "Of Human Vegetation" 160-161). A

hybridization of empirical and Romantic thought, with Aristotelian overtones,[15] it is

this hierarchical conception of the interrelation of body and mind that distinguishes

Godwin's ideas about potential immortality.

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[14] Godwin's father was a Calvinist minister, and Godwin was educated by a Sandemanian
tutor. He trained for the ministry and served until conflicts with others in the ministry led him
to abandon the calling. Under the influence of Joseph Priestley, he turned for a time to
Socianism, but eventually became an avowed atheist. Later in his life, he accepted a sort of
general theism, largely at the urging of Samuel Coleridge.

[15] Godwin's distinction between vegetative and transcendent life, associated with separate
mental states, is reminiscent of Aristotle's tripartite division of the soul into the natural or
vegetative, sensitive or animal, and the intelligent or rational. Declining to acknowledge the
soul, Godwin's emphasis on the mind suggests a secularization of the soul in his discourse.

In <u>Political Justice</u>, Godwin explains that mind already "modifies body involuntarily" through the effects of emotional states on the organism, giving several examples of psychosomatic phenomena (VIII:7:394). Combining this knowledge with his doctrine of perfectibility—the idea not of human perfection but of the potential for perpetual improvement—, Godwin extrapolates progressive psychosomatic advancement:

> If mind be now in a great degree the ruler of the system, why should it be incapable of extending its empire? If our involuntary thoughts can derange or restore the animal economy, why should we not in the process of time, in this as in other instances, subject the thoughts which are at present involuntary to the government of design? If volition now can do something, why should it not go on to do still more and more? . . . Mind, in a progressive view at least, is infinite. (<u>PJ</u> VIII:7:396)

Gaining such voluntary control is the core of both Godwin's vision of immortality and his ethical program as "the principle of immortality in man [is] chearfulness, clearness of conception and benevolence" (VIII:7:397). This statement of principle gradually shifts the locus of immortality from an essentially personal to a directly social position. Cheerfulness is the emotional state that "gives new life to our frame and circulation to our juices" (VIII:7:395). Although cheerfulness impacts our social relations, Godwin primarily emphasizes its effects on the body. It is the emotional state/habit to be cultivated to ensure the greatest physical well-being. Cheerfulness also supports clear conception, the intellectual aspect of the plan: close attention to one's physical and mental state allows one to gain increasing control of one's thoughts and body, while cheerfulness prevents this attention from sinking into morbid self-absorption. Godwin does not advocate the close attention of the hypochondriac, ever fearful of symptoms, but the attention of self-discipline, vigilant to regulate and maintain desirable mental and physical processes.

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With benevolence, Godwin directly centers immortality in social relationships: those who are apathetic to the general welfare will inevitably lose the cheerfulness that is essential to physical vigor. Benevolence is a slippery term, easily lending itself to a sort of paternalistic superiority, but Godwin understands benevolence as a broadly encompassing virtue, involving one's entire orientation to society and demanding the willingness to dedicate oneself to the public welfare. Godwin emphasizes the political valence of this virtue by locating his discussion of immortality as part of his argument for a more just distribution of property. For him, only social interests are sufficiently encompassing and meaningful to motivate biological progress. The condition for immortality as Godwin conceives it is not medical or technological advancement, but social and moral progress.

What will Godwin's ideal world look like? Notably, it privileges maturity. In this future utopia, people, having gained controlled of their senses and learned to properly (de)value sensual gratification, "will cease to propagate. . . .The whole will be a people of men, and not of children. Generation will not succeed generation, nor truth have in a certain degree to recommence her career at the end of every thirty years" (PJ VIII:7:402). Godwin is vague, but it seems likely that most individuals will be physically middle-aged, mature enough to have mastered their passions and bodies, yet young enough to retain physical vigor and avoid the "usual disadvantages old age brings" (Swift 256). Roy Porter's claim that Godwin gives Swift's Struldbruggs "a wholly optimistic spin. . . [by imagining] a future geriatric paradise" is not far off target (Flesh 427). Godwin's "geriatrics" will embody their history, their accumulated experience, just as Gulliver dreamed. However, they will not be "oracles" for the people because they are the people. Godwin's ideal

immortality is universal rather than localized in a privileged few. It is egalitarian

rather than paternalistic.[16]

Further, immortality in such a world is desirable because it will be a world with

"no war, no crimes, no administration of justice as it is called, and no government"

(PJ VIII:7:402). For the anarchist Godwin, who defines government as "a scheme for

enforcing by brute violence the sense of one man or set of men upon another," such

a future is a paradise (PJ IV:1:176). Godwin predicts that some of these social

advances are on the horizon and at least some of his contemporaries "may live to

see them in part accomplished" (PJ VIII:7:402). The attainment of immortality is

further away, as we are far from mature enough at this point to refuse our consent to

sickness and death (PJ VIII:7:400).

The status of immortality in Political Justice is clearly complex. On the one

hand, it is predicated on social progress: one cannot expect to attain control over

one's own body until society as a whole has advanced beyond its current state. (Will

there be some critical moment, a sort of evolutionary breakthrough when the species

potential becomes realizable, although still dependent on individual self-discipline?

Godwin's speculation provides no clue.) On the other hand, once attained

immortality will facilitate continued progress by eliminating the need for each

generation to play catch up—admittedly by eliminating the next generation. While

many might be appalled at the idea of a childless future, for Godwin, it is seemingly a

condition of our continued perfectibility. Does he undervalue the infusion of young

minds to revitalize the community and stir up new ideas? Does he underestimate the

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[16] Notably Godwin's perpetual opponent, economist Thomas Malthus, charges that Godwin's vision of immortality is unjust because, unlike Christian faith, it would eliminate all those who had the misfortune to be born before the onset of his immortalism. This was unlikely to be a convincing argument to Godwin, whose experience of Sandemanianism with its painfully exclusive doctrine of election was unlikely to persuade him of the egalitarian tendencies of Christian salvation.

entrenchment of ideas sanctified by time and experience and the recalcitrance of minds, however progressive in theory, to change? Perhaps he is naïve, or perhaps, it is our (my) own resistance to accepting such a radical social transformation that insists that a childless future is a barren future. However one judges his ideal, for Godwin, immortality is not an end in itself. It is at once the byproduct and precondition of moral and ethical development that transforms not only the individual but society. For all its dependence on individual minds and bodies, Godwin's concept of natural immortality is essentially social.

Critical, for Godwin, is the gradualist aspect of such development. A political radical, Godwin nonetheless advocates gradualism in all aspects of life—political, educational, and personal. He warns students in all fields to "be earnest in your application, but let your march be vigilant and slow" ("Of the Duration of Human Life" 136). In Political Justice, he identifies two enemies of humanity: those "friends of antiquity" who would cling to the past regardless of the demands of justice, humanity and reason and "friends of innovation, who, impatient of suspense, are inclined violently to interrupt the calm, the incessant, the rapid and auspicious progress which thought and reflection appear to be making in the world" (PJ, third edition IV:1:256). Even in 1793, when he is still an advocate of the French Revolution, he does not recommend abrupt transformation that does not allow time for thought and reflection. In the progress toward immortality too, gradualism is essential. For Godwin, the result of replacing a gradualist system of immortality predicated on the rational evolution of the human species with an abrupt, transgressive amortality is the disintegration of communal ties and social order. While Political Justice depicts the gradualist system, it is the latter that takes center stage in St. Leon, as Godwin conflates amortality with revolutionary scientific and political change.

I noted above that Godwin opens his discussion of immortality in <u>Political Justice</u> with a paraphrase of Benjamin Franklin, but I want to revisit that passage at greater length to ground my analysis of <u>St. Leon</u>. Franklin writes

> The rapid progress true science now makes, occasions my regretting sometimes that I was born so soon. It is impossible to imagine the height to which may be carried, in a thousand years, the power of man over matter. We may perhaps learn to deprive large masses of their gravity and give them absolute levity, for the sake of easy transport. . . ; all diseases may by sure means be prevented or cured, not excepting even that of old age, and our lives lengthened at pleasure even beyond the antediluvian standard. (174-175)

Here medical and technological progress are directly linked with prolongevity. Triumphs over gravity, distance, disease, age and death are equally the result of scientific advances—human knowledge acting upon the external environment of which the body is merely one element. Condorcet too links medicine to broader scientific progress,[17] and this connection has direct political implications. Condorcet claims that advances in science will improve thinking and inevitably improve morals as "all errors in politics and morals are based on philosophical errors and these in turn are connected with scientific errors" (Condorcet 163). He is confident that "the progress of reason will. . . [keep] pace with that of the sciences" (189). Such unrestrained faith in scientific progress was a "fundamental myth" of the Enlightenment (Montag 391), and statements like those by Franklin and Condorcet merely express a widely shared confidence in scientific progress as the foundation for moral and social progress.

Godwin, however, is less convinced of the synchronous development of science and morals—particularly where science is given the leading role. While

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[17] In his April 1792 report to the French Legislative Assembly, Condorcet classed medicine and surgery as part of the "Application of Sciences to the Arts" along with agriculture, construction arts, hydraulics, navigation, machines and instruments, and mechanical and chemical arts (Vess 62).

hardly an enemy of science,[18] he sees its scope as more confined than Condorcet or Franklin: scientific advances may accompany intellectual and moral evolution; they cannot produce it. To treat scientific advancement as a shortcut to moral development is to risk social disruption and cultural devastation. In the third edition of Political Justice, Godwin specifically distinguishes his system of immortality from the prolongevity theories of Bacon, Franklin, and Condorcet who "have inclined to rest their hopes, rather upon the growing power of art [science], than, as is here done, upon the immediate and unavoidable operation of an improved intellect" (VIII:9:520n1). If in Political Justice Godwin is content to offer a counter-vision to the Enlightenment faith in scientific progress, in St. Leon, he imaginatively traces out the potentially devastating impact of such faith.

The novel opens with a statement of apparent optimism that could rival those of Franklin or Condorcet. Indeed there is a distinct echo of Franklin's voice.

> There is nothing that human imagination can figure brilliant and enviable, that human genius and skill do not aspire to realize. . . . In my own times. . . the subject which has chiefly occupied men of intrepid and persevering study, has been the great secret of nature, the opus magnum, in its two grand and inseparable branches, the art of multiplying gold, and of defying the inroads of infirmity and death. . . . It is not my purpose to ascertain the number of those whose victory over the powers and inertness of matter has been complete. It is enough that I am a living instance of the existence of such men. (1)

Where Franklin could only regret having been born too early to witness the triumph of science over nature, the immortal St. Leon is not only the witness to, but the product of, that triumph. Yet as we have already seen, this triumphant refrain is not the novel's final word. Like the Struldbruggs, St. Leon's status moves from the blessed to the mortified, his body and his personal progress bearing the weight of

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[18] Godwin was an admirer of Franklin, Locke, Hume, Hartley, Joseph Priestley, and Erasmus Darwin among others and himself once applied (though unsuccessfully) for a position in the Natural History Department of the British Museum (Tysdahl 29).

Godwin's social and political critique. Again, it will be gradualism versus abrupt

transformation that serves as the fulcrum for his argument. It is St. Leon the

alchemist who demonstrates the "folly in trying to short-cut the evolutionary path

towards immortality by using the elixir of life" (Roberts, Gothic Immortals 34), St.

Leon the amortal who embodies the "folly of precipitate attempts at human

improvement" (Kelly 211). Linking his political concern with revolution to his critique

of science, Godwin establishes a metaphorical equivalence between alchemy,

medical science, and political revolution that yields not immortality and progress but

amortality and social disorder. [19]

     Narratively, how is this "equation" constructed? The answer lies in Godwin's

use of a narrative pattern I will identify as scientific conversion.[20] Godwin is well

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[19] Prevalent discursive ties between the French Revolution and alchemy offered Godwin fertile imaginative resources. For instance, in his widely read anti-revolutionary tirade, Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), Edmund Burke compares the Revolution to necromancy, writing that "we look with horror on those children of their country, who are prompt rashly to hack that aged parent in pieces, and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes that by their poisonous weeds, and wild incantations, they may regenerate the paternal constitution, and renovate their father's life" (143). Such polemical rhetoric readily links the alchemist St. Leon with "the revolutionary extremist in conservative propaganda" (Clemit 91). Anti-Jacobin propagandists quickly placed the blame for the Revolution on Enlightenment thought disseminated via secret societies such as the Rosicrucians and Illuminati (Kelly 213). Two early conservative theories of the Revolution, Abbe Barruel's Memoirs, Illustrating the History of the Jacobinism (1797-98) and John Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy (1797), both make such assumptions explicit (Clemit 91-2). However, what is a simple propagandist move for the anti-Jacobins demands a complicated (and not always entirely successful) balancing act for Godwin, who has definite sympathies with the Jacobin cause. He must demonstrate at once the dangers of revolution while maintaining republican values.

     For an insightful analysis of the discursive relationship between scientific advancement and political revolution, see Margaret Jacob. For discussion of the link between the medical profession and the French Revolution, see David Vess and Ludmilla Jordanova.

[20] The idea of scientific conversion is not without precedent. Richard Brown argues that conversion is a familiar trope in early texts of natural history. In fact, Brown suggests that it is only once new scientific perspectives become "sedimented in discourse" that personal narrative is sublimated in favor of abstract, non-narrative prose (91). So long as they remain controversial, as they do for Godwin, scientific perspectives require the rhetorical support of personal testimony and narrative embellishment. Conversely, spiritual autobiographers may employ the vocabulary of medical science metaphorically to describe their own autobiographical acts. In his Christian Soldier (1669), Thomas Watson writes, "'Self-searching is an heart-anatomy. As a chirurgeon, when he makes a dissection in the body,

known for his creative appropriation of generic conventions to suit new ideas.[21]

What has been overlooked is Godwin's combination of two disparate genres—the

religious conversion narrative and the natural history—to create a hybrid literary form

that is uniquely suited to his social critique and to the motif of amortality.[22] It is the

interpolation of scientific discourse into a recognizable pattern of spiritual

autobiography—the conversion narrative form(s) familiar from St. Augustine's

Confessions, John Bunyan's Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, and a myriad

of Methodist narratives in circulation throughout the eighteenth century—that

facilitates Godwin's social criticism.

In his novel, Godwin uses biblically allusive language and many of the

narrative conventions of Christian spiritual autobiography in what is nonetheless a

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discovers the *intestina*, the inward parts, the heart, liver, arteries: so a Christian anatomizeth himself; he searcheth what is flesh, and what is spirit; what is sin, and what is grace'" (qtd in Starr 6). Such language is echoed in Godwin's account of his composition of Caleb Williams where he refers to the fictional "analysis of the private and internal operations of the mind" as "employing my metaphysical dissecting knife" ("Account" 351).

[21] Tysdahl argues that his "striking experiments in narrative form" routinely imitate and subvert concrete literary models ranging from autobiographical "confessions" to sentimental and gothic novels (1-2). Maertz describes St. Leon as arguably Godwin's "most innovative novel," a virtual pastiche of narrative forms (268). Ellen Levy and William Brewer both discuss Godwin's employment of confessional narrative, focusing on confession as an aspect of narrative voice—a first-person narrator revealing his inner thoughts as he recounts his experiences.

[22] Robert Merrett argues that, by the eighteenth century, scientific and literary language were virtually inextricable, that novelists of the period routinely "defined their fictional techniques in the face of this rival form [the natural history]," and that novelists "both appropriate and resist natural history" to fulfill their rhetorical purposes (145-146, 158). When St. Leon early in the novel explicitly denies that he is writing a "treatise of natural history" (2), Godwin engages in just such an act of appropriation and resistance. The denial itself calls natural history into play as a potential interpretive category, drawing attention to the scientific motif, even as St. Leon refuses to divulge the details of his scientific pursuits. A similar strategy of foregrounding the scientific by drawing attention to its absence recurs throughout the novel. Further, Jill Bradbury claims that the "unsettled relations between the fields of knowledge and their textual forms" brought about by scientific advances necessitate the reconfiguration of traditional generic categories to accommodate new textual forms (30). Godwin exploits this generic indeterminacy to support his critical endeavor. In interweaving religious narrative with scientific discourse, he actively participates in a literary tradition that both "appropriates and resists" the demands of science and that interrogates the relationship between knowledge and its forms. And, perhaps most urgently for Godwin, knowledge's relations to politics, ethics and moral judgment.

predominantly secular appropriation of immortality: the story of the protagonist's (ultimately futile) conversion to the tenets of science via alchemy. St. Leon, the story of a man who learns the alchemical secret of the elixir of life and becomes amortal, is also the story of science's failure as a salvific force and of the risks of placing one's faith in any abrupt (revolutionary) solution to social problems rather than "the true instruments for changing the opinions of men. . . argument and persuasion . . . . sober thought, clear discernment, and intrepid discussion" (PJ IV:2:185-86). Precisely because immortality has traditionally been the province of religion in Judeo-Christian culture, it is ideally suited to bear the weight of Godwin's challenge to misplaced faith. Whether immortality is divorced from the body, focusing solely on immortality of the soul, or embodied via resurrection at the Second Coming, Christian conceptions of immortality are inherently expressions of faith. Immortality is a corollary of salvation (or, less happily, of damnation). In St. Leon, Godwin uses immortality as a religious symbol, even as he secularizes its attainment: it is intended to save, even as it effectively damns, its possessor.

It is this appropriation of the sacred to the secular that allows his scientific conversion narrative to operate and that facilitates the ironic shift from immortality to amortality. This ironic space operates on two levels. On one level, the disjunction between the traditional treatment of immortality as a spiritual state, literally a divine gift, in Christian spiritual autobiography and Godwin's secularization of immortality as a product of science opens the sort of epistemological gap that is necessary to his critical stance. It is not simply that he presents a secularized version of immortality; rather it is the juxtaposition of the two versions implied by his narrative structure that sets the stage for his social critique. On another level, there is a disjunction between Godwin's own two secularized versions of immortality—the evolutionary form

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idealized in <u>Political Justice</u> and the revolutionary form depicted in the novel. Implicitly, both play upon and against the Christian version, allowing Godwin to engage Christian rhetorical conventions in his favor without truly endorsing them—an act his atheism will not allow.

For Godwin, raised a Calvinist and serving as a minister before his turn to atheism, spiritual autobiographies would have been familiar fare. What is known of Godwin's early reading confirms that it is typical of a fairly poor nonconformist upbringing—that is primarily the Bible and "religious stories in the Bunyan tradition" (Tysdahl 14). The "Bunyan tradition" would clearly include moral allegories such as <u>The Pilgrim's Progress</u> and conversion narratives in the mode of <u>Grace Abounding</u>. Structurally and conceptually, the novel functions as just such a conversion narrative, as St. Leon encounters a stranger who offers him the gift of (bodily) eternal life via the *elixir vitae*. St. Leon's acceptance of this gift is his moment of conversion and transformation, as he is literally made a new man. Following the conventions of conversion narrative, the novel then follows a rising and falling pattern, as St. Leon repeatedly recognizes the value of the gift he has received, only to "backslide" into doubt and despair. From each new low, he recovers, not by recognizing God's grace or the workings of Providence, but by reevaluating the variables and parameters of his experiment. Unfortunately, each experiment—and St. Leon's conversion— ultimately fails, destroying many lives in the process.

In his classic study of spiritual autobiography, G. A. Starr notes that all events in a conversion narrative are "seen as happening before, during, or after conversion" (40). Spiritual autobiography is essentially teleological. There are no random events, no coincidences. Each event recounted "not only precedes or follows conversion in point of time, but takes on significance wholly as a preparation or

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obstacle to it beforehand, or as a result or retrogression from it once achieved" (40).

Such is the pattern of events in <u>St. Leon</u>. St. Leon's childhood experiences and early

married life lead him, seemingly inexorably, to the encounter with the stranger who

offers him the elixir of life, while the events that follow this encounter illustrate the

devastating results of his conversion. Rather than a page by page demonstration of

the conversion narrative structure, I want to focus my discussion on St. Leon's

conversion experience itself, on his wife's response, and on his failed attempts at

"benevolence" following his attainment of amortality.

The stage for St. Leon's conversion is set by a series of financial misfortunes,

intermingled with episodes of madness. First, St. Leon gambles away his (wife's)

family fortune. St. Leon had only been saved from financial disaster once before by

the (providential?) intervention of a kindly mentor who offered St. Leon the hand of

his daughter, Marguerite, on the condition that he reform (37). Following several

years of blissful marriage, however, St. Leon succumbs once again to his fatal

weakness. As he gambles his way to ruin, St. Leon experiences his "night of the

soul! My mind was wrapped in a gloom that could not be pierced! My heart was

oppressed with a weight that no power human or divine was equal to remove!" (56).

St. Leon's anguish and consequent sense of alienation is described in conventional

religious language, but it has a very physical effect: a "paroxysm of insanity" (59).

He is seized by a "period of inactivity and stupor. . . succeeded by a period of frenzy"

(73). Brewer, who claims that Godwin's detailed representations of madness

"typically read like case studies," identifies these as two recognized forms of

madness: catatonic and hyperkinetic (151, 139). Such "clinical" details are primarily

important to Godwin as they add force to the symbolic import of St. Leon's madness.

St. Leon wonders

> Where is the cold and inapprehensive spirit that talks of madness as a refuge from sorrow? . . . Oh, how many sleepless days and weeks did I endure! The thoughts frantic, the tongue raving! While we can still adhere, if I may so express myself, to the method of misery, there is a sort of nameless complacency that lurks under all that we can endure. We are still conscious that we are men; we wonder at and admire our powers of being miserable; but, when the masts and tackle of the intellectual vessel are all swept away, then is the true sadness. We have no consciousness to sustain us, no sentiment of dignity, no secret admiration of what we are, still clinging to our hearts. (70)

For Godwin, whose ideal of rationality grounds his entire political philosophy, madness is a horror that undermines the very essence of being human (Brewer 130). It essentially leaves a body without mind, worse than a mere "state of vegetation" in its violent overthrow of reason. Later, we find that amortality too proves to undermine humanness, creating a suggestive resonance between lunacy and amortality throughout the text. While St. Leon is suffering his fits of madness, the practical Marguerite provides for the payment of their debts and arranges for the family to go into exile in Switzerland, where they live as peasants. Although with careful nursing by Marguerite St. Leon recovers his wits, his previous madness obliquely calls his judgment into question when Zampieri arrives with his offer.

While Marguerite (whose character is based upon an idealized portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft) accepts their reduced circumstances philosophically, voicing a distinctively republican conviction that their previous luxury had "its basis in oppression; and that the superfluities of the rich are a boon extorted from the hunger and misery of the poor!" (85), St. Leon resents their change in fortune. He recounts how he "murmured in bitterness of soul" and wandered the countryside "with a gloomy and rebellious spirit" (87). For some time, St. Leon's self-pity aside, the family's situation is not dire. If their house is modest, it provides adequate shelter, and if their food is plain, it is healthy and in adequate supply. Suddenly, however,

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that changes with the arrival of a violent storm that ravages the countryside. The

worst storm on record, its combination of hail, torrential rains and strong winds

transforms the land—with crops nearly ready for harvest—to a scene of devastation

in a matter of minutes (88-89). In a passage suggestive of the chastening hand of

Providence, St. Leon notes that their property appeared to have "been particularly a

mark for the vengeance of Heaven," having suffered greater destruction than any of

the surrounding fields (90). While initially suffused with gratitude that they had

survived the onslaught, the family soon discovers that their survival may yet be at

risk, for suddenly, they face the danger of starvation.

Having lost their only food source and, as foreigners, being refused

assistance from the public storehouses and treasury (95-96), the St. Leons are

driven once again into exile. Cheated even of the meager profits from the sale of

their cottage by a cunning neighbor, they are left destitute, and plagued by illness

and despair, St. Leon watches his family suffer. As he recovers from a debilitating

fever that cost them even the small income he had been able to procure, St. Leon

reaches the "climax of physical and mental agony" that Starr identifies as the

immediate precursor to conversion (Starr 44):

> This scene [of his family going hungry at dinner] made an impression on
> my mind never to be forgotten. It blasted and corrupted all the pulses of
> my soul. . . .No change of circumstances, no inundation of wealth, has
> had the power to obliterate from my recollection what I then saw. A
> family perishing with hunger . . . no prospect but of still accumulating
> distress; a death, the slowest, yet the most certain and the most
> agonising, that can befall us. . . .From this moment, the whole set of my
> feelings was changed. Avarice descended, and took possession of my
> soul. Haunted, as I perpetually was, by images of the plague of famine,
> nothing appeared to me so valuable as wealth. (St. Leon 118-119)

Gary Handwerk identifies this as the pivotal point of the novel, a "trauma" that will

impede St. Leon's ability to move forward psychologically, socially, or politically,

trapping him in a pattern of repetition as he makes the same mistakes time and

again (72-73). While I regard St. Leon's conversion as the actual pivotal moment in the novel, Handwerk's analysis illuminates a significant aspect of my argument regarding the novel's conversion motif.

As Starr explains, conversion does not bring "immunity" to further trials, either physical or spiritual; however, it provides "a new orientation from which to face them, and a new strength with which to overcome them" (46). St. Leon remains psychologically and spiritually immobilized by his trauma, precisely because his conversion is flawed. It offers rejuvenation of the body without regeneration of the soul—or in Godwin's terms without improvement of the intellect. His amortality ironically replicates this psychological and spiritual immobility, the *elixir vitae* granting a sort of biological stasis that parallels the "moral and social stasis" caused by his trauma (Roberts, Gothic Immortals 43)

Having traced the events that psychologically, if not spiritually, prepare St. Leon for conversion, it is time to place him on his personal road to Damascus. Following a convenient reversal of fortune in which St. Leon "obtained redress" from his cheating neighbor, the St. Leon family returns to rural life and relative comfort, and a single sentence assures readers that this move is followed by six years of "peace and tranquillity" (124). Despite the years that follow St. Leon's "climax" of agony, this abbreviated description maintains the narrative connection between his "dark night of the soul" and his upcoming conversion, for it is in the very next paragraph that Zampieri arrives.

Here I must digress slightly to reiterate that it is in fact a scientific conversion that St. Leon undergoes. Although the rhetorical marginalization of alchemy as pseudo-science was dominant by the time Godwin was writing, there was still a long tradition of treating alchemy as a serious avenue of scientific exploration. At least

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until the early eighteenth century, alchemy continued to attract significant members of the scientific and medical communities and to contribute to intellectual and scientific developments (Principe 202). St. Leon, set in the sixteenth century, could readily exploit this conceptualization of alchemy as valid science, rather than the other standard literary tropes, alchemy as fraud or (often black) magic. This is a crucial distinction within the novel and one where I diverge from scholars such as Roberts and Tysdahl who emphasize the novel's supernaturalism, as I argue that Godwin deliberately sublimates supernatural and occult elements in the text in favor of empirical science.

Instead of portraying a fraud or sorcerer, Godwin characterizes his alchemist, St. Leon, as a scientist, naturalizing alchemy as science within the narrative. St. Leon, uncritically accepting the promises of alchemy—science—to "save" him by solving all his problems, becomes a true believer in progress via science. Post-conversion, scientific discourse colors his self-expression, indeed his entire mode of viewing the world. His practice of the gifts of alchemy—not only his laboratory activities, but his daily interactions with the world—are repeatedly presented as "experiments" that must be carefully examined and evaluated. Every failure offers an opportunity to reexamine his variables and refine his methods. In fact, his entire life as an amortal becomes an experiment, a trial and error effort to remake the world to suit his desires.

Likewise, Zampieri is not presented as a Mephistophelian fiend, tempting St. Leon with diabolical powers at the cost of his soul.[23] Their interaction involves no overt blasphemy, no call to deny God; rather they discuss "various sciences and

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[23] This is Tysdahl's perception of Zampieri, and though I disagree with this reading, I do admit that an intertextual awareness of the Faustian tradition may intensify the tension over St. Leon's decision to accept Zampieri's offer.

branches of learning" (141).   Despite physical debilitation, Zampieri possesses "a

vigorous and masculine genius" (141) and explains alchemical processes using a

"methodical and orderly discourse" (157). In presenting Zampieri as a foil for St.

Leon—a fellow scientist with a parallel history of persecution—, Godwin suggests

that St. Leon's unhappy fate is no fluke. It is not simply St. Leon's character that

prevents his immortality from yielding the beneficial results he expects; rather

immortality as a product of science is itself flawed. Replicability being one of the key

tenets of scientific proof, Zampieri as scientist and fellow sufferer reinforces

Godwin's critique of science: for both men, scientific faith has proven unreliable.

To return then to Zampieri's arrival. Described as "feeble, emaciated, and

pale, his forehead full of wrinkles, and his hair and beard as white as snow" (124),

Zampieri's initial appearance is not prepossessing. In light of St. Leon's early

assurances that the elixir makes him invulnerable to disease and time, what is the

reader to make of this stranger who "support[s] his tottering steps with a staff,"

speaks indistinctly "having lost his foreteeth" (124) and desires nothing so much as

death (128)? If such infirmities cannot be attributed simply to the ravages of time,

what is the reader to conclude? Presumably that immunity to time does not

guarantee immunity to suffering and that the torment of years can ravage the body,

even if the years themselves cannot. Exempt from the power of nature, the amortal

body is not exempt from the power of a brutal and unevolved humankind; rather it

becomes a living map of the human capacity for violence. In Zampieri's catalog of

abuses—imprisonment, calumny, torture, pursuit and perpetual exile, all leaving their

stigmata on his broken body (and premonitory of the experiences that will plague St.

Leon)—Godwin offers a vivid reminder that physical/material progress made in the

absence of the appropriate intellectual and moral progress is of little avail.

Despite Zampieri's unprepossessing appearance and obvious frailty, his amortality apparently does lend him a degree of vigor, even it if is rapidly failing. His indistinct speech is countered, at least when his passions are aroused, by an amazing vocal power and his eyes are penetrating.   When he denounces St. Leon's cowardice, Zampieri speaks with "the voice of thunder."

> Rolling in a rich and sublime swell, it arrested and stilled, while it withered all the nerves of the soul. His eye-beam sat upon your countenance, and seemed to look through you. You wished to escape from its penetrating power, but you had not the strength to move. (136)

In Godwin's catalog of the sublime human form in "Of Body and Mind," he pays special attention to both the voice and the eye, the voice in particular demanding a sort of veneration. Even as a physical emanation distinct from the content of any message, the voice can cause mingled somatic and emotional/intellectual effects: "What terror may it inspire! How may it electrify the soul, and suspend all its functions! How infinite is its melody! How instantly it subdues the hearer to pity or to love!" (5). Zampieri's voice may not inspire pity or love, but it certainly subdues St. Leon's judgment. In St. Leon, these physiological effects have distinct theological overtones. The thunder-voiced Zampieri sounds within the text like an omnipotent and omniscient god—or at least like a preacher, shouting from the pulpit, as his eyes penetrate the sinner with a gaze that paralyzes the body even as it exposes the soul.[24]

The role of voice and speech—communication—is central to St. Leon's conversion experience. When Zampieri at last explains his alchemical process, St. Leon's "soul [is] roused to the utmost stretch of attention and astonishment" (160).

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[24] Godwin's uncle was converted to Methodism by George Whitefield. It seems plausible, though certainly speculative, that knowledge of Whitefield whose voice, according to Benjamin Franklin, was "like an organ" could have influenced Godwin's description in this section.

St. Leon, the autobiographer, writes, "From the moment of my last interview with the stranger I was another creature" (161). This oral/aural event is his moment of conversion, the moment that irrevocably changes his nature, but it is not reached without difficulty. Two impediments to communication arise: one physiological, the other interpersonal. Before Zampieri can share his alchemical secret, his thunderous voice is silenced by a "paralytic stroke" that leaves him incapable of more than inarticulate murmurs (159). Only after a slow, and partial, convalescence is he able to reveal his method to St. Leon. Here Godwin literalizes on the physiological level what is a much deeper ethical concern: the value of communication in the community, for it is silence that Zampieri demands of St. Leon.

Zampieri's scientific "gospel" is not to be "preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" like that of Christ (Matthew 24:14 KJV). Rather Zampieri's condition for sharing his "gift" with St. Leon is total secrecy, even from his wife and children. Initially, St. Leon refuses, unwilling to betray his family's mutual confidence (126). For Godwin, perpetually resistant to the demands of authority to control people or information, open communication is a vital underpinning of social progress, the very lifeblood of social relations, domestic or public. St. Leon himself describes the harm done to interpersonal relations when "reserve" enters into a friendship: "Our hearts, which grew together, suffer amputation; the arteries are closed; the blood is no longer mutually transfused and confounded" (154). The anatomical vocabulary of amputation and circulation reinforces just how integral open communication is to our very existence.

But the value of open communication is never without its detractors. As Roy Porter argues, "The rival priorities of secrecy and revelation, exclusiveness and openness, the dangers of multiplication of error, fears that knowledge would fall into

the wrong hands, the paradox of knowledge as private property and common patrimony" have always been important concerns of power and authority ("Introduction" 4). When St. Leon, at Zampiere's urging, convinces himself that his scruples demonstrate only "baseness, effeminacy, want of spirit and adventure" and determines to accept the stranger's condition, suspending familial openness for the promise of wealth and power, he has failed not only on the personal, but the political level (137). Far from demonstrating courage and spirit by his willingness to accept Zampieri's demand of secrecy, St. Leon is undermining the very source of courage and social progress:

> It is with difficulty that we obtain the courage of striking into untrodden paths, and questioning tenets that have been generally received. But conversation accustoms us to hear a variety of sentiments, obliges us to exercise patience and attention, and gives freedom and elasticity to our mental disquisitions. . . . promoting the best interests of mankind eminently depends upon the freedom of social communication. (PJ IV:2)

In sacrificing communication with his family, St. Leon is effectively damning himself and destroying any real opportunity for improvement.

Self-blinded to this truth, the newly converted St. Leon is euphoric. "Happy, happy, happy man!" he exclaims in an echo of Gulliver's response to the Struldbruggs (162). He extols the virtues of wealth, with its "unbounded and inconceivable" power in terms that are overtly blasphemous, placing himself on equal terms with deity: the man of limitless wealth "possesses the attribute which we are accustomed to ascribe to the Creator of the universe" and "holds the fate of nations and of the world in his hand" (162). He then lists the powers over the individual, over society, and over nature that belong to such a man. Wealth allows philanthropy and the patronage of genius. It even pays to "remove forests, and level mountains, drain marshes, extend canals, turn the course of rivers, and shut up the sea with doors"

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(162). St. Leon's list reminds his readers of the promised mastery of nature by science. As Thomas Vargish writes of another literary character,[25] St. Leon "believes himself to be 'the God of the machine,' the god of his world, one that can comprehend and control its workings, immune to the vicissitudes common to the lesser beings who remain subject to the comparatively haphazard arrangements of the natural dispensation" (52). He has, in effect, become his own Providence.

While the powers identified by St. Leon are temporal, St. Leon assumes a moral component to the acquisition of limitless wealth: its owner must inevitably be benevolent, since "he has as few temptations to obliquity as omnipotence itself. Weakness and want are the parents of vice. But he possesses every thing; he cannot better his situation; no man can come into rivalship or competition with him" (163). Benevolence is, of course, an important component of Godwin's philosophy, the very heart of the "principle of immortality" in Political Justice, but Godwin's argument here is multivalent and complex. Godwin does believe that want plays a crucial negative role in vice. He blames social evils and inequality, rather than innate depravity, for crime and "sin." On the other hand, the development of benevolence as a life-orienting standard takes time. It is not a magical corollary of wealth—as the prominence of greed and injustice in Godwin's day demonstrates—but must be nurtured. And of course, it is surely ironic to base one's benevolence on the elimination of competition! Godwin uses St. Leon's hubristic and blasphemous self-definition to undermine the argument for trusting in wealth as the guarantor of virtue.

Wealth is only one attribute of his new birth, however, and St. Leon quickly shifts his attention to the other aspect of his "salvation." Amazed at the prospect of an immutable body possessed of "perpetual vigour, perpetual activity, perpetual

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[25] George Meredith's *Egoist*

youth," St. Leon is entranced by his victory over the "abhorred grasp" of death, by the

knowledge that, for him, the "laws of nature are suspended" (163). He will outlive not

only men, but empires—and generations of his posterity (164). It is this realization,

coming at the very height of his exultation, that gives St. Leon his first glimmer of

doubt. To watch as first his wife and children and later his remaining descendants die

is surely a thorn in the crown of amortality. Not one of the elect, but the one elect, St.

Leon is fundamentally alienated from his family and fellows.

> Methought the race of mankind looked too insignificant in my eyes. I
> felt a degree of uneasiness at the immeasurable distance that was put
> between me and the rest of my species. I found myself alone in the
> world. . . . I experienced something, less than a wish, yet a something
> very capable of damping my joy, that I also were subject to mortality.
> I could have been well content to be partaker with a race of immortals,
> but I was not satisfied to be single in this respect. (164)

Alone in his amortality, St. Leon is threatened with "deadness of heart," with

"vacancy and torpor," for he will have no emotional ties once his companions are

dead. The prospect of new companions is little consolation: "human affections and

passions are not made of this transferable stuff" and nothing can be truly loved

unless "heart and soul, and our life is, as it were, bound up in the object of our

attachment" (164). While the habits of a lifetime have attached him to his present

family, it will be impossible in the future to recreate such ties: "An immortal can form

no true and real attachment to the insect of an hour" (165). And since "domestic and

private affections [are] inseparable from the nature of man," their dissolution will

destroy St. Leon's humanity (xxxiv).[26]

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[26] Godwin notes in the preface to St. Leon that the novel is intended to modify the somewhat
negative attitudes toward domestic ties presented in Political Justice. Since writing the
political treatise, his marriage to Mary Wollstonecraft had convinced him that domestic
affections were not contrary to, but supportive of, general benevolence; and the critic of
marriage had become its warm advocate.

Surely this is an easy enough problem to resolve? Simply provide Marguerite and his children with the elixir, and St. Leon will have, if not a race, then at least a family of immortals. Apparently, there is a pragmatic obstacle to this solution: only an adept can safely imbibe the elixir, and none of his family is qualified in the science. Nor, bound as he is by secrecy, can St. Leon teach them his process. More significant is the ethical consideration, as Marguerite's response to his condition reveals. If in some ways Marguerite is more of a mouthpiece for Godwin's philosophy than a fully developed character, Political Justice made flesh, hers remains the normative voice of the novel. Having guessed St. Leon's secret, at least in regards to his wealth, she underscores his essential solitude, framing her criticism in terms of the republican value of equality.

While St. Leon believes that his connection to the human race will at least endure while his family lives, Marguerite denies that possibility, noting that no mortal lives who can "'sympathize with [his] thoughts and emotions'" (210). Having no equal in condition, he can have no peer in thought or feeling. An impassible chasm has been opened by suspending the laws of nature on St. Leon's behalf: no longer subject to the human condition, he can no longer truly be considered human. Calling mortals "insects" is simply misdirection, perhaps self-delusion. Like Shakespeare's rose, a human by any other name is still a human, and the mortal body remains the biological and social norm. It is St. Leon who has transgressed to become something other, who no longer has a place or a kind.

St. Leon's very willingness to accept such exclusive benefits demonstrates his intellectual and spiritual pettiness. Marguerite warns that a "generous spirit" would

> 'disdain, when offered to him, excessive and clandestine advantages.
> Equality is the soul of real and cordial society. . . . How unhappy the

> wretch, the monster, rather let me say, who is without equal; who looks through the world, and in the world cannot find a brother; who is endowed with attributes which no living being participates with him. . . . How unhappy this wretch! How weak and ignoble the man that voluntarily accepts these laws of existence!' (211)[27]

Far from the godlike being that St. Leon first presents himself as, Marguerite identifies him as a pathetic creature, "weak and ignoble." Indeed he is monstrous. That Marguerite seems unaware of the second half of his gift—his physical immortality—is striking. If clandestine wealth alone so divorces a man from society, what can be the effect of a physical change that makes him, literally, no longer one of the race of mortals? To become amortal then is to become something ontologically other than human. Since all that is "best and most excellent in the intellectual world, is man," such a transfiguration can hardly be cause for celebration (Godwin, Thoughts v). The immortal body of Political Justice can become normative only if and when it becomes normal—human because common to the species. Paradoxically, in attempting to become more than human, St. Leon has apparently become something less, a theme that will recur in other fictions of amortality.

Of course, one might argue that, in the real world, scientific prolongevity would benefit everyone, would indeed create a race of immortals, thus invalidating Godwin's emphasis on alienation as a source of critique. Here it is worth reiterating Godwin's concern with the unequal distribution of benefits in society. The idealistic, but socially critical Godwin may well doubt that scientific benefits would be shared equally among the population. As I stated above, his discussion of immortality in Political Justice is included as part of his discussion of property and its abuses, while

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[27] It is notable how closely such language mirrors that of Wollstonecraft in A Vindication of the Rights of Men. She writes that "true happiness arose from the friendship and intimacy which can only be enjoyed by equals" (12). "Virtue can only flourish amongst equals" (149). It also offers a clear precursor to Mary Shelley's discourse of monstrosity in Frankenstein, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.

in St. Leon, immortality is paired with limitless wealth and is effectively the product of a drug. Symbolically, immortality has been identified as a valuable, privately-owned, and highly exclusive, if not unique, commodity. Godwin's own ideal version of immortality, one earned through reason, a resource that is equally available to all classes (though not equally nurtured), may benefit all humankind. On the other hand, an immortality that depends on external resources—whether an elixir of life or medical treatment—may only be available to those who can afford it: the property owners of whom Godwin is so critical. By framing Marguerite's argument in republican terms, Godwin at the least raises the specter of social inequality being not only reflected in, but reinforced by, scientific advances.

Economic speculations aside, what is particularly notable about the above discussion of St. Leon's isolation is that both quoted passages occur before St. Leon actually drinks the elixir. At the time he describes his "less than a wish" to be "subject to mortality," St. Leon is, in fact, still physically mortal. John Barbour defines religious conversion as a "profound change in belief and action in relation to what a person conceives of as ultimate reality" (1), and it is just such a change that St. Leon undergoes prior to his physical rejuvenation. In perceiving a shift in his relation to society and the "ultimate reality" of mortality, St. Leon's beliefs and actions are transformed, even in the absence of physical change. By establishing this lag between the two changes—mental and physical—Godwin underscores the role of faith in St. Leon's conversion to science. Without experiencing the reality of rejuvenation (and despite the less than inspiring example of Zampieri), St. Leon is entirely confident of its effects.

It is only in the fourth volume that St. Leon finally undergoes physical regeneration. By this time, he has lost his family. In characteristic sentimental

fashion, Marguerite has died of grief; St. Leon has abandoned his daughters to the care of a guardian, letting them believe he is dead; and his son, Charles, shamed by his father's ill-repute, has long since left to make his own way as a soldier. St. Leon has been subjected to violence—the burning of his home and the murders of his servant/assistant and beloved dog—by a superstitious mob, who could not distinguish between scientific experimentation and black magic.[28] He has been twice imprisoned, once for the alleged murder of Zampieri, and once arbitrarily by the Spanish Inquisition for twelve years. It is upon his escape from the Inquisition—he is on his way to be burned as a heretic, when a fortuitous accident frees him—that he at last drinks the elixir of life, and for once, science appears to fulfill all promises.

> The evening before, I had seen my hair white, and my face ploughed with furrows; I looked fourscore. What I beheld now was totally different, yet altogether familiar; it was myself, myself as I had appeared on the day of my marriage with Marguerite de Damville. . . .I leaped a gulf of thirty-two years. (349)

Nor is his rejuvenation purely physical: it is a "revolution . . . in [his] sentiments (355). "What was most material, my mind was grown young with my body. . . . Now I felt within me a superfluity of vigour. . . .my thoughts seemed capable of industry unwearied, and investigation the most constant and invincible" (352). What had been theoretical is now reality. Like a Christian whose faith in heaven is only a "faint and indistinct picture" of the reality, St. Leon can scarcely express the difference between his previous presumptive immortality and his new physical state (355-356). He is like the "celebrated apostle, who had been taken up into the third heaven," at last not only believing in, but knowing Heaven (355).

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[28] The incident of the mob burning St. Leon's house is modeled on the 1791 destruction of Joseph Priestley's house and laboratory by an angry anti-Jacobin mob, encouraged by loyalist Birmingham authorities. Priestley fled to London, then emigrated to America.

Physical immortality as earthly heaven. If the novel ended here, we would be

left with a picture of triumphant science, one that has fulfilled its salvific promise.

Despite initial setbacks, only to be expected in the pursuit of scientific advancement,

science would have ultimately proven its value. With St. Leon and Benjamin Franklin,

we could extol the wonders of scientific progress and, if anything, regret only that this

is a work of fiction—or that we are born too soon to witness this triumph. And with

this success, the associated critique of political gradualism would likewise be

undermined. Surely, the subtext would suggest, the costs of revolution are more

than balanced by its benefits.

Not surprisingly, a skeptical Godwin undermines this promising picture on the

very next page. Fully amortal at last, St. Leon can no longer deny the truth: "the

creature does not exist with whom I have any common language, or any genuine

sympathies. Society is a bitter and galling mockery to my heart; it only shows in more

glaring colours my desolate condition" (356). His youthful appearance is a "bitter

mockery of the furrows ploughed in [his] heart" (356), his transfigured body not the

fulfillment of an ideal, but a lie. We appear to have come full circle. The fear of

alienation and loneliness St. Leon expresses on first learning the secret of

immortality has been fully realized with his physical transformation. Nor can mere

physical rejuvenation repair the emotional and psychological ravages of suffering.

Science's limits are obvious, its ability to provide salvation illusory.

Tysdahl complains that this latter portion of the novel lacks "social and

psychological verisimilitude" because St. Leon has "place[d] himself absolutely

outside ordinary humanity" (94). Godwin's social commentary is undermined

because it is not applicable to ordinary humans and human society; it lacks the "force

that social criticism can have when it describes plausible action in recognizable

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societies" (95). What such a critique (biased in favor of literary realism) ignores is that displacement from humanity is an essential part of Godwin's critique. For Godwin, political gradualism works because it moves society forward as a whole, or at the very least minimalizes the stratification of society into groups with divergent and often opposing interests. St. Leon's amputation from humanity literalizes the cost of sacrificing gradual improvement to impatience.

The political project of the final volume reinforces this message. With a renewed body and under a new identity, the sieur de Chatillon, St. Leon attempts to restore prosperity to the war torn kingdom of Hungary. The picture Godwin paints of a land and people devastated by war is one of the most effective in the novel. The people

> appeared terrified, sickly, dejected, and despairing; . . . The savage neglect into which every thing was declining, produced in repeated instances a contagious air and pestilential diseases; while dearth and famine unrelentingly haunted the steps of those whom the sword and the pestilence had spared. Such is war: such are the evils nations willingly plunge into, or are compelled to endure, to pamper the senseless luxury or pride of a Ferdinand and a Solyman! (371-72)

Godwin makes it nearly impossible to condemn the desire to relieve such suffering. (I say nearly impossible because some characters do condemn it: the misanthropic Bethlem Gabor and St. Leon's own son, who views relief efforts as treasonous because they undermine the military efforts of the Christian armies. Godwin refuses to ignore the entrenched and often irrational forces working against social reform.) Briefly, St. Leon's efforts appear to work. His attempts to revive agriculture and commerce earn him the title "saviour of Hungary" (376). Soon, however, inflation sets in, shortages of goods recur, and threats of mob violence arise. War continues to be waged in the vicinity and to threaten the country with renewed destruction.

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St. Leon complains, "in proportion to the gratitude and adoration with which they had lately regarded me, were their detestation and abhorrence now" (380). He is no longer a savior, but an interfering intruder in their country (380). "Not understanding the powers by which I acted, they blindly ascribed to me the faculty of doing whatever I pleased. . . . They made no allowance for the limited capacities of a human creature" (379). In other words, ironically, they made the same assumptions St. Leon himself had once made about the capacity for wealth to accomplish anything. When St. Leon's great experiment in philanthropy fails, the people blame St. Leon/Chatillon. Ever solipsistic, he blames the ingratitude and impatience of the "lower orders of mankind" (380). Godwin's narrative suggests that both are equally precipitate. Social change cannot simply be imposed from above/without, but must develop organically. It is not the urgency of reform that Godwin questions, but its method.

The novel concludes with a more modest (and anonymous), but equally disastrous effort to ensure his estranged son's happiness by securing his desired marriage. Despite St. Leon's unfortunate interference, the novel closes on a relatively positive note: once St. Leon is out of the picture, the damage he has done is repaired, and Charles marries his beloved Pandora. It is on this picture of domestic happiness that St. Leon ends his confession, the contrast with his own "somewhat melancholy story" providing a stark reminder of what he lost in his acceptance of amortality (478). Domestic ties and normative human relations are restored, but with St. Leon permanently excluded. The novel's last word, literally, is given to St. Leon's reflection on the "fate of Charles and Pandora" that the world "yet contains something in its stores that is worth living for" (478). The only true good to emerge from (and survive) St. Leon's existence was the product of his mortality: his

child(ren). Any good yet to come will come from them. Amortality has proven sterile

and destructive, a truly flawed ideal. Further, Godwin may implicitly (and

unwittingly?) have undermined his own expressed ideal: where children are the only

thing "worth living for," even evolutionary immortality without them may prove barren.

Godwin's critical Fall may, in fact, demand wholly new ground on which to found a

future ideal. Ironic indeed.

From Amortality to Immortality: Bulwer's *Zanoni*

The pattern of <u>Zanoni</u> in many ways reverses that of <u>St. Leon</u>. Where we

follow St. Leon's attainment of amortality, Zanoni possesses amortality when the

novel opens, and the story follows his enlightenment and rejection of that state. From

a narrative standpoint, <u>Zanoni</u> is in some ways a more problematic novel than <u>St.

Leon</u>. Mitchell notes that "learning invaded [Bulwer's] page insistently" not only in

the form of his ubiquitous footnotes but in his use of classical and foreign forms (xx).

<u>Zanoni</u> structurally reproduces the platonic stages of enthusiasm,[29] while its

argument is constructed in terms of a Hegelian dialectic of the ideal and the actual.[30]

Its Victorian readers often experienced it as an "essentially foreign book" (Mitchell

135). While Godwin's biblical allusions are easily accessible to a wide audience

(though perhaps less so today than in his own era), Bulwer's more esoteric allusions

often distance readers, both his contemporaries and, more recently, scholars. Wolff

identifies <u>Zanoni</u> as a "protean" text, and the varied responses of scholars and critics

validates this claim (208). The novel has been variously recognized as an

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[29] Identified in the novel's introduction as 1. musical 2. telestic or mystic 3. prophetic 4. amorous or "that which belongs to Love." For a comprehensive analysis of Bulwer's use of these stages and their connection to the ascension of the soul, see Wolff, *Strange Stories*.

[30] See Roberts, <u>Gothic Immortals</u> p. 161-66, for a discussion of the application of Hegelian idealism to Rosicrucianism.

inspirational text for theosophy, as "sacred philosophy," as a Medieval morality play, a political parable, a metaphysical "fairy tale for adults" and "an encyclopedia of ideas about the occult sciences."[31] This multiplicity of readings foregrounds the interpretive complexity of the novel.

This complexity is replicated at the narrative level. While St. Leon has a relatively straightforward chronological order and a single first-person point of view (however unreliable that point of view may appear at times), Zanoni is an embedded narrative that often switches points of view. Not so much omniscient as kaleidoscopic, it alternately follows the experiences of the hero Zanoni, the initiate Clarence Glyndon, the opera singer Viola Pisani, and the atheistic artist Jean Nicot. In the final chapters, it even follows Robespierre and his fellow revolutionaries into their chambers. To complicate the perspective further, Bulwer incorporates trance visions where one set of characters observes another across vast distances. A particularly dizzying play of perspective occurs when the entranced Viola inadvertently astral projects and becomes aware of Zanoni and his mentor Mejnour, also disembodied, watching her watching them in their own trance vision:

> With the eyes of the spirit, Viola followed theirs. . . .she beheld a shadowy likeness of the very room in which her form yet dwelt. . . and in that room the ghost-like image of herself! This double phantom— here herself a phantom, gazing there upon a phantom-self—. . . . Suddenly the phantom-Zanoni turned, it seemed to perceive herself— her second self. . . . she woke!" (266-67)

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[31] By Madame Blavatsky, Harriet Martineau (in a letter to Bulwer dated July 1842), Roberts, Wolff, Campbell, and Joscelyn Godwin respectively. Martineau wrote a key to the novel which she sent to Bulwer, who had it printed with the 1853 and all subsequent editions of Zanoni, although he somewhat coyly declined to acknowledge how closely it actually reflected his own idea of the novel, describing it in his author's note as one of many possible solutions to the enigma.

Such perspectival shiftings and doublings are more than simple gothic ornaments to Bulwer's narrative. They underline an important theme of the text that will be reiterated over and over: the limits of human vision and comprehension.

Even when we appear to see most clearly, Bulwer suggests, we may see phantoms or shadows. Even our bodies are not the anchors to reality that we assume, our senses having the potential to deceive us, our very frames to fail us. As readers, we are reminded by descriptions of the invisible worlds illuminated by the microscope—"the animalculae in the air we breathe—in the water that plays in yonder basin" and that "inhabit man's frame as man inhabits earth" (53, 193)—of just how fundamental our human blind spots are. "Man contemplates the universe as an animalcule would an elephant," explains Bulwer. "The animalcule, seeing scarcely the tip of the hoof, would be incapable of comprehending that the trunk belonged to the same creature" (313). It is such limited vision that allows a flawed ideal such as amortality to be highly valued, and it is this limitation that must be overcome before Zanoni can recognize the value of true immortality. Or in the terms I used to discuss St. Leon, Zanoni must be converted from a false amortality to true spiritual immortality.

Bulwer's and Godwin's treatments of amortality and revolution share more than superficial resemblances. Like St. Leon, Zanoni explores the cost of amortality to social and familial relations. In the novel's references to the ephemerality of mortal life, we hear echoes not only of Godwin, but of Swift. Zanoni mourns, "the flower gives perfume to the rock on whose heart it grows. A little while, and the flower is dead; but the rock still endures—the snow at its breast, the sunshine on its summit" (69). Pleasing though the flower may be, the stone remains essentially untouched, the difference in their natures making a true relationship impossible. Bulwer goes a

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step beyond Godwin, however, and formalizes the division between immortal and mortal states: the initiate Clarence Glyndon is expressly required to reject the demands of human love, if he is to pursue alchemical studies. He is warned, "No neophyte must have, at his initiation, one affection or desire that chains him to the world" (113). His answer? "A fiercer desire than that of love burns in my veins: the desire not to resemble, but to surpass, my kind; the desire to penetrate and to share the secret of your own existence. . . . I renounce love. I renounce happiness. Welcome solitude; welcome despair; if they are the entrances to thy dark and sublime secret" (137-38). Bulwer thus reifies St. Leon's isolation into a formal prerequisite of the pursuit of esoteric knowledge, immediately locating his immortals outside the bounds of human society.

Parallels are also apparent in their treatment of revolution. If St. Leon offers an oblique, refracted commentary on the French Revolution, Zanoni restores the Revolution to center stage, and Bulwer shares Godwin's concern with revolutionary impatience and the need to move slowly in reform. Zanoni asks,

> Without patience, what is man? And what a people? Without patience, Art never can be high; without patience, Liberty never can be perfected. By wild throes, and impetuous, aimless struggles, intellect seeks to soar from Penury, and a nation to struggle into Freedom. And woe, thus unfortified, guideless, and unenduring, woe to both!" (298)

Impatience then is aesthetically, intellectually, and politically crippling. In "The Reign of Terror: Its Causes and Results," written the same year as Zanoni, Bulwer explicitly condemns the "habit of impatience" that leads to revolution (53). And like Godwin, Bulwer narratively links revolutionary impatience with alchemical practices. Glyndon's initiation fails and his tutor Mejnour rejects him because he could not discipline himself to move forward slowly. The link is made explicit when Mejnour compares the Revolution to Glyndon's failure: "'What in truth are these would-be

builders of a new world? Like the students who have vainly struggled after our supreme science, they have attempted what is beyond their power'" (289). And the fruit of this impatience? Demons (Campbell 114). For Glyndon, it is the monstrous Dweller of the Threshold that haunts him after his premature attempt to drink the elixir of life. For the revolutionaries, it is the Reign of Terror. Metaphorically, they too have "passed from this solid earth of usages and forms, into the land of shadow; and its loathsome keeper has seized them as its prey" (Zanoni 289). Finally, (perhaps concerned that he has been too subtle) Bulwer directly identifies Robespierre as the "*real* Sorcerer! And round *his* last hours gather the Fiends he raised!" (350).

As the reference to demons suggests, the resemblances between the novels should not be allowed to disguise their significant divergences. While Godwin's criticism of revolutionary fervor is tempered by sympathy for republican values, Bulwer's response is unequivocally condemnatory, as his explicit demonization of revolutionary forces indicates. A one-time "Whig-Liberal committed to political reform" and friendly correspondent with Godwin, Bulwer over time transferred his allegiance to the Tory party and a conservative social agenda (Campbell 11-16). Zanoni is largely a product of his revised socio-political beliefs. While acknowledging that the "vices of the old regime" had sparked the revolutionary upheaval, he nonetheless condemns those who would respond to injustice with violence rather than legal efforts for reform: "The moment LAW, instead of being *corrected*, was *resisted*; the moment the populace were permitted to indulge passion and to taste blood; the moment, in fact, Force began—Reform ceased" (Bulwer, "Terror" 51).

Nor is Bulwer's response simply a rejection of violence and overhaste, such as Godwin might have made, but a class-based condemnation: the Revolution was an "unhallowed union between the middle class and the populace" ("Terror" 34).

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Against the egalitarian values espoused in St. Leon, Bulwer sets aristocratic and

paternalistic ideals. Practicing, at least early in his career, a sort of gentlemanly

radicalism, Bulwer does advocate reform, but only at the instigation and direction of

the aristocracy, who are responsible for setting the values for society (Mitchell 185,

189). In a letter to Lord Landsdowne, Bulwer writes, "'I hold the Aristocratic Element

on [sic] a State to be vitally essential to all elevations of social thought and all

durability of free institutions. I would infinitely prefer an Aristocratic Republic to a

Democratic Monarchy'" (qtd in Mitchell 197). More crucial even than the

governmental structure to Bulwer is the (idealized) presence of an aristocracy. Nor

is this purely an aristocracy of birth, for, in true Romantic fashion, the type of

Bulwer's aristocrat is the artist, for whom Bulwer perpetually seeks greater social

esteem.[32]

Bulwer's employment of immortality is equally distinctive. Where Godwin

secularizes immortality, even as he employs Christian rhetorical conventions,

Bulwer's immortality, even in its material form, is spiritualized. Zanoni's transfigured

state allows him access to higher spiritual realms, epitomized by his communion with

the angelic personage Adon-Ai, while Glyndon's failure as an initiate signifies his

spiritual immaturity. Where St. Leon's physical regeneration is spiritually impotent,

Zanoni's elixir attunes the physical frame to spiritual realities. It "pours a more

glorious life into the frame, so sharpens the senses that those larvae of the air

become to thee audible and apparent" (194-95). The "larvae of the air" are spirits

"composed of refined matter. . . that could not be seen in a 'normal state'" (Taves

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[32] Mitchell describes Bulwer as "a leading figure in what might be called literary good causes"
(123). He provided financial assistance to marginalized writers such as William Godwin and
Leigh Hunt, cared for the dependents of writers after their deaths, sought to set up a
government trust for writers, and sought to revise copyright laws to protect writers rather than
publishers (123-125).

174). The altered awareness attributed by spiritualism to clairvoyance is here provided by the elixir which, like a spiritual microscope, makes visible entities of another order, some of whom are spiritually more advanced, like the "Son of Light," Adon-Ai, and can guide spiritual progress. And of course, Zanoni's ultimate sacrifice of physical immortality opens the gate to the Eternal Life of the spirit, as I will examine in more detail below.

Both elements of Bulwer's narrative—immortality and revolution—are used to develop an overarching theme: the spiritual stagnation caused by materialism. Bulwer perceived materialism as "intellectual bondage" that was destroying the human spirit (Eigner 8). Spreading like a cancer, it infected society at all levels. It metastasized in the physical sciences, where it would deny the existence of the soul and, recognizing only the organic aspect of the body, deny the hope for an afterlife; in the socio-economic realm, where a soul-destroying industrialism would replace the pastoral values of agricultural society (Mitchell 189-91); and in the arts, where it would straightjacket the imagination within the bonds of realism, a "gray spirit which starves the heroism" of Bulwer's sympathetic characters and releases his antagonists from moral restraints (Eigner 176).

The French Revolution seemed the perfect symbol of these stultifying forces, a manifestation of spiritual as well as political degeneration. Founded on the premises and promises of Enlightenment rationality yet descending into a hell of violence and fear, the Revolution epitomized Bulwer's anti-materialist critique. For Bulwer, "the mystical significance of the French Revolution was inseparable from its historic dimension" (Roberts, Gothic Immortals 178-179). It held spiritual as well as political significance. Foolishly denying as superstition the highest aspects of

humanity, the revolutionaries' "fanaticism of unbelief" undermines all that makes life meaningful and beautiful (<u>Zanoni</u> 42).

> Of all the weaknesses which little men rail against, there is none that they are more apt to ridicule than the tendency to believe. And of all the signs of a corrupt heart and a feeble head, the tendency of incredulity is the surest. Real philosophy seeks rather to solve than to deny. (76)

Here, incredulity, a sort of reified (deified?) skepticism, becomes the basest form of credulity: a weak, reductionistic readiness to believe that nothing exists beyond the evidence of our senses and instruments. Where for Godwin, the promise of immortality lay in reason, for Bulwer, the Age of Reason sounded a death knell for the spirit. Against this tyranny of the rational, Bulwer pits the aesthetic, a Romantic ideal of beauty, and the fantastic, reintegrating all of the supernatural elements that Godwin had banished: the demonic, the angelic, and of course the mystical in the form of his ideal immortal Zanoni.

If St. Leon was the alchemist-as-scientist, Zanoni is the alchemist-as-mystic, for Zanoni uses alchemy and the powers of the occult to access the divine. In fact, Bulwer emphasizes that alchemist is a misnomer. Zanoni is more precisely described as an herbalist and a theurgist, one whose abilities rely directly on the invocation of divine powers (60, 329). This is a crucial distinction in the context of the novel. On the one hand, Bulwer does naturalize alchemical practices in the text. For instance, as his other amortal Mejnour explains, "magic (or science that violates Nature) exists not; it is but the science by which Nature can be controlled" (194). Even the ability to forestall death is simply "the Art of Medicine rightly understood," predicated on a thorough understanding of human physiology and the regenerative potential of botanical nature (185; 184, 212). "All that we profess to do is but this: to find out the secrets of the human frame, to know why the parts ossify and the blood

stagnates, and to apply continual preventives to the effects of Time" (185). As Poston argues, "what appears to the unbeliever as alchemic charlatanry is authenticated by an appeal to the laws of nature" (151), thus helping to justify the belief that Bulwer values so highly.

Yet Bulwer's science is more comprehensive, or perhaps more permeable, than that employed by Godwin or the empiricists, who entertain no spirits, recognize no otherworldly beings. Bulwer's science is a "higher chemistry," one that is open to the existence of the supernatural (194). Like the microscope that may reveal forms of life that are invisible to the naked eye, theurgic alchemy opens the eye to spiritual forms that are too subtle for normal vision (193-194). In the context of the Victorian era, when the rapid development of new fields of scientific inquiry and the elucidation of new forms of energy made it seem reasonable to ask whether other nominally "mysterious" or supernatural forces could not come under the auspices of science, Bulwer's blurring of the boundaries between nature and supernature seemed at least plausible (Christensen, New Regions 131). Written shortly before the heyday of the spiritualist movement,[33] Bulwer relies on a similar complex of religious naturalism, blending psychological theory, scientific understandings of matter and energy, and theology (Taves 166-167). His particular critical approach might best be identified as Christian occultism, the tenets of occultism, defined as the "pursuit of occult science

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[33] Jackson Davis, the American "Poughkeepsie Seer," began establishing his reputation as a clairvoyant in 1843, a year after the publication of Zanoni, and became renowned as a prophet and seer by 1845. His influential treatise The Principles of Nature, her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind appeared in 1847. The phenomenological foundation of modern spiritualism is typically traced to the "spirit rappings" that surrounded the Fox sisters, Kate and Margaret, in Hydesville, New York, beginning in March 1848. The arrival in England of two American mediums, Mrs. Hayden and Mrs. Roberts in 1852 and 1853, respectively, sparked a latent predisposition to spiritualism (already apparent in Zanoni and other occult texts) into an active social force. Useful studies of spiritualism include Logie Barrow, Ruth Brandon, Ann Braude, Robert Cox, Janet Oppenheim, Alex Owen, and Ann Taves.

in deliberate opposition to the prevailing beliefs of scientific materialism" (J. Godwin xii), being directly adapted to (somewhat heterodox) Christian theological ends.

In Bulwer's distinctive blend of Christian occultism, both occult science and nature are subordinate to a Creator: "With all our lore, how in each step we are reduced to be but the permitted instruments of the Power, that vouchsafes our own, but only to direct it. How all our wisdom shrinks into nought, compared with that which gives the meanest herb its virtues, and peoples the smallest globule with its appropriate world" ponders Zanoni (219). Unlike St. Leon who compares himself to the Creator, Zanoni avoids overt blasphemy. Despite his ontological separation from the human race, he consciously remains subject to a providential order. "To know nature is to know that there must be a God!" he asserts confidently (218). It is this certainty of the divine that underscores Zanoni's role as theurgist. Zanoni practices (occult) science, but only as a subsidiary of and facilitator to his spiritual quest. He is thus the embodiment of Bulwer's heroic believer, a role illuminated by contrast with his fellow amortal and foil, Mejnour.

Identified as a "seer," Zanoni spends much of his time in communion with an angelic personage, Adon-Ai, who acts as his spiritual guide. In Bulwer's conflation of the mystical with the artistic, Zanoni is also the type of the Artist, whose higher order of intellect, sensitivity and imagination allowed him to use "'sympathy' to transcend the body and to commune with what lay beyond" (Mitchell 131). Zanoni is not, however, a cloistered mystic (or artist) who lives in isolation from the world. He is rather Gulliver's ideal immortal realized: teacher, historical record, and oracle. Generous and selfless, he uses the wisdom gained over several thousand years (Zanoni and Mejnour are identified as Chaldeans, long predating the Rosicrucian tradition) to guide the young and inexperienced, to heal the sick, and to prevent (and

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occasionally punish) wrongdoing. By contrast, the purely contemplative Mejnour is essentially amoral:

> If he committed no evil, he seemed equally apathetic to good. His deeds relieved no want, his words pitied no distress. What we call the heart appeared to have merged into the intellect. He moved, though, and lived, like some regular and calm Abstraction, rather than one who yet retained, with the form, the feelings and sympathies of his kind! (184)

Detached from human ties, Mejnour "has no friends, no associates, no companions, except books and instruments of science" (30). With vast powers over nature and humanity, his indifference seems selfish at best. For Bulwer, who valorized action as the only true expression of virtue, the purely reflective man having no useful social or moral impact (Mitchell 170), the relative value of the two amortals is obvious.

Zanoni is also the ideal aristocrat, denying with Bulwer the claims of egalitarianism: "'A nation that aspires to *equality* is unfit for *freedom*. . . . No teacher left to the world, no men wiser, better than others—were it not an impossible condition, *what a hopeless prospect for humanity*!'" (84). He advocates in its place Nature's "most lovely, and most noble Law—THE INEQUALITY BETWEEN MAN AND MAN!" (340). In Zanoni we do not find the decadent, luxurious French aristocrat whose abdication of his moral role allowed the bourgeoisie to usurp his position (Bulwer, "Terror" 11), but the true aristocrat whose actions earn deference from the lower orders (Mitchell 188). Such an aristocrat is willing to remove the "'disparities of the *physical* life," so long as such change is managed by the moral aristocracy (Zanoni 84). Distanced from human ties by his amortal state, Zanoni yet retains his paternal(istic) concern for human affairs, maintaining an essential humanity. He has "refused to live only in the intellect . . . hast not mortified the heart; thy pulse still beats with the sweet music of mortal passion; thy kind is to thee still something warmer than an abstraction" (31). Amortal, yet still morally and

emotionally human, Zanoni becomes the exemplar of all that Bulwer deems best in human society.

What is most remarkable is his effect on his associates: "those with whom he principally associated—the gay, the dissipated, the thoughtless, the sinners and publicans of the more polished world—all appeared rapidly, yet insensibly to themselves, to awaken to purer thoughts and more regulated lives" (78). Working not by force—Zanoni does not share Mejnour's vision of a numerous immortal race "'with a force and power sufficient to permit them to acknowledge to mankind their majestic conquests and dominion; to become the true lords of this planet'" (153)—but by moral charisma, the aristocratic Zanoni serves as an inoculation against spiritual disease. When rightly practiced, Bulwer suggests, aristocratic virtue has an elevating impact on society as a whole, realizing the maxim that "the few in every age improve the many" (83-84). Adding to the inherent virtue of his aristocratic heritage the gathered wisdom of millennia spent in intercourse with celestial beings, Zanoni seems to prove that physical immortality can indeed live up to the ideal.

Surely then, amortality is an empty category in relation to Zanoni, if not to Mejnour or Glyndon? But it is here that Bulwer's irony operates for, having presented the ideal, he must demonstrate its insufficiency. To establish Zanoni's critical Fall, Bulwer must simultaneously revalorize the domestic affections and devalorize the claims of the material, even in its most perfected form, a paradoxical endeavor it would seem.

First the reinstitution of love as a normative force in the novel is essential. Falling in love with Viola Pisani, a young Italian opera singer, Zanoni marries her despite the immediate loss of some of his supernatural abilities. Following his proposal, Zanoni tells her, "'Hearest thou the wind that sighs and dies away? As that

wind, my power to preserve thee, to guard thee, to foresee the storm in thy skies, is gone'" (145). Still immortal and possessing vast powers, Zanoni's emotional attachment has destroyed the objectivity needed to exercise his powers on Viola's behalf. As Mejnour says, "'Henceforth to her you are human, and human only'" (154). Still Zanoni believes that love will "'supply the loss of all that it has dared to sacrifice'" (145). He writes to Mejnour that "true love is less a passion than a symbol" of the highest reaches of the human spirit: "But for love there were no civilization, no music, no poetry, no beauty, no life beyond the brute's. . . . in its heavenlier shape, in its utter abnegation of self, in its intimate connection with all that is most delicate and subtle in the spirit. . . the wonder rather becomes how so few regard it in its holiest nature" (220). This sacralized, de-eroticized (eros seems to have little place in Bulwer's vision) portrait of human love acts for Bulwer as the standard against which all human action may be judged. It is not love as companionship-of-equals as in St. Leon, but love as inspiration: domesticity as ladder to heaven, even as it improves existence on earth.

Initially, Zanoni's hopes seem fulfilled. For several years, the couple lives a nearly idyllic life together. The serpent in their Eden is, of course, Viola's mortality. With the limited vision of the materialist—for in cherishing bodily immortality, Zanoni paradoxically remains bound to materialism, despite his spiritual enlightenment—, Zanoni can only see one solution to his dilemma: raise Viola to his own exalted state. This is a greater challenge than it might appear. Not simply restricted by a promise of secrecy like St. Leon, Zanoni must face two powerful obstacles: Viola's gender and her innate spirituality that instinctively recoils from his transgressive ideas.

Gender plays a complicated role in the discourse of amortality, and Bulwer's juxtaposition of contrasting gender assumptions is particularly interesting. First, I

want to note the polarized depiction of femininity that comes into play in the novel. The initiatory ordeal of overcoming the (female) Dweller of the Threshold defeats most men, as Glyndon's experience suggests, but it is one that "hitherto no woman has survived" (75). It would seem a vain hope to "banish *fear* from the heart of woman" (124). On one level, such statements simply reflect traditional assumptions about feminine vulnerability, even hysteria: immortality must be gendered male because no woman is capable of enduring its mental and physical demands. Certainly, such fear for Viola is one of Zanoni's central concerns.

Yet the implacable separation of the Dweller and Viola also suggests an absolute difference in kind, as if contact with one is automatically fatal to the other. We see this fear realized when Glyndon's susceptible sister, alerted to the Dweller's existence by her brother's nightmares and confession, dies of terror in its/her presence. The doctor, a mouthpiece for blind materialism, attributes her fatal fit to epilepsy (248). However, the fantastic is real within the pages of Bulwer's novel and, in this case, terrifying. Eerily akin to the abhuman bodies—"liminal, admixed, nauseating, abominable"—that Kelly Hurley identifies as typical of Victorian fin de siecle gothic (Hurley 9), the fiendish Dweller of the Threshold is a repulsive hybrid of the human and animalistic, strangely "larva-like" and moving like "some vast misshapen reptile," yet with something in its eyes "almost human. . . that served to show that the shadowy Horror was not all a spirit, but partook of matter enough, at least, to make it more deadly and fearful an enemy to material forms" (Bulwer 208).

Heightening the horror is a threatening eroticization of the "Phantom" whose veiled "outline was that of a female" and who identifies herself to Clarence Glyndon as "thy beloved" and demands a kiss from her "mortal lover" whose (feminized) response is to faint away (Zanoni 208-209). Even as a (mostly) immaterial Phantom,

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the Dweller embodies the lowest aspects of the material animal—insectile and reptilian, somehow a creature of the earth even as she/it haunts the "immeasurable region" (209). Against this figure of erotic, malevolent and emasculating feminine power is set the purity and fragility of Viola, who came untouched even through the temptations offered to an Italian diva. Bulwer's heroines are often "fairy-like innocents untouched by either conventional education or mortality" who "live on a plane of enhanced spirituality" (Campbell 129; Mitchell 24).

Victorian spiritualism not unproblematically tended to link women with a sort of instinctive spirituality, their nervous sensibility rendering them particularly susceptible to spiritual forces (Taves 28-30), a set of assumptions that Bulwer employs in his characterization of Viola. By identifying bodily immortality as a spiritually-enhanced state yet gendering it male, Bulwer complicates this gendered position, only to reinstitute the idea of female spiritual power through Viola's resistance to Zanoni's hinted amortality. For Viola's ethereal, spiritualized femininity protects her as certainly from Zanoni's mistaken values as from the more obvious threats of evil lechers and reveals the limits of his flawed vision. Asked by Zanoni if she would not like to be "'thus young and fair forever, till the world blazes round us as one funeral pyre!'" Viola answers unhesitatingly, "'We shall be so, when we leave the world!'" (191). As critical readers, we may, of course, wonder whether such an answer is not more reflective of unexamined orthodoxy than innate spirituality, but within the context of the novel, we are assured that even the celestial spirits Zanoni calls upon to inspire Viola are "less pure than her own thoughts . . . ! They could not raise her above her human heart, for that has a heaven of its own" (219).

A desperate Zanoni finally attempts to bind their spirits through the intermediary of a child—"'a young soul fresh from Heaven, that I may rear from the

first moment it touches earth; whose wings I may train to follow mine through the glories of creation; and through whom the mother herself may be led upward over the realm of death!'" (216). Zanoni's romantic description of the infant is reminiscent of Wordworth's "Intimations of Immortality" with its emphasis on the residual connection between a child and a preexistent state, and the poem provides a sort of oblique commentary on Zanoni's plan. Where Wordsworth asks, "Whither is fled the visionary gleam?/ Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" (lines 56-27) with earthly life "but a sleep and a forgetting" (line 58), the flaw in Zanoni's ideal is implicitly underscored. Supposed salvation is, in fact, exile from heaven. If successful, Zanoni's plan will trap the infant's spirit (and by extension the mother's) perpetually in this physical form, an unrecognized (by Zanoni) downside to his desire.

An even more damning critique silently haunts this scenario. Zanoni's supposedly loving desire to "save" Viola is in fact one of the most problematic sections in the novel. Closely tied to the spiritualist concept of pathetism, defined by La Roy Sunderland as the "'agency by which one person, by manipulation, produces emotion, feeling, passion, or any physical or mental effect, in the system of another'" as they sleep[34], Zanoni's communication with the sleeping infant relies on a magnetic effect that would be essentially the imposition of his will upon another. The elitist Bulwer seems untroubled by the implications of this oppressive manipulation: the narrative reveals the falsity of Zanoni's desire, but his methods go unremarked. It is for us as readers to remember that Bulwer's social vision is predicated on an aristocratic paternalism, whereby imposing one's will on those lower in the social hierarchy "for their own good" is an acceptable, even commendable, practice.

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[34] Pathetism (1843).

Viola's or the child's loss of autonomy, like those of the "lower orders," is simply

irrelevant from Bulwer's perspective. Fortunately, this attempt proves futile.

Ultimately, Zanoni's very attempts to raise Viola above humanity drive her to flee with

their child, finding "'less terror in the pestilence than in [his] words'" (223).

Unprotected, Viola falls into the clutches of the "butcher-atheists" who lead

the Terror. And it is at this point that Bulwer's vision of true immortality is fulfilled.

Zanoni had already begun to recognize his amortality as somehow transgressive,

asking, "'Is there no guilt in the knowledge that has so divided us from our race? . . .

how many virtues must lie dead in those who live in the world of death, and refuse to

die! Is not this sublime egotism?" (220). (Of course, I have already noted the

sublime egotism of his treatment of Viola.) Arriving in Paris and witnessing the

sacrifice of a father for his son and of young nuns unwilling to renounce God even on

pain of death, he writes to Mejnour:

> I see here, for the first time, how majestic and beauteous a thing is
> Death! Of what sublime virtues we robbed ourselves, when, in the
> thirst for virtue, we attained the art by which we can refuse to die! . . .
> *To live forever upon this earth, is to live in nothing diviner than
> ourselves.* Yes, even amidst this gory butcherdom, God, the Ever-
> living, vindicates to man the sanctity of His servant, Death! (287-288)

This is an awakening for Zanoni, an acknowledgement of the limitation of his vision.

The very scope of his clairvoyant powers, letting him see across vast distances and

even across time, has blinded him to a greater truth. Never presenting physical

immortality as inherently destructive or evil, Bulwer nonetheless represents it as

constricting, a falling short of the full potential of the spirit. Even Zanoni, the epitome

of sublime physical immortality, is somehow less than those who are subject to

mortality. We are assured by Bulwer that the human is holy—and to be human is to

be mortal (150).

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Zanoni only reaches his true potential in death, as desiring to save Viola (selflessly this time), he offers his own life in exchange for hers. Adon-Ai assures him that he is wiser in his acceptance of death than in his discovery of the alchemical secret of life: "'The human affections that thralled and humbled thee awhile bring to thee, in these last hours of mortality, the sublimest heritage of thy race—the eternity that commences from the grave'" (329-330). Nor does this sacrifice benefit Zanoni and Viola alone; it is part of a much grander social transformation. If Godwin believed in moral evolution through reason, Bulwer articulates an ideal of moral evolution through self-sacrifice. In Bulwer's theology, those at higher levels of the moral (and social!) hierarchy are continually motivated to sacrifice for those at lower levels; those who have benefited from this sacrifice are elevated to higher perceptions of love and become self-sacrificing in their turn. Through this contagion of self-sacrifice, all creation is "progressively recreated at ever higher stages of ideality" (Christensen 102). Seeing clearly at last, Zanoni's final message to Mejnour is a plea to follow his example: "At last, I recognize the true ordeal and the real victory. Mejnour, cast down thy elixir; lay by thy load of years! Wherever the soul can wander, the Eternal Soul of all things protects it still!" (333). A true convert, Zanoni is filled with missionizing zeal, desiring to share the gospel of true eternity with his longtime associate.

Thus, an organic life of millennia ends at the guillotine—the instrument of death that substitutes for throne and altar in revolutionary France (286). I mentioned the importance of the guillotine in the opening to this chapter, and certainly, it is a powerful symbol of the materialist forces Bulwer seeks to oppose. In addition, an awareness of the physiological effects of the guillotine clearly underlies Bulwer's image of Zanoni's final moment. For Zanoni smiles at the moment of death(?) and

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his physiognomy not only reveals the exalted state of his soul but serves as a divine revelation of the ineffectuality of the guillotine to extinguish Eternal Life. In a final subordination of matter to spirit,

> those pale lips [smiled]—and *with* the smile, the place of doom, the headsman, the horror vanished! With that smile, all space seemed suffused in eternal sunshine. Up from the earth he rose . . . a thing not of matter—an IDEA of joy and light! Behind, Heaven opened, deep after deep; and the Hosts of Beauty were seen. . . 'Welcome! O purified by sacrifice, and immortal only through the grave—this it is to die.' (349-350)

What it is to die is left somewhat to the imagination. Bulwer's ideas of the afterlife are rather ambiguous and sometimes perplexing. Informed sometimes by poetry and sometimes by science—his afterlife theology is colored by evolutionary ideas of successive stages of existence in <u>Zanoni</u> (214)—his vision of heaven seems more concerned with the religio-aesthetic ideal than any specific theology. "Heaven is beauty" might best encapsulate his conception of the afterlife.

His essential message is nonetheless explicit: the true triumph over death's sting must be spiritual, not physical, and it can only be attained by passing beyond death, not by avoiding it. Very much a religious individualist, who "crafted a religion to suit his own purposes" (Mitchell 139), Bulwer nonetheless relies heavily on Christian conventions in shaping his spiritual arguments. However heterodox that Christianity may be, it is a Christian ethos that informs the novel's theology of self-sacrifice and otherworldly values. A vision of eternal life with Christ is at least implied (though one may need to progress through successive heavens to reach Him), and amortality is ultimately subordinated to the immortality of the spirit, a spirit that is opposed to the materialism and atheism of the Revolution—and of the mentality that produced it and continues, at least in Bulwer's view, to threaten the social order.

In giving Life and spirit the final word, does Bulwer somehow negate the horrors of the Revolution, offering an otherworldly consolation while effectively consigning this world to the devil? Writing of Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities, Vargish argues that the vision of otherworldly immortality can in fact serve as a form of social protest. It "becomes an indictment of the way things are, of the way of the world. . . . It shows divine benevolence, certainly; but it also tells us that we have acquiesced in a social order where human justice can no longer provide adequate protection and redress" (124). Bulwer employs immortality in a similar fashion, as an ideal that can be juxtaposed with social reality to illuminate the shortcomings of things as they are: Zanoni's death may have restored him to a higher order, but the cause of his death remains a crime. Further, Zanoni dies in an act of this-worldly compassion, realizing the ideal in the midst of barely describable horror. His reward may be otherworldly, but his actions have impact here. And Bulwer offers a picture of the afterlife not simply as an alternative to this world, but as a means to rehabilitate existence here. Believing as he does that the "fanaticism of unbelief" is the source of so many of the world's wrongs, to restore the image of eternal life is to restore the potential for belief and hope—the central elements in combating the senselessness and ugliness of Bulwer's world.

However critical we may be of Bulwer's aristocratic values, elitist paternalism, and fear (loathing?) of female sexuality, it would be a misreading to assume that his "apologetic" immortality is somehow a dismissal of this world. Hindmarsh writes that spiritual autobiographies "speak to us of the hope and sanity of an identity that is found not in the resources of the self alone, but, as St. Paul so often said, 'in Christ'" (viii). Bulwer presents the conclusion to Zanoni as one of "hope and sanity" even in light of such horrors as the French Revolution or the wrongs of Victorian Britain. It is

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Bulwer's irony that he must offer hope and sanity by sacrificing the ideal hero he so lovingly portrayed.

Conjunctions, Disjunctions and Afterthoughts

Where does an interwoven reading of these two novelists then leave us? Secularist and spiritualist, radical and conservative, their texts reveal the discursive malleability of amortality, its capacity to support divergent critical purposes. No simple apologists, their portrayals of the shortcomings of material immortality open space for both cautionary and visionary critiques. Both possessing strong didactic inclinations—though Bulwer is more directly polemical, Godwin more ambiguously nuanced—their fictions are deliberate interventions in the social and political concerns of their times. For both Godwin and Bulwer, immortality is politically charged, but for Godwin, the significance (if not the rhetoric) is moral and ethical, but secular, while for Bulwer the political and spiritual are inseparable.

Both accept the mortal body as the normative standard, as the truly human, and both value the human highly, though only Bulwer registers humanity as a participant in a broader spiritual chain of being. Both also normalize domestic relations, though Godwin's domestic ideal, like his politics is egalitarian and somewhat pragmatic, while Bulwer's vision of family life is as spiritualized and hierarchical as his politics. The trope of immortality as flawed ideal then illuminates the religio- and socio-political assumptions and values of the authors, their resonances and disparities, as I hope I have demonstrated.

In closing, I would like to return to the epigraph I selected for this chapter. It refers to the "disparity between man's possibilities and aspirations . . . and the narrow scope afforded them in the brief space of the present life," but these ironic portrayals of amortality suggest the futility of using length of years to judge the value

of a life. A qualitative, not quantitative measure is assumed by both authors. Godwin writes that "life is like a lordly garden, which it calls forth all the skill of the artist to adorn with exhaustless variety and beauty . . . so that we may wander in it for ever, and never be wearied" ("Of the Duration of Human Life" 138). At the heart of Godwin's philosophy is the conviction that a life lived well "with exhaustless variety and beauty" is desirable *for however long it lasts*. His ideas of reform are to shape a world that possesses that quality of desirability—without instead wreaking havoc by moving too fast. If we, as readers, are inclined to be impatient with his cautious approach, Godwin would argue that this is simply evidence of our own immaturity. Certainly, there is something captivating in his faith in reason, even if we find ourselves unable to fully share it.

Zanoni too has its charms. In fact, the emotional-aesthetic appeal of the heroic Zanoni makes Bulwer's text dangerously seductive. In light of his final sacrifice for her—"no greater love than this"—it is easy to overlook Zanoni's attempts to manipulate Viola and their child. It is easy while reading to accept his aristocratic values as given, to nod sympathetically when Zanoni criticizes the egalitarian claims of the revolutionaries: after all, wasn't he proven right? The Revolution did produce demons. Written with the benefit of hindsight, Zanoni can depict the horrors of revolution in detail. The more balanced St. Leon offers a valuable corrective to seeing revolution and republicanism as synonymous and to seeing aristocratic idealism as the only alternative to materialism. By contrast, Zanoni challenges the reductionistic impulse to assume that everything can be explained in terms of simple "rational" truths. Characterizing the fantastic, the aesthetic, and the spiritual as valuable in their own rights, Zanoni adds color and vibrancy to the somber shades of

<u>St. Leon</u>. In juxtaposing these novels and bringing their amortalities into

conversation, each sheds light on the other.

The authors and works I have chosen to pair in chapter three, Bram Stoker's

<u>Jewel of Seven Stars</u> and Mary Shelley's <u>Frankenstein</u> and "The Mortal Immortal"

are likewise intended to illuminate and complicate one another's themes and

treatment of amortality. I will turn now to them and an examination of amortality in

light of feminist and gender concerns, a complicated issue as my brief foray into

gender analysis with <u>Zanoni</u> suggests.

CHAPTER 3

POSTHUMOUS LIVES: AMORTALITY AND THE

PROBLEM(S) OF WOMANHOOD

> "Each day he would look up in the doctor's face to discover how long
> he should live—he would say—'how long will this posthumous life of
> mine last'—that look was more than we could ever bear—the extreme
> brightness of his eyes—with his poor pallid face—were not earthly—"
> <div align="right">--Joseph Severn, March 6, 1821[1]</div>

"How long will this posthumous life of mine last?" John Keats reportedly (and

repeatedly) asked his physicians from his deathbed. What is one to make of such an

incongruous, even oxymoronic, question? The use of the pronoun *this* suggests that

Keats is not referring to some future state or afterlife, but to his current existence, yet

how can one experience "posthumous life" before experiencing death? Joseph

Severn's description of Keats's overbright eyes and pallor, the unearthly quality of his

body, sheds some light. It reflects standard period descriptions of tuberculosis, the

"wasting" disease. Consumption, as the disease was popularly known for the way it

consumed the body, was commonly considered a half-life by patients. Less than

living, while not yet dead, consumption blurred the line between life and death for its

victims.[2] It is not surprising that Keats, having witnessed the consumption of his

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[1] This passage is excerpted from a letter from Joseph Severn to John Taylor dated March 6,
1821. The letter is reprinted in The Keats Circle: Letters and Papers 1816-1878 vol. 2, edited
by Hyder Edward Rollins.

[2] See Thomas Dormandy, The White Death: A History of Tuberculosis (1999) and Thomas
Daniel, "The History of Tuberculosis" (2006).

mother and brother before succumbing himself, would consider his condition more as death than life—even in some ways as a posthumous condition. No mere poetic metaphor, posthumous life was a condition of existence for many in the nineteenth century as I hope to demonstrate in this chapter. However one interprets Keats's words—and his body—, his phrasing certainly problematizes conventional thinking about the boundaries between life and death and discursively aligns Keats with my trope of amortality, where disruptive bodies straddle, reverse, and otherwise complicate life and death.

This recognition of the permeability of the boundary between life and death opens interpretive space for examining qualitative concerns of daily existence in terms of amortality: where life and death are conceptually interchangeable, each can be used to illuminate aspects of the other. While my previous chapter explored the gap between an ideal of immortality and its actualization as a locus for critique, this chapter identifies critical space in the gray area of posthumousness—the limbo of living death, suggested in the Keats passage and vividly invoked by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" where the skeletal woman on the ship is identified as "the Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH" (line 193). Coleridge's evocation of a figure at once enticing and repellant—a woman whose red lips, free looks, golden hair and leprosy-white skin (lines 190-92) mingle promise and threat—introduces the second part of my argument—the particular relevance of posthumousness to female experience.

Assuming that the association of living death with womanhood is not arbitrary, but theoretically significant, I will argue that the concept of posthumous life is especially applicable to the experience and representation of womanhood, revealing something about women's ambivalent and anomalous status throughout

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the long nineteenth century. Focusing on Mary Shelley's <u>Frankenstein</u> (1818) and

"The Mortal Immortal" (1834) and Bram Stoker's <u>Jewel of Seven Stars</u> (1903), I will

examine how amortality as posthumous life may illuminate feminine experience. To

recognize posthumousness as a useful lens for examining female experience is not

to assume an exclusively negative valuation of women in nineteenth-century culture.

Rather it is an attempt to locate a site for interrogation and negotiation of meaning

and status. I take seriously Jordanova's warning in <u>Sexual Visions</u> that "It is all too

easy to see the tangles around gender, science and medicine as simply evidence of

'sexism,' of cultures that denigrated women and denied them rights and value. Such

a judgment is both simplistic and facile" (162). The picture of female life these

narratives present is varied and ambivalent, provocative and complex—anything but

simplistic and facile. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar claim that representations of

female embodiment have often focused on "immanence with no hope of

transcendence" (94), yet these narratives complicate embodiment, even at their

moments of greatest pessimism. The transgressive nature of amortality means that

posthumousness offers space for both critique and innovation. The negativity of

death-in-life is, after all, counterbalanced by the potentiality of life-from-death.

     A common thread connecting these narratives is the relationship of the

female body and mortality. Not only is being female arguably a fatal condition in

<u>Frankenstein</u>—Mrs. Frankenstein, Justine, and Elizabeth Lavenza all die in the

course of the novel—but posthumousness is overtly addressed. The famous dream

sequence in which Victor embraces Elizabeth only to have her body morph into his

mother's corpse identifies both women explicitly with the grave (61), while the female

creature is (like the more famous male Monster) constructed from parts of corpses

and is (unlike her male counterpart) denied even posthumous life, being effectively

aborted by Victor. Bertha Winzy of "The Mortal Immortal" meanwhile lives her entire

life in feverish denial of her own mortality, graphically highlighted by contrast with her

husband's physical immutability. The story simultaneously reveals that a life lived

only in denial of the grave and a female life lived solely as an extension or mirror of

male life is, in effect, non-life. Finally, Stoker's Queen Tera once had herself

entombed alive and later "lives" in the novel simultaneously as a mummified corpse

and a disembodied intelligence, while the heroine Margaret, we learn, was born

posthumously to her mother and appears throughout the novel as Tera's double.

These women's existence is not simply shadowed by death, but by a powerful

impression of death-in-life. Each straddles the boundary between life and death, their

liminal positions offering revealing commentary on the roles and status of women

during a century in which gender expectations were in flux.

Femininity in the Shadow of the Grave

Why, though, is posthumousness such a fitting metaphor for female

experience? How does it become so vividly available as a means of approaching a

complicated subject? Four critical developments/concerns seem to deserve

examination. First is an epistemological shift in "the conceptual mastery of death"

from theology to medicine during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Foucault,

Clinic 141). Second is the objectification and commodification of the body

throughout the long nineteenth century. Third is the strong medical and popular

association of femininity with death and the grave. And finally, the recognition of the

legal status of married women under the rule of coverture as a form of "civil death"

provides a foundation for theorizing female experience in terms of posthumous life.

First to address the epistemology of death. In The Sacred Canopy, Peter

Berger identifies death as the ultimate marginal situation for human existence (43), a

situation that "reveal[s] the innate precariousness of all social worlds" (23). To

counter this precariousness, religious beliefs and rituals surrounding death have

often been used to shore up walls of social and epistemological meaning. As Pat

Jalland points out in Death in the Victorian Family, cultural models for understanding

and managing death are generally transmitted from generation to generation, and a

culture's "dominant ideal of death" can literally shape how death itself is understood

and experienced (17).   At least until early modern times, Christianity provided

Western culture with its "most comprehensive and coherent body of available

guidance" on how to perceive and practice death (Houlbrooke 1). From a purely

practical perspective, Christian tradition provided the deathbed, funeral, and burial

rites that accompanied death, but beyond the pragmatics of death management,

Christian theology also provided the framework for interpreting death as a

meaningful experience, locating it as part of a divine plan and offering hope of life

after death. While Christian theology was hardly homogenous—beliefs and practices

varied across time and place, as well as between priesthood and laity, between

denominations, between classes, even between genders[3]—Christianity, broadly

defined, offered the dominant means of understanding death. Certainly, it was the

model that most permeated the literary culture.

So long as this cultural model is transmitted between generations with little

conflict or innovation, its meaning-making authority remains largely intact. Indeed the

"coercive objectivity" such a model obtains helps ensure that threats to the model are

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[3] See Ruth Richardson, Death, Dissection and the Destitute chapter 1"The Corpse and
Popular Culture," for a useful discussion of cultural differences in treatments of the dead.

restrained (Berger 11). However, once its credibility, what Berger might call its "plausibility structure" (45) comes into question, it opens space for an epistemological shift, one that is bound to have important social implications. What Michel Foucault describes in <u>The Birth of the Clinic</u> is just such a breakdown in cultural transmission, as the Church increasingly loses its monopoly over "the conceptual mastery of death" in favor of the medical establishment.

In identifying an epistemological shift toward medicalization in relation to death, it is important to recognize a longstanding "historical interdependence between religion and medicine in the struggle against death" (Reynolds 157). To assume a simple opposition between religion and medicine is to dismiss the nuanced ways in which theological and medical discourses informed one another, even as they did at times seem to compete for dominance. Nonetheless, there is abundant evidence that the tensions inherent in different approaches to death became increasingly urgent during the long nineteenth century, contestations over the corpse manifesting in everything from bodysnatching to denouncing as infidels those who would have donated their bodies for medical research (Richardson 168).

Three aspects of this conceptual shift have particular significance for the texts I will be examining in this chapter. One is a temporal shift, privileging the ephemeral body as the marker of time and focusing on biological processes rather than fixed states. Foucault identifies this dual pattern of "pathological time" and "cadaveric time," as the result of an anatomical approach to the body that understands life and death in terms of rates of disease progression and organic decomposition, respectively (<u>Clinic</u> 141). This is not an entirely new perspective, of course. Caroline Walker Bynum argues, for instance, that throughout much of Western Christian history, the recognition of biological process dominated understandings of the body

(<u>Resurrection</u> xviii). The doctrine of resurrection was conceptualized specifically in terms of a recognition of the corpse as the "paradigmatic earthly body"—one that blatantly revealed change and decay as the reality of physical existence (<u>Resurrection</u> 41). "Death was horrible, not because it was an event that ended consciousness, but because it was part of oozing, disgusting, uncontrollable biological process" that began with conception and continued into the grave (113).[4] Bodily state, not soul or consciousness, dominates this Medieval theological understanding of death as much as it does eighteenth- and nineteenth-century medical views.

If biological process has always played a role in the conception of the body, then what is at stake is not merely an understanding of the body's material structure (athough this plays an important role), but how that material structure is to be interpreted. Can/should the theological and eschatological significance of the body be drained in the dissecting room along with its vital fluids, leaving a simple anatomical specimen, or can/should the corpse remain an important locus of personal identity and eternal significance? Is there some possible intermediary position between these poles? Most importantly for my purposes in this chapter, how can these questions lend themselves to an exploration/revelation of female experience through imaginative literature?

Most obviously, the bodies of Frankenstein's creatures, formed from parts of corpses, are implicated in this shift, indeed might reasonably be identified as literalizations of such problematic embodiment. Margaret Homans defines

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[4] It should be noted that Bynum's study focuses on theological texts, coming from an elite body of writers. The exact relationship of such writings to popular beliefs and practices is difficult to determine. As Richardson points out, there can be a considerable chasm or time lag between officialdom and laity when it comes to doctrine and practice (7).

literalization as occurring "when some piece of overtly figurative language, a simile or an extended or conspicuous metaphor, is translated into an actual event or circumstance" (30). In the case of <u>Frankenstein</u>, Shelley regularly literalizes not simply figurative language, but social concerns via amortality. Even if less concretely, the other narratives also participate in this dialogue of embodiment, time, and death. Bertha Winzy's frantic denial of aging may be examined as a denial of pathological/cadaveric time, while Winzy's own physical immutability, as well as the perfectly preserved body of Queen Tera (reminiscent of the incorruptible bodies of Medieval martyrs and saints), stand in opposition to a clinically defined understanding of the body. All of these narratives then, more or less directly, engage with such anatomical concepts of embodiment, using them in diverse ways for their critical purposes. Their critical stances in fact depend on exploring/exploiting the tension between medically and theologically oriented perceptions of the body.

The concept of cadaveric time also complicates the absolute status of death. Defined in relation to a process of organic failure and decay, death has become

> multiple, and dispersed in time: it is not that absolute, privileged point at which time stops and moves back; like disease itself, it has a teeming presence that analysis may divide into time and space; gradually, here and there, each of the knots breaks, until organic life ceases, at least in its major forms, since long after the death of the individual, minuscule, partial deaths continue to dissociate the islets of life that still subsist (Foucault, <u>Clinic</u> 142)

As with the guillotined heads of my previous chapter that problematized the moment of death, bodies are revealed as experiencing death at uneven rates, even in what is presumably a unified entity. In conjunction with this shift towards a process-centered understanding of death is increasing uncertainty over the distinction between life and death and over how to diagnose death. Part of this debate involved the nature of the animating force: is life a principle of the organization of matter, the immanentist

position, or the result of an immaterial (and divine) vitalizing force, the

transcendentalist position?[5] Death meant something different if there was a

separate animating "soul" than if the material structure was solely responsible for

vitality. British anatomists and surgeons such as John Hunter, [6] John Fletcher,

William Lawrence, and John Abernathy all participated actively and vociferously in

this debate. In a lecture exploring Hunter's theories, John Thewell explains,

> Life is a term so constantly recurring, and, indeed, as one would at
> first suppose, an image so perpetually presenting itself to our senses-
> and the difference is so striking, between the pale insensate corpse,
> and a living being, with all the expressions, actions, and attributes with
> which, in the higher scale of animals, he generally offers himself to
> our eyes, or our imaginations, that a vulgar observer would sneer at
> the philosopher who should suggest the difficulty of ascertaining in
> what vitality consists; yet where is the student, who, upon serious
> examination, has found himself satisfied with anything that has been
> said upon the subject?[7]

If the experts are unable to agree upon a definition or principle of life, it is not

surprising that they are equally challenged in agreeing upon the definition and

characteristics of death.

Jan Bondeson identifies literally dozens of texts in a "bibliography of apparent

death" where various proofs of death are attested, contested and extenuated (98). [8]

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[5] For a useful discussion of this debate, see L. S. Jacyna, "Immanence or Transcendence:
Theories of Life and Organization in Britain, 1790-1835."

[6] Hunter (1728-1793), one of the founders of British surgery, is of particular interest in regards
to Frankenstein. Hunter was intimately involved with the bodysnatching "Resurrection Men"
who inform Shelley's presentation of Victor Frankenstein's anatomical practices, and he also
left behind a significant collection of "monstrosities" that resonate with Shelley's concern with
physical abnormality and the monstrous. See Richardson, Death, Dissection and the
Destitute, for an enlightening discussion of Hunter's practices.

[7] Thewell's "Essay towards a Definition of Animal Vitality" was presented at Guy's Hospital,
London, in 1793.

[8] For example, Danish anatomist Jacques-Benigne [nee Jacob] Winslow writes in his treatise
Morte incertae signa (1740) that "'Death is certain, since it is inevitable, but also uncertain,
since its diagnosis is sometimes fallible'" (qtd in Bondeson 53) while French physician Jean-

While the medical authority of such texts varied, their proliferation indicates the depth of concern over defining and correctly identifying death. Nor were these purely academic concerns somehow insulated from the daily life of the community. For instance, the Newscastle Magazine published an overview of the history and controversy over death criterion that had been delivered to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle in 1828. Apologizing for his "presumption in teaching on a subject concerning which I cannot possibly profess any personal knowledge," V.F. asserts that his "enquiry will readily be admitted to be curious and important" (258, 255). Obviously, ideas that were disseminated to groups such as the Literary and Philosophical Society entered the cultural arena of imaginative writers, as well as medical practitioners. Notably, even Thewell's address at Guy's Hospital, mentioned above, is not the work of an anatomist, but of an elocutionist and rhetorician. During the long nineteenth century, when "a leading feature of British intellectual life . . . was the weakness of the barriers between different forms of discourse" (Jacyna 312), such commingling of medical theory with other communities of discourse is common.

Even more widely shared than theories of vitality and death was information about resuscitation of the "apparently dead." Steven Harris notes that, by mid-eighteenth century, reports of successful mouth-to-mouth resuscitation had become increasingly common, particularly in cases of drowning. In response to such cases, the Society for the Recovery of Persons Apparently Drowned was founded in London in 1774. Quickly evolving into the Humane Society, this group advocated advanced resuscitative techniques, including mouth-to-mouth and electric shock—an early form

Jacques Bruhier d'Albaincourt redefines death as a "sometimes treatable, not always irreversible medical condition" and acknowledges only putrefaction as a sure sign of death (ctd in Bondeson 86, 70).

of cardiac defibrillation (Harris, "Immortality Myth" 50). Supporting such public efforts

was an outpouring of popular literature detailing life restoration techniques for the

"apparently dead," including literature specifically designed for women (Williams,

"Inhumanly" 216). By 1866, restoration had become sufficiently commonplace for

Charles Dickens' family magazine All the Year Round to publish a stinging indictment

of the Royal Humane Society for its cruel and often gratuitous tests on animals to

determine the effects of drowning and suffocation, since those effects had already

been sufficiently demonstrated. Resuscitation techniques—and the publicity they

received through popular forms of literature—encouraged the widespread realization

that "'death' was not a sure and objective state" (Harris 51). Where death is, at least

in part, a matter of perception—to be "apparently dead" is not to be dead in fact—

and thus potentially reversible, the permeability of life and death becomes readily

apparent.

In the wake of such an array of medical challenges to death's sovereignty, it

becomes far more difficult to speak with certainty of being dead or alive. In

imaginatively provocative ways, one is simultaneously dead and alive—

posthumously alive—and potentially fragmented, dead in some organs, while others

yet possess the spark of life. Such uncertainty about the distinctions of life and death

produced a form of "theological uncertainty" (Sage xvii) or even what William Hughes

identifies as "ontological panic" in the face of the breakdown of "the scientific and

theological absolutes invested in death" (Beyond Dracula 160). And such uncertainty

infected the imaginations of the British public and literati, manifesting in both a terror

of possible live burial and a hope for/dread of life restoration. Such fears were

represented in fiction such as Edgar Allan Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher" and

Sheridan Le Fanu's "The Room in the Dragon Volant," but they went beyond popular

fictional motifs. British writers as diverse as Bulwer-Lytton and Harriet Martineau

took steps to protect themselves from premature burial (Bondeson 161), and an

entire industry arose around the prevention of/recovery from live burial. Certainly,

Mary Shelley, who had a personal investment in the issue of "apparent death," since

her mother was revived from drowning after a suicide attempt, while her husband

Percy was a drowning victim, and Bram Stoker, surrounded by an array of

physicians,[9] both grasped the literary possibilities of such an alluring and threatening

conceptual scheme. The intertwined potential for hope and horror arising from the

permeability of life and death informs their fiction in both flagrant and subtle ways.

A third aspect of the shift from a theological to a medical understanding of

death is a change in perception(s) of the body: how it is literally perceived via an

(often technologically mediated) anatomical gaze and how it is metaphorically

perceived as a specimen or commodity. The anatomical study of the body is

predicated upon the cultivation of "necessary Inhumanity," what we would today

identify as clinical detachment (Richardson 30-31). It centers on a constructed gaze

that distances the observer from the object of observation and that facilitates the

"effective suspension or suppression of many normal physical and emotional

responses to the wilful mutilation of the body of another human being" (Richardson

30). (Imagined to be) effective only so far as this distance is established and

maintained, the anatomically trained eye (or stethescope or microscope) is designed

only for viewing a body part or a symptom, the person as a whole remaining outside

its scope.

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[9] Stoker's three brothers, William, Richard and George, all practiced medicine, while he lived
near and frequently associated with John Todhunter, a physician turned playwright (Hughes,
Beyond Dracula 6).

A perhaps unintended consequence of this cultivation of detachment was the detachment of the body from human identity and status (Richardson 76, 95). It is just such a gaze, detached and dehumanizing, with which Trelawney observes Queen Tera in Stoker's Jewel. Challenged by his daughter Margaret to recognize and value Tera's personhood—"'Father, you are not going to unswathe her! All you men. . . ! And in the glare of light!. . . Just think, Father, a woman! All alone! In such a way! In such a place! Oh! It's cruel, cruel!'"—Trelawney is unmoved: "'Not a woman, dear; a mummy! She has been dead nearly five thousand years!'" (264). Trafton points out the discursive relation between dissection and unwrapping mummies, noting that initially such unveilings were described in the "idioms of early autopsies" (124), and Jordanova identifies dissection as the "symbolic core of scientific medicine—the place where signs of pathology were revealed to the medical gaze" (Sexual Visions 100). It is not difficult to recognize in Margaret's and Trelawney's opposing viewpoints a painful disjunction in the experience of the medical gaze by its practitioner and its object. Death only exaggerates a disjunction that is present in any encounter between medical gaze and submissive body, especially the submissive body of a woman that is often simultaneously eroticized, as in Malcolm Ross's response to the unwrapped and unclad Tera: "the white wonder of that beautiful form was something to dream of" (Stoker 270).

Despite Foucault's claim that, for Western scientific society, the experience of individuality is linked to death so that death "lends to each individual the power of being heard forever" (Clinic 197), the experience of many in the face of medical objectification was a suppression of personhood. Such objectification of the body meant that the sense of the individual could easily be lost—or in the case of dissection not simply lost but deliberately obliterated. Bynum notes how, in resurrection doctrine,

personal identity is closely tied to the body in a "psychosomatic unity" of selfhood (11),

and fears of dissection reflect a popular understanding that an anatomist's interest in a

body is its destruction and by extension the destruction of personhood (Richardson

76). Medicalized death becomes, not the "lyrical core of man" (Foucault, Clinic 172)

but the gateway to his, and especially her, commodification (Richardson 51).

Medical objectification is particularly problematic for women who increasingly

become defined in terms of pathology. Indeed womanhood is often represented as

an inherently pathological state (Shuttleworth 62) in what Foucault terms a

"hysterization of women's bodies" (Sexuality 104, 121). Jordanova argues that by

the late eighteenth century, medical writers distinguished women from men "by virtue

of their total anatomy and physiology," not merely their reproductive organs, locating

the necessity for female subordination in deficient (read not male) female bodies

(Sexual Visions 27). The hysterical pathology of womanhood even lends itself to a

particular relationship to apparent death: the "death trance," a hysterical disorder

virtually indistinguishable from real death, to which young women were inclined by

nature of their innate hysterical tendencies (Bondeson 97, 250-51).[10] The gender-

specific death trance then reinforces the link between women and death, while also

making the living female body available for observation in a manner eerily similar to

that of a corpse.

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[10] The death trance or "scheintod" is most fully discussed by Christoph Hufeland in *Der Scheintod* (1808). Hufeland argues that the death trance could last for days or even weeks with the patient exhibiting no pulse, reflexes or respiration, although reports from revived victims indicated that they could hear and understand what was happening, despite their inability to move or speak (Bondeson 96-97). Other influential physicians who treated reputed death trances included Philadelphia neurologist Silas Weir Mitchell and French neurologist G. Gilles de la Tourette who identified the death trance as "lucid hysterical lethargy" (Bondeson 250-251). The fear of the death trance was one source of the popular concern over premature burial that spiked during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

One might imagine that pregnancy and giving birth would help to counter this conceptual link between womanhood and death, but such an assumption shows an almost Gulliverian credulity. In fact, motherhood, the quintessential female occupation, simply reinforces this connection. Not only was birth all too often accompanied by death of child and/or mother, but stories of coffin births (infants born to prematurely buried mothers) proliferated in popular culture and even appeared in some forensic literature (Bondeson 245).[11] The posthumous birth of Margaret Trelawney is an obvious adaptation of this popular tradition, introducing occult elements into a naturalistic, if lurid, tradtion. Such ghastly stories lent an air of the macabre to an event already fraught with very real danger. (The well-known example of Mary Wollstonecraft's death due to a postpartum infection only eleven days after Mary Godwin's birth inevitably comes to mind.) Finally, as Gilbert and Gubar argue, the Victorian ideal of woman as the Angel of the House—already visible in Frankenstein in the selfless Caroline Frankenstein and the saintly Elizabeth Lavenza—who "simultaneously inhabits both this world and the next" itself occupies a liminal space between life and death (Gilbert and Gubar 24). To be a woman, then, is to have an unusually intimate relationship with death, even while living.

The apotheosis of this relationship may be located in the eighteenth-century doctrine of coverture. Coverture, the legal extinction of woman in marriage, is

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[11] So prevalent were stories of coffin birth that the phenomenon was given the name Sarggeburt. Bondeson cites a 1941 German review that lists 100 instances of childbirth in coffin, many of which were initially reported as premature burials. Investigation into such cases indicates that they were the result of putrefactive gases in the corpse expelling a dead fetus from the womb, not prematurely buried women giving birth to live infants in agonizing circumstances (Bondeson 245-46).

formalized by Justice Sir William Blackstone in his <u>Commentaries on the Laws of England</u> (1765):

> By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and *cover*, she performs every thing; and is therefore called coverture.

If the "very being. . . of the woman is suspended," such an existence can reasonably be described as a form of suspended animation, a living death.[12] Marriage becomes effectively an annihilation of identity for woman, a limbo in which she ceases to exist as an individual, but only exists as an appendage to her husband. Like the anomalous corpse that legally "did not constitute real property" yet somehow becomes a commodity "touted, priced, haggled over, negotiated for, discussed in terms of supply and demand, delivered, imported, exported, transported. . . . dismembered and sold in pieces, or measured and sold by the inch" (Richardson 58, 72), the anomalous female under coverture law was an "Unperson" at once living and dead (Anolik 27).[13] She was, in the words of nineteenth-century legal reformers, "civilly dead" (Erickson 4). Although the term "civil death" is more typically used to describe the loss of rights by those convicted of a crime, its applicability to women under the law of coverture is easily recognizable.[14] Ironically, the wife's

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[12] Walter Scott's definition of "suspended animation" may be informative in this instance. In an article for <u>Newcastle Magazine</u>, he defines it as "'a stop put to the actions of life in the body, without any irreparable injury to any vital organ; but it is requisite to put the animated machinery into action in a given time, or the power of action will be irrecoverably lost'" (181).

[13] Anolik's use of the Orwellian "Unperson" reflects Joan Perkin's discussion of coverture in <u>Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England</u> (2). The term "unperson" has obvious resonances with the gothicized term "undead," strengthening the link between coverture and amortality. Although as a legal doctrine, coverture only applies to England, it provides useful insight into the status of British women in general.

[14] Claudia Zaher provides a useful research guide to the doctrine of coverture. Although her primary focus is on American jurisprudence related to coverture and marriage law, she

"resurrection" depended upon the death of her husband: as widow, she regained a legal status of her own. While this is admittedly an oversimplification of marriage law, it is a conceptually provocative position from which to approach amortality. While technically coverture law only applies to married women, its underlying assumption that independent female existence is, in some aspects, an aberration (or even a transgression), that her proper status is non-existence or unpersonhood has resonance for understanding gender relations in general.

Together these four factors—the destabilization of ideas about death; the objectification and commodification of the body, especially the female body; close associations of femininity with death and the grave; and the recognition of coverture as a form of civil death—provide a conceptual framework for using posthumousness as a trope for examining womanhood. Within this context, posthumous life possesses a protean form, one that is both figurative and literal within the narratives at hand, revealing at once the liminal status of women and interrogating the gender conventions that structure female existence throughout the period, as a close examination of these narratives will demonstrate.

Redeeming the Feminine: Frankenstein and "The Mortal Immortal"

Frankenstein is at heart a novel of desire: Victor's desire for creative power and dominion over a new species, the Creature's desire for acceptance and love (or at least tolerance) and their mutually damning desire for mastery of, and vengeance

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includes a useful overview of the history of coverture and a number of sources relevant to a British context. Other useful discussions of coverture as civil death include Amy Louise Erickson, Cy Frost, and Ruth Beinstock Anolik. Civil death can be useful as a way of understanding the legal status of other marginalized groups. I noted in the previous chapter the applicability of this term to Swift's "dead in law" Struldbruggs, symbolic in some ways of the Irish under English rule. Lepers have also historically been "classed among the living dead" (Dyer 199).

on, the other. But beyond this, it is a novel of conflicting desires between the comforting conformity of life-as-it-is, the familiar structure of the status quo, and the enticements of intellectual, emotional, and social freedom. For Mary Shelley, daughter of two radicals, Frankenstein is also a painful recognition that, for the female sex, life-as-it-is is often effectively non-life and unpersonhood; while the transgressive quest for freedom could be (literally) fatal to a woman.[15] Julia Kristeva asks if a woman ever "write[s] under any other condition than being possessed by abjection, in an indefinite catharsis" (208), and it is certainly a fair question to ask of Shelley. While it is not my intention to address Shelley's writing in overtly biographical terms, ignoring Shelley's personal and familial experiences with gender conventions and their (costly) transgression would distort a crucial aspect of her writing: the emotional urgency that informs her attempt to imaginatively explore and reconstruct gender relations in her society. If Frankenstein opens and acts as "an indefinite catharsis" for Shelley, the novel also initiates a cultural critique that extends far beyond the personal and continues in various permutations throughout her literary career.

How then does this catharsis/critique work? Not surprisingly, perhaps, for a novel that has spawned one of the best known scenes in the history of cinematic horror, it relies heavily on fear and destruction. If ever an amortal body was designed to give one nightmares, it is, of course, the nameless monster of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. The use of the word "designed" is deliberate, since the monster's

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[15] Shelley's half-sister, Fanny Imlay Godwin, and Percy Shelley's first wife, Harriet Westbrook Shelley, both committed suicide during the writing of Frankenstein (in October 1816 and November 1816 respectively), inevitably a vivid reminder of the costs women could pay for transgressions of societal norms. In addition, Mary Wollstonecraft's suicide attempts following her failed love affair with Gilbert Imlay and the social condemnation she experienced were well known to her daughter, who was even then experiencing the costs of her own illicit relationship with Percy Shelley.

body, unlike the other amortals examined in this study, is literally the result of conscious construction, bits and pieces brought together to form a most unwholesome whole. "Nightmare" is also a deliberately selected term, since the Monster is literally the stuff of nightmares—or so Mary Shelley's legendary explanation of her "hideous progeny's" origins claims.[16] Certainly he has starred in enough late night horror flicks to qualify as a bringer of bad dreams. It can also be something of a nightmare to attempt to study Frankenstein, since, unlike St. Leon and Zanoni, the annals of scholarship are glutted with studies of He Who Shall Not Be (Mis)named.[17] To delve into this plethora of scholarship can be an overwhelming task. Adding something new to the conversation seems nearly as impossible as opening one's own attic lab and galvanizing a corpse into life.

My answer to this dilemma is to juxtapose the iconic Frankenstein with one of Shelley's neglected works, her short story "The Mortal Immortal," to examine how their respective uses of amortality illuminate Shelley's gender concerns. Betty Bennett points out Frankenstein's rare status as "an instant myth," allowing Shelley in later writings to "draw on an earlier, already semi-canonized public myth that she herself had written to create negative and positive prints of the same Romantic etching" ("Not This Time", 1-2). The amortality themes of "The Mortal Immortal" revisit those of Frankenstein, creating not so much negative and positive prints of the same etching, but complementary etchings that reveal Shelley's gender construction

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[16] See Shelley's preface to the 1831 edition of Frankenstein.

[17] The common misconception that the name Frankenstein refers to the creature has an underlying validity that is often overlooked: in a patriarchal society the (legitimate) child does in fact carry the father's name. Calling the creature Frankenstein tacitly asserts his legitimate claim on Victor Frankenstein, while the novel's persistent refusal to name the creature is a reminder of his illegitimate and anomalous status in a society that has no place for the Other. See Gavin Edwards on the significance of the confusion over the name Frankenstein (145).

in distinctive ways. I argue that together these works may be read as Shelley's

attempt to first excise and then recuperate the feminine by (re)defining normative

femininity against a blasphemous male amortality.

Since "The Mortal Immortal" can best be understood against the frame of its

more famous sister-work, I will begin my discussion with Frankenstein. Gender-

based and/or overtly feminist readings of Frankenstein are among the most prevalent

scholarly approaches to the novel.[18] Among the most influential are Gilbert and

Gubar's "Horror's Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve," where the authors identify

virtually all of the (feminized) male characters as manifestations of Eve (246)[19] and

those that follow Ellen Moers in treating Victor Frankenstein's nine month labor as a

symbolic pregnancy and identifying the crucial laboratory scene of his (her?)

animation as a birth.[20]   While such readings no doubt offer useful insights, coding

the male monster as feminine tempts one to read the female as merely his double, a

nearly redundant attempt to drive home the point of Frankenstein's scientific hubris

and transgression of divine reproductive authority. This masks the essential

distinction between the two creatures—that one is male, the other female—and that

this distinction matters. I want to emphasize instead the male Monster's status as

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[18] See, for example, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Kate Ellis, Anne Mellor, Mary Poovey, Johanna Smith, Vanessa Dickerson, Veronica Hollinger, Steven Vine, James Davis, Bette London, Margaret Homans, and Ellen Moers.

[19] Chapter 7 in Gilbert and Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination.

[20] See Ellen Moer's "Female Gothic," Margaret Homans's "Bearing Demons: Frankenstein's Circumvention of the Maternal" in her Bearing the Word, and Marie Mulvey Roberts's "The Male Scientist, Man-Midwife, and Female Monster: Appropriation and Transmutation in Frankenstein." Such readings often rely heavily on autobiographical and specifically psychoanalytic approaches. Useful though such approaches may be, they can also result in a warping of the text's meaning, treating the text as little more than a vessel for the author's (unconscious) fears and traumas and diminishing the author's active participation in the social and political dialogues of her day.

male because it is fundamental to understanding an often neglected element of the novel: the abortion/murder of the female monster.

The instigating scene is well known to readers of Romantic literature: the bitter, murderous creature confronts his creator amidst the icy peaks near Mont Blanc, recounts his unhappy history, and demands that Frankenstein construct a companion for him, "'a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself'" who will offer the sympathy necessary to his peaceful existence (129). Coerced by a painful combination of sympathy, guilt and fear, Frankenstein agrees and begins the "filthy process" (143). He claims that, while his first experiment was undertaken in an "enthusiastic frenzy," this second project was undertaken in "cold blood," a self-aware state that often sickened his heart (143). The female creature's destruction, nonetheless, is clearly an act of passion, not of reason: "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" (145). Verbal justifications aside, the brutality and rage Frankenstein exhibits go far beyond a reasoned determination to avoid repeating a mistake. He is not content simply to leave the female incomplete and dispose of the body in the sea: he must rip her apart with his bare hands.

The misogyny of his act is readily apparent. Anne Mellor identifies six concerns underlying Frankenstein's destruction of the female creature that boil down to a fear of female power and female sexuality (<u>Mary Shelley</u> 120). Built on the powerful lines of the male creature, her size does not only "[defy] that sexist aesthetic that insists that women be small, delicate, modest, passive, and sexually

pleasing" (120),[21] it makes her an overt threat to patriarchal control of society. An

"independent female will" and aggressive—even dominant—sexuality, coupled with

reproductive capacity, establishes the female creature as a male nightmare (120).

Mellor's argument is straightforward and compelling, and I have no intention of

challenging her interpretation of this scene. I simply wish to argue that it does not

exhaust the meaning of the female creature's destruction. While Frankenstein's

attack is an overt display of male hostility towards the feminine, Shelley's destruction

of the female creature works on another level—as a female author's rejection of male

commodification and pathologization of the female body.

　　　Diane Hoeveler writes that "the body of the male in Mary Shelley's fiction is

always a commodity of worth, an object to be valued, reconstructed, reassembled,

and salvaged, while the bodies of the women in her texts are always devalued,

compromised, flawed, and inherently worthless" (153). At first glance, this seems

applicable to the destruction of the female monster: even the flawed body of the male

creature is salvageable, while the female body is never even allowed to reach

completion. However, to attribute such a "fear and loathing of the female body" to

Shelley herself as Hoeveler does (155), suggests a superficial reading of Shelley's

grasp of gender politics in her day. Rather I would argue that Shelley exhibits a

profound awareness of the cultural devaluation and commodification of the female,

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[21] See Part III of Burke's <u>A Philosophical Inquiry into our Ideas of the Origins of the Sublime and the Beautiful</u>, for an influential discussion of female beauty. Of particular relevance are Sections XVI "Delicacy" and IX "Perfection not the Cause of Beauty." Mary Wollstonecraft directly attacked these ideas in her <u>Vindication of the Rights of Woman</u>. One of the complaints lodged against Wollstonecraft was that she was "amazonian," an accusation that linked female power with immorality and a transgression against the "natural" order of things. Shelley was strongly influenced by her mother's arguments about beauty and femininity in both <u>Frankenstein</u> and "The Mortal Immortal."

and Frankenstein (and "The Mortal Immortal") reveals her admittedly problematic attempt to reimagine feminine value.

Throughout Frankenstein, the female body can be understood as primarily a commodity, an object of trade between males. The bargain struck between Victor and the male creature is only the most overt example of female commodification in the novel. Victor's mother Caroline is effectively passed from his father's friend to his father, moving from daughter to wife with a brief intermediary period as "orphan" and "beggar" that only reinforces her absolute dependence on male support/possession (41), while Elizabeth Lavenza is presented as a "gift" to Victor while still a child. He recalls receiving "all praises bestowed on her. . . as made to a possession of my own" (44). Like a husband taking possession of his wife's fortune, young Victor appropriates whatever belongs to Elizabeth as his by default; Elizabeth has effectively succumbed to the civil death of coverture long before taking her marriage vows. Her death in the marriage bed simply literalizes a lifelong fact of her existence. The apparently genuine affection that surrounds both of these transactions does not alter the basic status of the women involved as commodities, a status that is stripped of its "pleasing illusions" and "decent drapery" (Burke, Reflections 109) in the transaction between Victor and the male monster.

However understandable and sympathetic the Monster's desire for companionship may be, it is nonetheless a desire that objectifies the female. Even less than Caroline Beaufort or Elizabeth Lavenza does the female Monster have any say in her own fate. While the male Monster, like any human being, has no choice in his creation, he is, with life, given voice and will. And as a male, he uses both voice and will to obtain power over a female. His demand is specifically for a female "'as deformed and horrible'" as himself, subject to the same rejection by society, who will

therefore have no choice but to turn to him (128). Having suffered the agonies of alienation himself, he is quite willing to bring a female into the same agonizing existence for his own benefit. No consideration is given to her own potential needs and desires, except as they will drive her to accommodate those of the male Monster.

Eve to the Monster's Adam, coverture is assumed prior to her creation: she is literally to be created for the sole purpose of having her life subsumed in his. She has no identity except in relation to him, no self beyond her role as companion to the male Monster. The very possibility that she would reject this role is enough to drive Victor to homicidal mania. Female independence is apparently sufficient threat to justify destroying the female *in potentia*. Her destruction is essentially an abortion: life, voice and will are all preemptively destroyed, metaphorically eliminating the threat to male dominance in the womb.

Yet as I claimed above, this destruction serves another purpose within the novel's complicated gender construction: if it destroys the threat to male power, it also prevents the female creature from being born into the living death that has been prepared for her. The transaction between Victor and the monster has been nullified, the object of trade removed from the bargaining table. The fates of Caroline and Elizabeth Frankenstein (and the servant Justine) are poignant reminders that death (civil and/or biological) is the end result of female commodification. Yet, sadly, biological death (their own or a husband's) is also potentially their only freedom. Death is a freedom that the women whose parts compose the female creature have earned, and Shelley refuses to allow Victor and the monster to resurrect her/them into renewed coverture/living death.

It is not only the commodification of women that Shelley rejects, however. She is equally resistant to the pathologization of the female body. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the medical pathologization of the female body, but Shelley addresses a particular construction of female pathology in Frankenstein, that of female monstrosity. Shelley's monsters are heir to a long cultural tradition with both theological and scientific implications.[22] Christian theology and early-modern science assumed "a designed nature, from which the monstrous was a categorical deviation" (Kors 32). While this deviation might be due to the direct intervention of the divine,[23] human monstrosity was all too often attributed to the frailty of woman (Huet 5). Generally, Christian theologians and scientists accepted the thinking of Roman philosopher Empedocles who had argued that children were imprinted with a mother's fancies during conception or pregnancy.[24] Monsters arose from the mother-to-be dwelling on unhealthy and/or perverse images and ideas—ideas that were embodied in her unfortunate offspring. The uncontrolled maternal imagination could even result in nightmarish hybrids of human and animal, for "the maternal

[22] For an elaboration of the theological and scientific traditions of monstrosity, see Chris Baldick's "The Politics of Monstrosity" and Marie-Helene Huet's Monstrous Imagination. Huet in particular addresses the gender implications of monstrosity. Other useful sources include James A. Steintrager's Cruel Delight: Enlightenment Culture and the Inhuman, where he explores the construction of "moral monstrosity" as a definitional term in defining the inhuman, and Alan Charles Kors's "Monsters and the Problem of Naturalism in French Thought," where he examines how Enlightenment materialism recast monstrosity in purely naturalistic terms.

[23] One of the earliest etymologies of the word monster comes from St. Augustine's City of God, suggesting that it originates with the word "monstrare" "to show or display." See Huet (6) and Baldick (48) for discussion of this construction of the word's etymology. Current etymologies attribute the word's origin to monere "to warn," associating a monstrous birth with a prophetic vision of impending disaster (Huet 6), but both etymologies share the conception of monsters as messengers—bringing to light the secret or sacred.

[24] Kors notes that Empedocles' arguments regarding monstrosity were almost entirely naturalistic in tenor (40). Nonetheless, some of his claims, available mostly through fragments embedded in other texts, could be appropriated by Christian scholars for their own purposes.

imagination mocks the taboo of mixing and confounding species; it brings about what Nature will not allow" (Huet 22). Mentally blaspheming against nature and the divine, the female imagination, in conjunction with the female body, becomes the source of the monstrous—that which has no place in an ordered world. Even after science and medicine had abandoned the association of the maternal imagination with monstrosity (in favor of other forms of female pathologization), it remained an important literary aesthetic (Huet 7). And it is this misogynistic tradition of monstrosity that Shelley rejects and reformulates in <u>Frankenstein</u>.

Perhaps inspired in part by Erasmus Darwin's reattribution of monstrosity to the male imagination,[25] Shelley transfers the source of monstrosity from the female to the male. Read from this perspective, Shelley's use of maternal language and imagery surrounding Victor's "confinement" and "labour" (Shelley 102, 104), culminating in the creature's "birth," is not simply an act of male usurpation of a female prerogative, but a deliberate transference of the monstrous imagination by Mary Shelley for a strategic purpose: monstrosity—embodied transgression— becomes the prerogative of the male, particularly the scientific male, rather than the female.

Identifying Frankenstein's creature as monstrous seems almost transparently simple. Physically grotesque, the creature is an aesthetic abomination.[26] Frankenstein asserts that

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[25] See Anne Mellor's "A Feminist Critique of Science" for an extended discussion of Mary Shelley's scientific reading, including an analysis of Erasmus Darwin's treatment of the relative impacts of the male and female imaginations on the fetus (117).

[26] Philip Thompson discusses the Romantic grotesque as an aesthetic based on estrangement, on the familiar made alien and ominous, and especially on the joining of contraries. Visually, it was typified by ugliness; but conceptually it was more complex, relying on the juxtaposition of the familiar with the alien. It might be considered a particularly ugly

> 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. (61)

The creature confirms (or at least has internalized) Frankenstein's opinion, stating

that his "form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance"

(117). And for all his claims of original virtue, the "'exultation and hellish triumph'"

with which the creature regards the murder of young William (127) aligns the

creature in many ways with the tradition of moral monstrosity that "perversely enjoys

the spectacle of another's suffering" (Steintrager xiv). Yet Shelley's employment of

monstrousness is not simply an aesthetic or moral judgment; in fact, such judgments

are explicitly called into question by her often sympathetic portrayal of the monster.

Rather, the creature's monstrousness is an ontological aspect of its being based on

its anomalous status outside the bounds of nature. The creature has been made

monstrous not simply by his own acts, but by the action of his (male) creator.

This ontological monstrosity has dual sources. One comes from the

creature's lack of physical integrity. In Purity and Danger, anthropologist Mary

Douglas notes the high value societies have typically placed on an ideal of physical

wholeness, completeness and purity (54). Far from ideal, Frankenstein's monster is

a conglomeration of parts. Frankenstein "collected bones from charnel-houses and

disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame,"

eventually molding the scraps into a disparate whole (Shelley 58). Douglas notes

that naming is one way of categorizing and comprehending an object (Douglas 37),

but how does one name a human anomaly? The Monster is not Paul or John or

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manifestation of Freud's uncanny. Certainly, it is a useful concept for understanding the
visceral response the monster receives from those he encounters.

Isaac, but a being containing fragments of each; his namelessness is as much a symptom of his taxonomic irregularity as of Victor's abdication of his parental duty of naming his offspring.

This ontological horror deepens when one realizes that the creature is not merely an anonymous assemblage of human parts: he is further polluted by the mixing of species, for the Monster's construction includes materials gathered from the slaughter-house (Shelley 59). Just as the maternal imagination had been accused of "mixing and confounding species" to produce the forbidden (Huet 22), Victor's feverish imagination has led him to create a hybrid of man and beast—the ultimate degradation of an ideal of wholeness, completeness and purity. Kristeva argues that we inevitably experience "desire for an idealized norm, the norm of the Other" (47), and in Frankenstein the idealized, normative Other is that which is not monstrous, not anomalous, not transgression embodied. The ideal Other is the human.

A taxonomic abomination, the Monster is also monstrous in another sense: he is amortal. His immortality is uncertain. Marked by immense strength and physical resilience, the creature seems at the least difficult to kill, and it is feasible that the alchemical science that undergirds Victor's studies lent the spark of immortality to his process of animation. But immortality and amortality are distinct states. Amortality specifically asserts a transgression of normative mortality, and normative mortality has unquestionably been transgressed. Victor tacitly acknowledges this with his emphasis on motion. Although the body itself is ugly, it is the endowment of "muscles and joints" with energy, the capacity for motion and mobility that renders it transgressive. Ugliness in a corpse is normal, if unpleasant. Vitality in a corpse is something much worse.

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Kristeva writes,

> The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us. (Kristeva 4)

What Kristeva describes is enacted by the creature with the added complication of unnatural motility. A corpse endowed with movement and will, the creature is abjection literalized. He beckons and threatens to engulf his world in his own experience of death-in-life. No divinely ordained resurrection along the lines of Lazarus, nor even as "natural" as the resuscitations performed by the Humane Society on bodies only "apparently dead", the creature's animation is no miracle of God or nature but a "catastrophe" of male arrogance (Shelley 60).

I might more precisely state that this catastrophe is an arrogant blasphemy against God *and* nature, because for Shelley nature is, or at least mirrors, the divine. As Mellor explains, Shelley "envisions nature as a sacred life-force in which human beings ought to participate in conscious harmony" (Mary Shelley 124). Mary Poovey offers an alternative reading of Shelley's relationship to nature, arguing that she distrusts it, presenting as evidence the "inhospitable world most graphically depicted in the final setting of Frankenstein" and Shelley's "fatal kinship between the human imagination, nature, and death" (126). What this assumes, however, is that the link between nature and death is necessarily negative, where my reading suggests that Shelley is employing this relationship as beneficial, if not entirely pleasant. How such an organic order manifests culturally and/or politically depends, of course, on how nature is defined—which aspects of society are aligned with the "natural" and which are deemed unnatural. Crucial to Shelley's gender politics in both Frankenstein and "The Mortal Immortal" is her strategic association of the feminine

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with a natural cycle of life and death, while the transgressing figures—those associated with overt amortality—are male. Victor transgresses against this "sacred animating principle, call it Nature or Life or God" (Mellor, Mary Shelley 64) at a cost not only to himself, but to everyone around him. Like throwing a pebble in a pond, the effects of his blasphemy ripple out, in ever-widening waves of destruction. Constructing an amortal being, Shelley suggests, cannot be other than harmful because the harmonious submission to nature has been violated. The amortal is the monstrous in Frankenstein, a literalization of the disruption of our bond with the natural order that will inevitably result in disruption of social bonds as well, and it is a disruption that Shelley explicitly associates with the male sex.

Mary Shelley's destruction of the female monster then is also a rejection of the female monstrous—a pathologized conception of the female mind/body that blames womankind for the failures of society. In Frankenstein, Shelley can only accomplish this gender reconstruction through an act of negation, abjecting the abject. Kristeva describes abjection as "a violent, clumsy breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling" (13). The violent, clumsy destruction of the female creature enacts Shelley's refusal to fall back under the secure, but stifling definitions and conventions of female existence, to be engulfed by living death.

Abjection occurs as a result of both desire and repulsion: the desire for the idealized norm and a repulsion based in the desire to be independent of that norm, to develop a self separate from its demands. It is a necessary and productive, if brutal, process. The abject male creature can only be allowed to live in Shelley's novel because he is male. Shelley can invite sympathy for him as a victim of Victor's own male monstrousness and can admit that he desires the sympathetic ties that Victor

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himself (like Godwin's St. Leon) had discarded, making him in many ways less monstrous than his creator. He is available as an object (a subject?) for her to develop a variety of social critiques. She can give him a voice, a conscience, a desire for love, beauty and virtue. What she cannot give him is a mate because she cannot or will not exhume the trope of the pathologized, commodified female into a new realm of the amortal. The female bodies that inhabit the text of Frankenstein are those of Caroline, Elizabeth and Justine, female bodies that die, bodies that belong, however tragically, within the natural order. Their metaphorical amortality, their posthumous living, comes from the non-life of living only as an extension of the male. Aborting the female creature rescues her from both types of amortality.

 If in Frankenstein, Shelley's only recourse for protecting the feminine seems to be its elimination—a pyrric victory at best—in "The Mortal Immortal," she suggests the potential for a more hopeful feminine experience, if only in the space between the lines. "The Mortal Immortal" may initially seem an unlikely choice for inclusion in a chapter focusing on posthumous life. Profoundly influenced by her father's novel, St. Leon, appropriating Godwin's trope of the elixir of life as purveyor of immortality and recapitulating his idea that immortality alienates the possessor from humanity, Shelley's story might seem more closely aligned with the works of the previous chapter than with the reanimation motifs of Frankenstein and The Jewel of Seven Stars.

The story opens with Winzy celebrating the end of his "three hundred and twenty-third year" and pondering the weight of his own (apparent) immortality (377). Narrated by Winzy, who drank Cornelius Agrippa's elixir of life believing it was a potion that would extinguish his love for the coquettish Bertha, the story actually centers on Bertha's response to Winzy's perpetual youth, a response that figuratively

transforms her existence into a living death. Persecuted by her haglike guardian, Bertha agrees to marry Winzy, only to discover his immortality after their marriage. Their initial happiness is followed by increasing tension as the contrast between Winzy's unchanging youth and Bertha's aging becomes blatantly apparent. An increasingly desperate Bertha resorts to various forms of disguise in a futile effort to match Winzy's youthful appearance, only to finally succumb to the ravages of time and the grave, leaving her lover-turned-"son"-turned-nursemaid to recount her story.

Bertha is not, on the surface, a promising figure to support a redemptive vision of femininity. The young Bertha is a coquette who "fancied that love and security were enemies" ("Immortal" 379), driving Winzy to drink the supposed love antidote in a desperate attempt to "cure [himself] . . .of love—of torture!" (381). The older Bertha is an increasingly peevish and embittered woman, fruitlessly attempting to disguise her age with "a thousand feminine arts—rouge, youthful dress, and assumed juvenility of manner" (386). As Poovey explains, Shelley often employs a "paradigm of individual maturation" in her fiction, similar to that explored by Wollstonecraft in her Vindications (122). This is particularly applicable to "The Mortal Immortal": both versions of Bertha are reminiscent of Mary Wollstonecraft's critique of women in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. Bertha epitomizes the Wollstonecraftian female who "hav[ing] been stripped of the virtues that should clothe humanity . . . [has instead] been decked with artificial graces that enable [her] to exercise a short-lived tyranny" (Wollstonecraft 122), only to become with the decline of youth and beauty a "superannuated coquette" whose "studied airs. . . disgust every person of taste" (165).

Wollstonecraft argues that the physical beauty of the sexes is equal at twenty (Vindication 165)—the age of both Bertha and Winzy at the time Winzy drinks the

elixir—yet notes the gendered differences in popular conceptions of this age. At twenty, women are presumed to have reached their prime (with nothing left before them but inevitable decline), while men have another ten years to mature and are even then assumed to have productive years of maturity before them (164). Wollstonecraft argues that neither sex can fairly be considered mature before thirty— that development of the mind requires time and experience—and that mental maturity is as essential to women as to men, though it rarely receives equal attention (165). Wollstonecraft's argument might be seen as a repudiation of, or at least complication to, Foucault's type of biological clock: her reading reveals the social construction of bodily time, that it depends at least as much on interpretation as on actual physiological processes and that, in applying only physiological standards to women, rather than intellectual standards as well, an injustice is being committed that damages not only women but society as a whole.

Shelley's characters are a virtual morality play of Wollstonecraft's argument: both characters are frozen at the age of twenty, Bertha psychologically and emotionally, Winzy psychologically, emotionally, and physically. Neither expresses the character development essential to a reasonable human being. Stagnant rather than perfectible, the quality Wollstonecraft, much like her husband in Political Justice, identifies as "the stamen of immortality" (143), Bertha and Winzy offer a concise critique of the economy of youth, beauty and misogyny that cramps a woman's "limbs and faculties . . . worse than Chinese bands" (Wollstonecraft 129).

Public formulations of gender roles, including those surrounding aging, appearance, and intellect, literally shape women's experience of femaleness (Poovey x), making cultural intervention through literature an important aspect of any reformation of women's status, whether personal or political. As Sonia Hofkosh

explains, Shelley "deploys disfigurement" in her writing, using physical appearance and its cultural signification to criticize the commodity culture that entraps women (212). This culture so persistently portrays women through the lens of a male gaze that "even they can look at themselves through no other eyes" (Hofkosh 207). What Shelley attempts in "The Mortal Immortal" is to refocus that lens to allow a different view of women and the relations between women and men. The disfigurement deployed in "The Mortal Immortal" is not aging, as Hoeveler would suggest, demonstrating "the triumph of masculinity and masculine values over the feminine" (Hoeveler 159), but rather a dehumanizing artifice. And it leaves not the male, but the female in the role of normative humanity.

How does this shift occur? I have already noted the profound debt Shelley owes to Wollstonecraft in "The Mortal Immortal;" however, the debt to her father's <u>St. Leon</u>, is equally significant. In fact, in terms of plot, <u>St. Leon</u> is the obvious source for "The Mortal Immortal." Like St. Leon, Winzy's physical transformation comes at the cost of human ties—and indeed at the cost of his own humanity. Married to Bertha, he is nonetheless separate from her, his perpetual youth making a mockery of the marriage bonds. Bertha matures (physically if not emotionally) from youthful partner to cradle-robbing older woman to apparent mother and at last to bed-ridden paralytic nursed by a man "young" enough to be her grandson. As a result, they are "universally shunned" by a wary community and eventually driven into exile, Bertha sharing in her husband's punishment despite her own innocence of any transgression (385). In language that clearly echoes <u>St. Leon</u>, Winzy acknowledges his alienation from human ties: "the inextinguishable power of life in my frame, and their ephemeral existence, place us wide as the poles asunder" (Shelley 388). Humans have become for Winzy, as for St. Leon, "insects of an hour." Yet, as I

argued in the previous chapter, it is the "insects" who are truly human, Winzy who has become ontologically other—Winzy who, like his predecessor, has become monstrous.

Wollstonecraft's criticism that "every extrinsic advantage that exalt[s] a man above his fellows, without any mental exertion, sink[s] him in reality below them" (Vindication 132) is particularly apt for the amortal Winzy whose "extrinsic advantage" not only came without any mental exertion on his part, but as a result of his selfish desire to destroy his feelings for Bertha. To be amortal is to be other than human—and in the quest for superiority to ultimately fall below the human. It is not simply Winzy's youth that is an imposture, but his very humanity. And we are reminded that, as in Frankenstein, it is the human that is offered as the ideal, at once natural and divine.

Bertha, by contrast, remains mortal and thus human. Her aging and decaying body, her dying body—the female body— is natural and thus normative for the text. Dying is what the body is meant to do. It is an inevitable consequence of the crucial process of maturation. It is the failure of Winzy's male body to act as designed that destroys their world. As Wollstonecraft states and Shelley would certainly agree (if slightly more ambivalently on the exact nature of the divine), "Nature, or, to speak with strict propriety, God, has made all things right; but man has sought him out many inventions to mar the work" (113). Mortality, as part of the natural order, is right, while Winzy's amortality, the result of an invention, is an artifice that mars the perfection of Nature's/God's work. It is Winzy who is marred and disfigured by being located outside the order of nature, Winzy whose amortal state is a blasphemy against that order. That Shelley views this transgression of nature as a distinctively masculine failing is reinforced by Winzy's apprenticeship to

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Cornelius Agrippa, whose elixir he steals and drinks. It is men (Winzy, Agrippa, St. Leon, Zampiere) who routinely attempt to conquer and coerce, rather than harmoniously submit to, nature, men who encourage other men to transgress against nature.

Bertha only appears grotesque when she attempts to imitate Winzy's mask of youth. Unable, as Hofkosh suggests, to view or define herself except in terms of the male gaze and male standards of beauty, Bertha has no resources for separating herself from Winzy. Doubly constrained by a culture of youth and a coverture that subsumes her identity within that of her husband, Shelley tacitly asks what option Bertha has other than her masquerade. At one point, Winzy offers (selflessly? one wonders) to leave Bertha to ensure her "safety and happiness," an offer that Bertha not surprisingly rejects (386). Not surprisingly because, having from youth "only been taught to please" like most of her sex, Bertha lacks "sufficient native energy to look into herself for comfort, and cultivate her dormant faculties" (Wollstonecraft 110, 111). Instead, her entire existence revolves around a futile attempt to mirror Winzy— and simultaneously to accommodate the social demands for youth and beauty that offer her only source of self-worth.

Winzy himself admits that the main difference between them is that his mask is the more successful because fully embodied (Shelley 386). Bertha's mask is literally only skin deep; Winzy's penetrates to the very marrow of his bones. Bertha appears monstrous because she is trying to disguise the truth of her body—a truth shared by all humanity—, but Winzy truly is monstrous because he has destroyed the integrity of his body, alienating body from spirit as surely as he has alienated himself from human society. At the end of the story, Winzy admits that his body has become a cage for his spirit, which is "cruelly prevented from soaring from this dim

earth to a sphere more congenial to its immortal essence" (389). Bertha's spirit, of

course, had been freed to soar centuries before, escaping through death to the life

that had been denied her by dependence on Winzy and submission to socially-

constructed gender expectations. Posthumous life has been exchanged for eternal

life through the natural process of death.

Shelley's exploration of the transgression of natural-divine laws of mortality

thus intervenes in and challenges assumptions about the inferiority of the female

body rather than simply reproducing them. Dying may be horrible, but Shelley

suggests that not dying, denying one's place in the natural (and divine) order, is

more horrible. Reversing Hoeveler's claim, it is the male body that becomes the

horrifying other, "a shell fitted over a mass of stinking corruption" (159), but Winzy's

male corruption is mental, even spiritual, rather than purely physical. A society that

compels women to mirror a corrupting male order of artifice and invention, to

subsume themselves in it in a living death, is one that requires spiritual

transformation. A transformation that Shelley, channeling Wollstonecraft, suggests

depends on the transformation of womankind, if women are ever to have a hope for

genuine life in this world, not simply the next.

"It is time to effect a revolution in female manners—time to restore to them

their lost dignity—and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by

reforming themselves to reform the world" writes Wollstonecraft (133). This truly is a

spiritual as well as social transformation. Wollstonecraft charges, "Surely she has

not an immortal soul who can loiter life away merely employed to adorn her person . .

. ." (113). For Wollstonecraft, restoring woman's lost dignity means recognizing her

as a spiritual being, a person with an immortal soul too valuable for the trivial pursuits

to which she has been condemned by male society. In explicitly contrasting the body

with the spirit and the immortal soul with amortality, Shelley offers a vivid portrait of this need for spiritual/cultural transformation.

What Mary Roberts writes of Wollstonecraft, that her social critique "attempt[s] to recoup the symbolic power of the characters of women," is equally true of Shelley ("Physic" 160). The society-as-it-is that Shelley portrays is sterile in both Frankenstein and "The Mortal Immortal." Amortality seems incapable of either procreation or healthy creation, and the culture that produces amortality is too often destructive rather than constructive. A fruitful society requires a regeneration of the female, a redemption of society through a reconnection with the natural order represented by women living independent lives, rather than posthumous existences in the valley of the shadow of the male. If, as Poovey asserts,

> imaginative responses to social experience can actively contribute to the evolution of ideology. And . . . the mere representation of ideology (whether conscious or not) can sometimes expose its implicit contradictions and thus lay the groundwork for outrage and eventual change (xv)

then Mary Shelley, like her mother before her, must be considered one of the "unacknowledged legislators" of social change for women.[27] Lacking her mother's overt feminism, Shelley is nonetheless a potent force for a redemptive vision of femininity—even when that vision is still embryonic.

Sanctioning the Feminine: Stoker's Jewel of Seven Stars

If Shelley attempts to redeem the feminine by distancing woman from amortality, in Stoker amortality is manifested through the feminine in a multiplicity of

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[27] In his "Defense of Poetry", Percy Shelley identifies poets as the "unacknowledged legislators" of society, claiming for poets (and thus himself) high cultural status and prestige. The works of Wollstonecraft and Shelley seem to make at least as strong a claim for their own status, particularly since, unlike male poets, they could not be legislators in the literal sense.

ways, including some that would probably discourage Shelley by revealing the persistence of gender stereotypes and woman's oppression, even after several decades of progress. Stoker's <u>Jewel</u> is a sort of hybrid detective/adventure/scientific experiment story. Narrated by Malcolm Ross, a barrister who is called to the assistance of a lovely young woman, Margaret Trelawney, when her father is mysteriously attacked in his bedchamber and falls into a trance/coma, the story gradually transforms from a standard who-dunnit as the supernatural aspects of the tale overtake the human mystery. It unfolds that Trelawney, an adventurer and collector of Egyptian antiquities, had been attacked by the astral form of the Egyptian Queen Tera, whose mummy he had acquired. Once he awakens, Trelawney reveals that Queen Tera had carefully prepared for her own resurrection and that he intends a "Great Experiment" to fulfill her purpose. The novel climaxes with the attempted resurrection that fails (or possibly succeeds), killing all but Malcolm Ross (in the 1903 edition) or leaving Malcolm and Margaret to enjoy marital bliss (in the revised 1912 edition).[28]

In the mystery surrounding Tera and her relationship to Margaret, female amortality becomes overdetermined in the novel, so tightly layered and multifaceted that it becomes seemingly characteristic of the female and serves as an interrogation point not only for turn of the century gender relations, but for epistemological and theological concerns that permeate a society in a period of turbulent change. Shifting between (and sometimes conflating) discourses of magic, science, and

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[28] References to <u>Jewel of Seven Stars</u> will be for the 1903 edition, unless otherwise noted. For a detailed discussion of the differences between these two editions, see William Hughes' <u>Beyond Dracula</u>, Chapter 1, pages 35-53. Also see Glennis Byron, "Bram Stoker's Gothic and the Resources of Science," and David Glover, "The Lure of the Mummy," for alternative readings that argue for the successful completion of the resurrection in one or both editions.

religion(s) and employing concepts of both resurrection and reincarnation,[29] Stoker,

like Shelley, employs amortality to examine the limits of society. But where Shelley

emphasizes the cost of these limits to females who are forced into a sort of living

death, Stoker reveals the cost to society when limits collapse, leaving chaos in their

wake. Hughes claims that Stoker sometimes uses a "paradoxical combination of

chaos and order" to open theological debate (Beyond Dracula 28), and in Jewel,

chaos and order are gendered and linked to the discourse of amortality. In true

paradoxical fashion, Stoker invokes a Janus-faced image of femininity, one that is at

once promising and threatening, a femininity that must be sanctioned in both senses

of the word—authorized and approved to act as a meliorating force in society and

pressured into compliance with a socially approved code of behavior.

The most obvious source of chaos/example of female amortality in the novel

is the mummified Queen Tera, whose attempted reanimation is the novel's focus, the

"Great Experiment" that will shape the novel's critical stance. This Queen, who

"claimed all the privileges of kingship and masculinity," had entered the tomb alive,

"having been swathed and coffined and left as dead for a whole month" before

emerging to take on rulership of Upper and Lower Egypt (Stoker 145).[30] Her first

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[29] Laurence Rickels actually describes the novel's climax as a "contest between reanimation and reincarnation (49). While the idea of a contest seems overstated, the mingling of disparate possibilities for Tera's amortality reinforces her interpretive complexity and the challenge of neatly fitting her into a single interpretive framework.

[30] Tera appears to be based on the Egyptian Pharoah Hatshepsut as described by Wallis Budge in The Mummy: A Handbook of Egyptian Funerary Archaeology (1893). Budge notes that Hatshepsut was "represented in male form with a beard, and in masculine attire. . . . and in her inscriptions masculine pronouns and verbal forms are used in speaking of her" (53). The extended discussion of Egyptian concepts of the soul and afterlife are also largely developed from Budge. Budge was one of the predominant Egyptologists of the late nineteenth century and certainly the primary source for Stoker's knowledge of Egypt and archaeology, although Stoker was also a frequent visitor to amateur Egyptologist Sir William Wilde (Hughes, Beyond Dracula 6). Glover notes that Stoker's understanding of ancient

"resurrection" prefigures the resurrection she plans for herself after death, while later her mummified body retains clear signs of vitality: where her hand had been broken off by grave robbers, the wrist and wrappings were stained with dried blood "as though the body had bled after death!" (143). Also after death, her Ka, explained as a sort of astral body, has an existence at once linked to and distinct from her mummified form (146, 198). At nearly every point of Tera's existence, the lines between life and death are blurred, life and posthumousness intermingling to a point of virtual indistinguishability.

But almost equally yoked to amortality in the text is Tera's foil and double Margaret Trelawny.[31] Born posthumously to her mother, while her father is entranced in Tera's tomb (154), Margaret uncannily resembles images of Tera and, even more bizarrely, possesses a reddish birthmark that bracelets her wrist, matching the jagged, blood-stained scar of Tera's own dismembered hand (181). Speculatively exhuming the trope of the maternal imagination marking the fetus,[32] Ross nonetheless denies this cause for the likeness between Margaret and Tera, since Mrs. Trelawney never saw any pictures of the Queen (236-37). Yet in the economy of maternal death that Stoker employs,[33] this marking makes sense: Tera and Margaret are not only doubles—Ross once speculates that Margaret might in fact be "simply a phase of Queen Tera herself: an astral body obedient to her will!"

Egyptian religion is also filtered through the spiritualist conceptions of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (5).

[31] In Beyond Dracula, William Hughes points out that the name Tera, an inversion of the last four letters of Margaret's name also reinforces the "structural relationship" between the two characters (38).

[32] Lisa Hopkins notes that Stoker seemed particularly fascinated with the idea of maternal marking of the infant, employing it repeatedly in his writing (136).

[33] See Hopkins "Crowning the King, Mourning his Mother" for a discussion of Stoker's problematic relationship with motherhood.

(236)—, but Tera is Margaret's surrogate mother, the woman who in some occult manner apparently delivers her after the biological mother is dead (Smith 80). Stoker thus links a transgressive maternity to transgressive mortality, a sort of self-engendering that figuratively eliminates the paternal, as Victor Frankenstein attempted to eliminate the maternal. This conflation of the female characters produces not so much individual women as a sort of monolithic femininity that must be meaningfully decoded and contained within the text and the culture at large. Stoker's deployment of amortality asks "What does woman mean? And how can she best be assimilated into turn of the century British society?"

I have phrased the first question deliberately to emphasize the dominant heuristic aspect of the novel. Stoker does more than ask what a woman's role should be or even, as Glover argues, "What does the woman want?" (7). Her roles and desires are merely aspects of what she means culturally and theologically. The entire narrative reflects a hermeneutical and heuristic approach, from its emphasis on translating the explorer Van Huyn's tale of finding the star ruby and the heiroglyphs on Tera's sarcophagus to the narrative structure of a locked-room mystery to the laboratory experiment of the reanimation attempt itself. The novel is as much about questioning and attempting to make sense (and order) of chaos as it is about the specific plot. Glover describes Jewel as a "narrative riddled with epistemological gaps" (4), and these epistemological gaps congregate around the body of Tera and her relationship to Margaret.

In regarding Tera as an epistemological puzzle, the challenge becomes one of interpreting the clues provided to her nature. How are we to read her? Do we view her as an "inert artifact," a part of the "exhibition culture" of the Orientalist industry? (Trafton 124). Do we view her primarily as a dissectible laboratory

specimen, as Trelawney does? Do we view her first and foremost as a woman, as

Margaret does, and if so, as what kind of woman? Is she a window on the past, a

wonder in the present, or a threat/promise for the future? If her corpse is just that, a

corpse—a perfectly preserved specimen of Egyptian embalming techniques—then

she is at best an "artifact of lost ancient splendor," a source of knowledge about the

past (Trafton 125), at worst nothing more than potential firewood, however valuable

she may be from an archaeological perspective. If, however, her body has viable

metaphysical force and meaning, if, in fact, it can be resurrected, it becomes

something else—promise or threat or both at once.

Stoker has certainly stacked the deck in favor of Tera being more than just

firewood. Unmistakably, either Tera herself or some other occult power is active

within the novel: every attempt at naturalistic explanation fails. And the clues point to

Tera herself. The string of murders that accompanies her mummy's retrieval with the

distinctive strangling mark of a seven-fingered hand, the cataleptic trance she

apparently imposes on the men in her tomb, the prenatal marking and possible

possession of Margaret—everything hints that there is more to Tera than an

extraordinarily well-preserved body. The other characters certainly assume that Tera

is an active spiritual force, a conscious and independent will. Even the attempt to

resurrect Tera follows, as closely as practical (considering that her body has been

stolen from her chosen resting place and transported thousands of miles to

England), the Queen's own plan: using her astronomical calculations and her

materials and technology (although supplemented in true Stokerian fashion by

modern inventions such as electricity and ventilators).

What is presented, granting the "reality" of the occult elements that surround

Tera, is a woman of immense occult power, a dominant and intellectual woman who

claims masculine prerogatives, a violent woman who rejects the Victorian ideal of womanly passivity. Tera's identification as "Protector of the Arts," her talent as a scribe, her liberal (decidedly masculine) education, her rule in Egypt, and her challenge to the male priesthood (she is charged as a heretic in her own time) all suggest that contemporary challenges to conventional gender roles are by no means new and unprecedented. In other words, Tera is presented as an ancient New Woman, the figure who was herself at the center of an epistemological controversy, "The Woman Question" that pervaded the last decades of the nineteenth century. Ross's fear that "Margaret was changing"—ostensibly a concern with her possible possession by Tera—is also an expression of concern over the changing status of women during the Victorian/Edwardian periods when Stoker was writing.

Steve Farmer notes that the New Woman controversy was not expressly a battle of the sexes but a contest "between women and a culture grounded in the distant past; between women and woefully outdated laws, customs, and traditions; between women and the unpalatable human tendency to resist change, even when change would clearly rectify glaring flaws and usher in a new age of enlightenment" (34). It is easy to read into Stoker's novel a simple conservatism, a rejection of all the social change that the "Woman Question" represented. Andrew Smith, for example, summarizes Jewel as "represent[ing] a horror of women's empowerment" by revealing "that women cannot be properly objectified: that they are not as they appear to be" (88, 86), and Hopkins seconds this negative assessment, claiming that Stoker habitually represents women as "sites of strangeness, uncertainty and dangerous, unpredictable sexuality" (134). The plausibility of such a reading of Tera is undeniable. Both her body, particularly her murderous severed hand, and her relationship to Margaret attest to her threatening potential. Victorian fiction

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frequently places a premium on the use of hands as a synedoche for character, "the disembodied hand, the hand without the heart . . . [being] an unacceptable fragmentation of the female body" (Michie 98).   And Tera's hand is not only violently dismembered, it is disfigured with seven fingers, having two each of the middle and index fingers, a violation of the ideal of physical perfection (104). Implicit in Ross' exclamation that "We were in the hands of God! The hands of God . . . ! And yet . . . ! What other forces were arrayed?" is the contrast with those other hands that held so much potential for destruction (Jewel 254).

Tera's relationship/doubling with Margaret also carries a dark undertone. The exact nature of the relationship is uncertain. Does it reflect the insight of Gilbert and Gubar that the "monster woman [is always already] implicit in the angel woman" (240), further evidence of Stoker's misogynistic viewpoint? Is it simply a particularly powerful empathy of one woman for another? Is it an incomplete reincarnation, complicated by Tera's continued connection to her previous body? Or is it a more sinister force, an occult possession? The latter is at least hinted at by Ross, who is horrified when he sees "her [Margaret's] eyes [blaze] , and her mouth [take] on a hard, cruel tension tension which was new to me" (229). He worries that, "It was almost as if she were speaking parrot-like or at dictation of one who could read words or acts, but not thoughts" (234). Ross admits that, if Margaret is influenced or possessed by Tera, "All would depend on the spirit of the individuality by which she could be so compelled. If the individuality were just and kind and clean, all might be well.   But if not! . . . " (239). Ultimately, we are again left with questions—and with a need for interpretation. It is the impenetrability and mutable character of this relationship that allows Stoker to simultaneously criticize and question the status of women in the novel.

If it is Tera's body and spirit that carry much of the epistemological weight in the novel, it is Margaret's reading of that body and spirit that provides much of the novel's gender complexity and reveals the Janus-face of Stoker's vision of femininity. If the woman controversy is often a contest "between women and a culture grounded in the distant past" (Farmer 34), then the connection between Margaret and Tera realigns that contest. Womanhood becomes a unique locus of connection between past and present, one that problematizes the use of the past as validation for oppressing women in the present. While Trelawney could flippantly dismiss Tera's status as a woman—"'They didn't have women's rights or lady doctors in ancient Egypt, my dear!'" (265)—for Margaret, Tera's womanhood is central to her interpretive strategy. Claiming solidarity with Tera through their shared womanhood, Margaret also claims the right, as woman, to speak for her predecessor. This is an important claim since, despite her apparently powerful will, Tera has no voice of her own in the novel. The demand to speak on Tera's behalf—and the determination to justify her acts and defend her against charges of criminality—is a direct challenge to a purely masculine domination of the dead queen. Trelawney's clinical gaze may control perception of Tera's body, but Margaret denies him the right to control perception of her mind and spirit, instinctively recognizing the need for women to stand together in the face of an uncomprehending male audience. Woman as woman offers a necessary corrective to Trelawney's "dogmatizing empiricism" (Sage 178) and a historical imperialism that would warp the past into a model of oppression for the present.

Nonetheless Margaret's empathy is not unproblematic within the text: she engages in a sort of sentimental imperialism that is as restrictive of Tera's potential for independent action as Trelawney's dehumanizing gaze. Interpreting her through

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conventional Victorian gender mores, Margaret dismisses Tera's potential threat by assuming that her desire for resurrection does not involve a quest for power, but a search for love:

> 'To me, then, it is given to understand what was the dream of this great and far-thinking and high-souled lady of old; the dream that held her soul in patient waiting for its realization through the passing of all those tens of centuries. The dream of a love that might be; a love that she felt she might, even under new conditions, herself evoke. The love that is the dream of every woman's life; of the Old and of the New; Pagan or Christian. . . . ' (201)

Margaret universalizes and detemporalizes this ideal of love as the highest aim of woman, an assumption that, as surely as Trelawney's scientific viewpoint, attempts to constrain and contain the threat that Tera presents. Margaret's assurances of the mummy's good intentions may be somewhat suspect—if she is indeed an incarnation of or possessed by Queen Tera, the assurances may be as much to placate the male audience as a genuine expression of belief on Margaret's part—yet, regardless, the feminization of a previously masculinized Tera serves as a containment strategy. It sanctions her actions within an acceptable framework of domestic relations and revalorizes the male as the source of meaning for female experience. Knowledge and power are subordinated to love and marriage as the height of a woman's ambition.

If Tera can be molded into the approved shape of a woman whose primary identity is in relation to a male, her threat is largely neutralized. Her transgressive mortality can be transformed into the innocuous posthumousness of any other woman/wife. This possibility is reinforced when they unwrap the mummy to find the body covered in a beautiful garment that Margaret immediately identifies as a bridal robe (269). Here a Victorian code of dress that ignores cultural and temporal variance helps place Tera as a bride rather than a ruler. The role of wife is assumed

to rightly supercede that of any political authority. [34] Although the legal status of coverture has been eroded by a series of decisions by the time Stoker writes, many of its cultural effects are alive and well. Tera's resurrection can only be safely accomplished if her vitality can then be restrained within woman's habitual type of posthumousness. The shroud/bridal robe is a tacit reminder of this fact.

It is not surprising that Margaret would interpret Tera in such terms, as she herself is a product of just such a male economy. Her engagement to Ross— depicted as much as a transaction between father and suitor as a romance—is a pointed example. Her hand—notably the hand that bears Tera's mark—is passed from Trelawney to Ross in a rite of male possession (181-182). Hughes points out that Stoker often portrays women as a sort of "erotic currency" passed between father and suitor in which the woman's hand is literally encompassed by the two males in a "triadic gesture" of proprietorship to which the woman need only passively submit (Beyond Dracula 118-119). This scene is doubly significant in Jewel, as it also dramatically reveals Margaret's link with Tera to Ross. The kiss Ross bestows on Margaret's birthmark commits him not only to his desired bride, but symbolically to the queen who is her double. His coverture of Margaret covers Tera as well, a reminder that this is more than a relationship between individuals. It is a manifestation of cultural power.

While Stoker might seem to validate such a traditional view of gender relations, there is, in fact, considerable ambiguity about Margaret's interpretation and the binding of Tera to a conventional relationship. Ross makes it clear that, while

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[34] It is worth noting that a similar set of assumptions occurs in Stoker's Lady of the Shroud. Not only is there a similar conflation of shroud and bridal robe—Teuta wears her shroud as a wedding gown—but a parallel subordination of female political power to domestic status: Teuta abdicates her birthright as Queen of the Blue Mountains in favor of her husband who is crowned King, not simply royal consort.

Margaret's interpretation may be beautiful and noble, it may also be very wrong.

Trained only to recognize one legitimate path for a woman, Margaret is blinded to

any other possibilities for Tera. Her cultural blinders render her incapable of

correctly judging Tera, leaving her vulnerable if Tera's intentions are not what she

imagines. If a male education has formed Tera into a threat to society, an overly

restrictive education has rendered Margaret into a likely victim. Stoker's complicated

portrayal of their relationship suggests a far more ambivalent attitude toward female

empowerment than is often acknowledged—not entirely surprising from a man who,

like Mary Shelley, is the child of a dedicated feminist, Charlotte Stoker.

If Stoker is unwilling to arbitrarily deny the value of female intellectual

empowerment, he is unquestionably aware of the threat that such shifting gender

roles pose to social order. It is a threat that he invests with cosmic implications in the

novel, as gender relations become inextricably intertwined with theological concerns.

In Chapter XVI "Powers—Old and New,"[35] Ross posits the theological problem that

parallels the problem of gender in the novel:

> The whole possibility of the Great Experiment to which we were now
> pledged was based on the reality of the existence of the Old Forces
> which seemed to be coming into contact with the New Civilization. . . .
> Were those primal and elemental forces controlled at any time by
> other than that Final Cause which Christendom holds as its very
> essence? If there were truth at all in the belief of Ancient Egypt then
> their Gods had real existence, real power, real force. (Stoker, <u>Jewel</u>
> 210)

Glover claims that Ross is worried that the invading uncanny might "undermine the

certainties of modern Western science" (4), yet as this passage makes clear, it is not

only a threat to science that is of concern. As early as <u>Dracula</u>, as I will discuss in

chapter five, Stoker exhibits an ability to harmonize the demands of science and the

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[35] This chapter is omitted in the 1912 edition, possibly to limit the potential for theological
heterodoxy.

supernatural. Rather, Stoker's concern here is the threat to the Christian faith that has arisen from the experience of other living (posthumous?) faiths—and from the leveling practices of anthropological study of comparative religions. It is a threat to absolute truth as a foundation for society.

The pages of chapter XVI—and indeed the novel as a whole—are filled with uncertainty and the desire for order to be restored. Just as the mystery plot asks "who is behind the attacks on Trelawney and why are they happening?", in order to restore domestic safety and tranquility to the Trelawney household, the theological speculation asks "who is in (cosmic) control and how can his/her/their actions be understood and managed?" in an attempt to restore social order and ontological security. Trelawney seeks to bring order by subordinating the supernatural to the natural, specifically to science, but the novel suggests the limits of this approach. Stoker seems to counter the cultural trend of moving authority over life and death into the realm of biological and medical science, restoring it to the province of religion. Ross notes that "the struggle between Life and Death would no longer be a matter of earth . . . that the war of supra-elemental forces would be moved from the tangible world of facts [and medical science] to the . . . home of the Gods" (210-211). In other words, for Ross this is a theological, not a scientific, problem, though he allows himself to take refuge in Trelawney's empiricism precisely because it seems to reduce the existential anxiety he feels. For Ross, the implications of the experiment become overwhelming and he shies away from further contemplation; however, "scientific . . . discussions soothed [him]," distracting him from the terrors of the metaphysical and occult (215). For Stoker, it would seem that science, not religion, is the opiate of the Edwardian age. Certainly, the anxiety of a Christian believer whose very moorings are being overwhelmed is almost tangible in the novel.

Christianity had (for Christians, of course) always held special status as the one true faith. Other religions could be viewed as heathen superstitions or as primitive religious stages with Christianity at the evolutionary pinnacle of faith. By the time Stoker is writing, however, such complacent views of Christianity were long under siege, if not toppled. So what was one to do? One could, of course, cling defiantly to traditional Christian faith in the face of Darwin, Durkheim, Freud, Marx, and other challengers. One could attempt to somehow reconcile the "truths" of these theories with the "Truth." One could replace faith in Christian supernaturalism with appreciation of its ethical teachings. One could identify Christianity as one among many truths—or as one among many falsehoods. But these close encounters with religious alternatives required that a Christian believer do something. For Stoker in <u>Jewel</u>, that something is to shore up the walls of existential meaning by expelling the force of disintegration—in this case the interloping amortal. Tera's amortality is a threat because it reveals the shifting sands on which order is resting, illuminating the cracks and fissures that have already begun to erode the bedrock of moral, social, and theological certainty.

What Stoker offers in <u>The Jewel of Seven Stars</u> is a quasi-empirical test of faith. Like members of the Society for Psychical Research, Stoker appears, at first glance anyway, to accept the validity of the scientific model, even in questions of faith and the supernatural. His foundational premise, however, stated through Ross, is that divinity of some sort is a given—a clear limit on the lines of inquiry/questioning permissible, even in this most questioning of texts. "That there were, and are, such cosmic forces we cannot doubt, and that the Intelligence, which is behind them, was and is" Ross asserts firmly (<u>Jewel</u> 210), bracketing off purely naturalistic explanations of reality at the outset. Even Trelawney, the mouthpiece of science in

the novel, admits that in the future "men may find that what seemed empiric deductions were in reality the results of a loftier intelligence and a learning greater than our own" (212). Clearly, Stoker is determined to restrain a full skepticism that would call divinity itself into question. (The success of this limiting strategy is another question.) Rather it is the nature and definition of this controlling Intelligence that is under investigation here. Is it the (male) monotheistic God of Christian faith, the Christian "Final Cause," or are there other intelligences that also have real existence and possess power over the cosmos?

Because Stoker—I should be precise and say his narrator Ross—defines divinity as eternal, immortal in the purest sense, then either the old gods never existed or they still exist. And if they still exist, "wherein was the supremacy of the new?" (210). That is a crucial question for Stoker. Where is the authority of Christianity and how can it be maintained against a tide of skepticism and alternative faiths? Ross continues by asking, "Was there room in the Universe for opposing Gods; or if such there were, would the stronger allow manifestations of power on the part of the opposing Force, which would tend to the weakening of His own teaching and designs?" (211). As Hughes explains, a successful Great Experiment would cast doubt on the Christian doctrine of resurrection, undermining the unique nature of Christ's resurrection and thus its salvific power (43). Who needs Christ if an Egyptian necromancer and a team of Victorian scientists can offer resurrection of the dead?

I noted above the parallel between the hands of God and the hands of Tera. This trope reflects the overt question of divine power that pervades the novel. Christianity has traditionally understood God as male and omnipotent, but Tera, a woman, has been given words of power, "hekaus," that would give her "power to

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compel the Gods" themselves (195, 146). If legitimated by a successful resurrection,

Tera becomes a threat to more than social mores, more than earthly political power.

More than a queen, she will in effect become a figure of divinity herself, her

resurrection a theophany. As such, she threatens—from a Christian perspective—

the very foundation of order in the universe, the boundaries that shape and give

meaning to human existence. It is this threat that must be contained in the novel,

and it is here that we see why femininity must be sanctioned in the second sense:

the disorder caused by change must be managed and minimized by being properly

channeled.

As I suggested above, Stoker is not entirely unsympathetic to demands for

female education and empowerment. On the other hand, he is concerned with the

disintegration of order fostered by changes in the social structure, a structure that he

explicitly links to a cosmic order. In the original ending to Jewel, an intervening

wind—of natural or supernatural origin—disrupts the attempt to resurrect Tera, and

the experiment ends catastrophically with everyone except Ross himself dead, their

eyes fixed in a gaze of "unspeakable terror" (280). Tera herself may or may not be

dead—Stoker's narrative is ambiguous—but regardless of one's interpretation, one

point is unmistakable: a violent breach of order, natural or supernatural, justified or

blasphemous, may have devastating consequences for all involved. In the revised

ending, Margaret survives and eventually marries Ross, the Christian sacrament of

marriage indicating that cosmic and domestic order have been simultaneously

restored. The ultimate subordination of ancient powers to orthodox religion is

coupled with the subordination of female to male power. Male power remains the

normative force in both domains—a male power that may, however, need

modification through a female sensibility and empathy. Even in this revised ending,

however, ambivalence is apparent: Margaret weds Ross in Tera's bridal gown/shroud. Not only is this a potent reminder that the marriage bed and deathbed are uncomfortably close for many nineteenth century women, but less ominously it also suggests that Margaret herself may have been changed in positive ways by her empathetic encounter with the past, that even out of a collision of forces, potential growth may emerge.

A Fitting Epitaph

In seeking an appropriate close to this chapter, my imagination is captured by the last line of the 1903 <u>Jewel of Seven Stars</u>. Malcolm Ross, having just discovered that all of his companions had been killed in the reanimation attempt, asserts that "It was merciful that [he] was spared the pain of hoping" (280). At first glance, both Stoker's and Shelley's texts might seem to validate this rather dismal statement and suggest that lack of hope is more merciful than a futile longing after something that is always just out of reach—whether it is existential certainty or feminine equality. It is a bleak vision indeed that only finds hope in horror.

Yet just as Kate Flint writes of New Woman novels, "Even if such novelists did not reward such efforts with fairy-tale happy endings, thus emphasizing the struggles ahead, these fictions served, potentially, as confirmation of the fact that independently minded women readers were not without others who thought and felt along the same lines" (297), Shelley's and Stoker's narratives are not without hope. Lacking in fairy-tale happy endings, they are nonetheless filled with potential. Shelley suggests the potential for spiritual transformation through a transformation in women's status, while Stoker suggests that, if properly channeled, femininity can serve as a necessary corrective to a male dominated social order.

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For both authors, the female body is a locus of meaning, one that must be engaged in dialogue and interpreted. I am inevitably brought back to the image with which I opened: a man lying on his deathbed, asking how long his posthumous life would last. His body and his words are juxtaposed, opening discursive space. Just so are the bodies of women and their (lack of) words juxtaposed in Shelley's and Stoker's fictions, serving at once as interrogatives of and answers to the social concerns of their respective times. Shelley's stories invoke abjection as a strategy for redefining female status in society, while Stoker's narrative is a balancing act between the inevitability of, and indeed the need for, change if society is not to stagnate and the awareness of the cost of change. The answers provided are multifaceted and ambiguous, offered as much between the lines as in overt passages of text. Posthumousness becomes liminal space, space that allows for innovation and change as well as revealing the limits of the present.

The limits of the present, the significance of the past, and the potential of the future are likewise central to my next chapter. In fact, I locate Jane Webb Loudon's and H. Rider Haggard's works specifically in the context of "chronopolitics," developing more fully and within a different context themes that are only tangentially addressed here.

CHAPTER 4

ROMANCES OF THE FOURTH DIMENSION:[1]

AMORTALITY AND A POLITICS OF TIME

> "If only the Geologists would let me alone, I could do
> very well, but those dreadful Hammers! I hear the clink
> of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible
> verses."
>
> <div align="right">--John Ruskin, 1851</div>

"*Geopolitics* has its ideological foundations in *chronopolitics*" writes Johannes

Fabian, pithily expressing a key assumption that underlies this chapter (144). And

chronopolitics has its foundations in our understanding(s) of time, a subject far more

complex than our Western clock-abiding culture may typically acknowledge. Barbara

Adam notes that time is such "an integral part of our lives that it is rarely thought

about," having become effectively invisible from its very ubiquity (5-6). While we may

recognize specific time-management artifacts—calendars, clocks, daylight savings

time—as human constructs, the "order of time" itself has become so naturalized that

it seems a truth of existence, rather than what it actually is—a product of social

construction and struggle (Murphy 3). Perhaps it is this very invisibility of time that

Fabian reflects in the preface to Time and the Other when he states, "It is difficult to

speak about Time and we may leave it to philosophers to ponder the reasons. It is

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[1] My chapter title is an allusion to George Chetwynd Griffith's novel The Mummy and Miss
Nitocris: A Phantasy of the Fourth Dimension (1906). While less comprehensively
metaphysical than Griffith's "phantasy," the novels I examine in this chapter share a concern
with the relationship between time and power, and "romances of the fourth dimension"
seemed an apt description.

not difficult to show that we speak, fluently and profusely, *through* Time. Time, much like language or money, is a carrier of significance" (xxxix). Difficult or not, nineteenth-century writers did speak frequently, fluently—even frenziedly—about time, particularly about the disjunction between human time measured in years and geological or deep time measured in ages that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientific advances had brought to the foreground of consciousness.[2]

Well into the nineteenth century, annotated versions of the King James Bible included Bishop James Ussher's date of 4004 B.C. for the creation of the Earth. However, at least as early as 1830 when Charles Lyell published his Principles of Geology, biblical chronology had lost hegemonic control of Western time. Chronology has been extended and problematized, and the human lifespan has shrunk into apparent insignificance when compared with the age of geological formations. Excavated into glaring visibility by the geologists' hammers, time has become something that nineteenth-century writers seem to "speak about" incessantly, through a wide variety of forms and metaphors—through seasons, fossils, architectural ruins, archaeological remains, antiquities, railway timetables, and technological advances. And, of course, they speak about time through bodies, both bodies that are subject to mortality and those that have escaped it. In an important sense, amortality is a discourse about bodies and time, amortals serving

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[2] A second important temporal concern of the nineteenth century was the increased pace of life promoted by steam transportation and railroad travel, methods that drastically altered the relationship of space and time that had dominated civilization for centuries. While I will not focus on this particular aspect of temporal development in this chapter, it does underlie the patterns of mobility assumed by both Jane Loudon and Henry Rider Haggard. For discussions of the effect of modern transportation, see Michael Freeman, The Railway and the Victorian Imagination, Wolfgang Schivelbusch, The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century, and Myron Brightfield, "The Coming of the Railroad to Early Victorian England, as Viewed by Novels of the Period (1840-1870).

as living "traces," to use Paul Ricoeur's term for the multivalent temporality of marks

left behind by living beings (<u>Memory</u>14-15).[3]

The novels I examine in this chapter, Jane Webb Loudon's neglected <u>The</u>

<u>Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century</u> (1827)[4] and Henry Rider Haggard's

<u>She</u> (1887) and <u>Ayesha: The Return of She</u> (1904-05), are compelling examples of

this discourse, foregrounding time in provocative ways. Loudon, as her title

suggests, combines two radically disparate images of time in her fourth dimensional

romance. Framing her tale with a prophetic vision of twenty-second century

England, a prosperous queendom suffering the pangs of uncertain succession,

Loudon resurrects a three thousand year old mummy and transports him into her

envisioned future where he encounters both the wonders of modern technology and

the corruption of "contemporary" politics. Cheops the Mummy, simultaneously within

and without time, provides an outsider's perspective that bears the weight of history

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[3] In <u>Memory, History, Forgetting</u>, Ricoeur distinguishes three types of trace: 1) written traces
that are eventually archived and thus preserved, the primary resource of historiographers, 2)
imprint in the soul, and 3) the "corporeal, cerebral, cortical imprints, as discussed by
neuroscience" (13-15). Ricoeur's idea of the trace involves multiple temporal levels. It is
inscribed in a particular moment, survives through time, and is interpreted in the present,
helping to create continuity across time.

[4] This novel has been neglected for good reason: it is nearly impossible to get ahold of the
text in its complete form. Originally published in 1827 and reprinted in 1828, then reissued in
1872, only a handful of copies are available in rare books collections (Alkon, "Bowdler
Lives"). It remained out of print until the University of Michigan published an abridged edition
in 1994, edited by Alan Rauch. In February 2009, a facsimile reprint of volume 1 of the 1828
edition was published by Bibliolife. I have used the Bibliolife facsimile edition of volume 1;
however, I have had to rely on Rauch's abridgement for volumes 2 and 3, despite its failure to
acknowledge its deletions. I will designate volume numbers in references for clarity. Paul
Alkon's review of the abridged edition highlights the serious concerns raised when
undertaking scholarship using an abridged text: "If there are abridgments it is imperative to
indicate where and how cuts have been made, and on what copy-text. Only thus can scholars
and critics write about any included passage with confidence that at least that passage (or a
part of it) stands as the author published it, and that statements about it accordingly may
claim a significant degree of historical validity or relevance to authorial intentions and
accomplishments. . . . The consequence of unmarked cuts is abolition of criticism's historical
dimension--and indeed of reading's historical dimension." Despite this legitimate concern,
where the only option is continuing to ignore the text, I believe that using an abridgement is
the lesser of two evils. It is my hope that Bibliolife will soon publish the additional volumes so
that I will be able to revise my analysis to accommodate any necessary changes.

and acts as a social corrective. Haggard, the king of imperial romance, intermingles life-extension, reincarnation, and transmigration of souls in his stories of the mysterious queen Ayesha, She-who-must-be-obeyed. In their encounters with Ayesha, the values, epistemological certainties, and political loyalties of British adventurers Horace Holly and Leo Vincey are challenged and potentially subverted, in part because Ayesha's extra-temporal perspective so drastically relativizes their own Anglocentric space-timeframe. Writing in periods when the tides of republicanism and empire respectively were at their heights and when the development of the "historical sciences"—geology, archaeology, evolutionary biology, and anthropology—had enabled a new discourse for speaking about (and through) time, these authors use their amortal characters and their discourses of time to imaginatively respond to the social and political concerns of their day.

"Those Dreadful Hammers": Making Sense of Deep Time

To fully grasp Loudon's and Haggard's chronopolitics, it is important to understand the context in which time became available to and as discourse.[5] The nineteenth-century temporalization project includes two key aspects: extending the earth's chronology far beyond traditional conceptions, thus decentering humanity temporally, as Copernicus had previously done astronomically, and finding a way to manage this new timeframe in order to support a sense of human value and meaning. Not surprisingly, the controversy between "young earth" and "old earth"

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[5] The following discussion is not meant to imply that earlier scholars and writers had not been concerned with time. In Time and Narrative, for example, Ricouer explores the time consciousness of figures such as Augustine, Kant, Heidegger and Hegel in depth. A profound change does occur, however, in the nineteenth century perception of the relationship of human existence to time and earth history.

schools of thought was undertaken with great vigor (and at times great vitriol).[6]

Despite residual popular assumptions that this was a Manichean battle between

religion and science, tradition and innovation, the reality is far more complex. Much

of the controversy developed between rival geological schools—catastrophists and

uniformitarians, vulcanists and diluvians, Huttonians and Wernerians[7]—rather than

between theologians and secularists. Indeed theologians and secularists could mix

quite interestingly in the different camps.

This disclaimer aside, biblical chronology does play a formative role in

Western temporal construction. The name most frequently associated with the

biblical school is Bishop Ussher, whose Annals of the Old Testament (1654) offered

the 6000 year age of the earth that dominated popular opinion. Despite the

contemporary tendency to see Ussher as "the symbol of ancient and benighted

authoritarianism," Ussher was part of a scholarly, albeit theologically-oriented, effort

to rationally calculate the age of the earth (Gould n.p.). Ussher's earth—and that of

biblical chronology as a whole—was "anthropocentric, moral and teleological"

(Porter, Making 32). It was a habitat divinely designed for humans, and its history

was coeval with that of humanity. By contrast, the old earth conceived by geologists

and later by Darwinian evolutionists was a habitat that supported humans as only

one of a myriad of species shaped by natural forces of adaptation, rather than

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[6] Proponents of a "young earth" generally believed the age of the earth could be measured in millennia. While biblical chronologists generally fit this designation, it is worth noting that many geologists witnessing observable changes in the Earth considered the biblical timescale sufficient to accommodate geological change (Rappaport 175). "Old earth" advocates believed the age of the earth must be greatly extended to accommodate the geological evidence of change. The length of this extension varied considerably from hundreds of thousands to hundreds of millions of years. The age that would eventually become the Victorian standard was twenty million years, calculated by Lord Kelvin using the rate of the Earth's cooling (Repcheck 201-202).

[7] Huttonians were advocates of the uniformitarian theory of Scottish geologist James Hutton (1726-1797), while Wernerians embraced Abraham Gottlob Werner's (1749-1817) theory of a universal ocean as the primary force in shaping the earth.

design. By extension, human bodies in this new cosmology were merely highly developed organisms, understandable in biological rather than theological terms. Thus, in Darwin's evolutionary theory, especially as expressed in The Descent of Man (1871), we see the merging of concepts from geology and biology. The old earth provides the time needed for biological species to change, while evolution demonstrates that bodies too are subject to forces of change—not just individual aging, but development as a species. In contrast, biblical bodies are created bodies, made in the image of God (even if some regard those bodies as "fallen"). Darwinian bodies are products (accidents?) of adaptation, bodies that mingled the advantages of "development" with the weaknesses of chance—and the risk of devolution. Whereas biblical chronology not only accommodated, but accentuated a sense of human value and a meaningful existence, the new chronology and cosmology threatened human existential value in the minds of many. To meet both intellectual and psychological needs, geological chronology faced dual demands: proving its superior rationale and accuracy, while offering an alternative model for existential meaning.

Jane Loudon is one of the nineteenth-century authors who was resistant to the hammers of geological chronology.[8] In 1830, the same year Lyell's Principles of Geology appeared, Loudon published Conversations upon Comparative Chronology and the Outlines of General History. From the Creation of the World to the Birth of Our Savior, B.C. 4004. Her "conversations" follow an established pattern of didactic

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[8] Biographical information on Loudon is scarce. Her only full length biography is Bea Howe's Lady with Green Fingers: The Life of Jane Loudon, the title of which rightly indicates its focus on her botanical career. Married to horticulturalist John Claudius Loudon, Jane quickly became educated in botany as an amanuensis to her husband. Later she began writing popular botany texts for women, notably Instructions in Gardening for Ladies (1840) and an eight volume Ladies Flower Garden (1838+). Loudon also wrote the Young Naturalist's Journey; or The Travels of Agnes Merton and her Mama (1840).

works for children where "an omniscient mother and her two well-behaved and inquisitive children" discuss a topic of scientific interest (O'Connor 146-147). Loudon's title expresses her continued acceptance of orthodox biblical chronology, as does the Mother's explanation of her educational plan to her daughters:

> "It is for the learned to strike out new paths to knowledge, we will be content to pursue that which has already been trodden. . . . I shall adhere implicitly to the dates taken from the chronology usually accompanying the Holy Scriptures for sacred history; and generally that given by Lempriere, in his Classical Dictionary for the profane.[9] Having fixed upon this plan, I shall not notice any of the discrepancies between the latter and the other writers of chronology." (3-4)

Not only does Loudon's choice of a theologian as her source for "profane" history suggest her ideological allegiances, her overt disavowal of "new paths to knowledge" and chronological "discrepancies" (18), indicate her awareness of, and resistance to, new geological theories. [10] If she does not reject such theories absolutely—perhaps they are acceptable for the learned, if not for impressionable children (and those quasi-children, women and the lower classes)—they must nonetheless be subordinated to religious authority. Her novel The Mummy! tacitly shares this commitment to orthodox chronology. Yet by the time Haggard writes She in 1887, the ancient age of the Earth seems a mere commonplace, as Ayesha dismisses skepticism over her longevity with a casual reference to deep time: "'What are ten or twenty or fifty thousand years in the history of life. Why in ten thousand years scarce

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[9] John Lempriere, English classical scholar and theologian (1765-1824). His Classical Dictionary containing a full Account of all the Proper Names mentioned in Ancient Authors (1788) was among the most influential studies of classical mythology.

[10] Loudon makes specific reference later in the Conversations to Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, French naturalist and cosmologist (1707-1788). His Natural History, General and Particular (1749) helped to establish new standards of inquiry and proof for studies of the earth. She would almost certainly have also been familiar with Bernard de Fontenelle's Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds (1686), an introduction to astronomy aimed at young ladies. His work helped establish a standard for disseminating scientific knowledge to young ladies in an understandable and appropriate manner.

will the rain and storms lessen a mountain-top by a span in thickness'" (She 112-13).

How was this transformation effected?

At the simplest level is the continuing accumulation of scientific evidence: more marine fossils, more bones of extinct creatures, more geological strata revealed during railway excavations, more knowledge of the workings of glaciers and volcanoes. More upon more until the weight of proof seemed inescapable, the sound of hammers deafening. But accumulation of evidence is pointless without interpretation. A massive bone might equally belong to a prediluvian giant, a dragon, or a dinosaur. How was the judgment to be made?

A crucial step in the ascendancy of geological time was a reworking of the relationship between texts, particularly the Bible, and nature as sources of authoritative knowledge. The Western study of antiquity was informed by both Judeo-Christian and classical valorization of written texts. This privileging of texts extended to natural history, as seventeenth-century naturalists used the same time scale for geology and human history and habitually turned to ancient literature for references to and explanations of fossils. Rappaport's illustration is illuminating: have new fossil bones, apparently belonging to elephants, been uncovered? What could be more natural than to examine ancient texts for "traces of these animals accompanying the Roman legions in their march through Europe"? (94). Other ancient texts were used as supplements to, and supports of, the biblical cosmology, as Western scholars generally assumed that Genesis was the earliest written text and accorded it a privileged status in theories of the Earth (Rappaport 70). In this

situation, a comprehensive challenge to the valorization of texts was a preliminary

step in reconstructing epistemological authority.[11]

"Nature" gained authority in part to counter problems with human testimony.

The record of nature was "unfalsifiable, and it was independent of any human

account of its operations" (Rappaport 81). Initially, as in the use of marine fossils

found on mountaintops to "prove" the Noachian flood, this "Book of God" simply

supplemented textual records, helping to shore biblical authority against tides of

doubt. However, as nature seemed to possess its own truth claims, offering a

seemingly unmediated source of "reality," naturalistic investigation of the Earth

gradually gained independence from textual studies (Porter, Making 107). By 1785,

James Hutton, popularly considered the "father of modern geology" and discoverer of

"deep time" (although the term itself would not enter geological discourse until the

twentieth century), could confidently assert that "'It is not in human record but in

natural history, that we are to look for the means of ascertaining what has already

been'" (qtd in Porter 107). The human task was simply to observe and record,

allowing the Earth to tell her own story.

Though Hutton's uniformitarian theory and expanded time scale, propounded

to the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1785, encountered initial resistance, by 1800,

most naturalists had accepted an old Earth chronology, although how old remained

under debate. When the Geological Society of London was founded in 1807, some

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[11] Rappaport identifies three intellectual trends of the early seventeenth century that initiated this revaluation (64-65). One was increasing awareness of "confessional antagonisms" that undergirded contemporary scholarship and the corollary that perhaps ancient texts were likewise colored by (un)hidden agendas . Such ideas had already been applied to texts from outside the Judeo-Christian tradition; in the new atmosphere of skepticism, biblical texts too fell under suspicion. Second, doubts about the reliability of the senses and memory called the reliability of human testimony into question—even before one added in the human tendency to lie and/or embellish the truth. Third, recognition of the inability of any witness, however reliable, to provide a complete report of events, accentuated by temporal distance and redactions of early accounts, made historical documents problematic sources of knowledge at best.

founding members' primary concern was that "too many wished to join," suggesting how pervasive the sound of hammers had become (Porter, Making 131). The pathway to old earth orthodoxy seemed smooth, the "arrow of time" working on its behalf and paving the way for Charles Darwin to emerge on the scene with his deep time-dependent theory of natural selection in 1859.

While this shift in thinking may have been convincing to many naturalists, another development was necessary to diffuse this concept among the broader population, to move us from Loudon's teleological Mummy! and Conversations to Haggard's deep time-informed She. This development was the popularization of geology, ranging from the wide distribution of geological literature to scientific lectures and demonstrations to a sort of geological tourism where rock strata could be observed.[12] Lyell's Principles, intended for the lay reader, was one entry in this popularization campaign. Accompanying and encouraged by popular scientific texts was an explosion in scientific societies and growth in the science curriculums of universities.[13] Popularization also often involved a sensationalist marketing strategy that caused the new fields of geology, paleontology, and archaeology to resonate

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[12] Porter identifies seven factors that were essential to the popularization of the new science: 1) the establishment of amateur learned societies, among them the well-known Lunar Society; 2) the establishment of the British Museum in 1759; 3) the rise of libraries which, thanks to a moral and didactic ideal, tended to stock non-fiction, educational texts; 4) the popularity of paid scientific lectures, often with a strongly spectacular aspect; 5) the upsurge of scientific publications, especially encyclopedias and periodicals[12]; 6) the increasing popularity of scientific travelling and topographical writing; and 7) the intertwining of geology with the arts in the vogue for scientific poetry and landscape painting (Porter, Making 94-103).

[13] These new scientific societies included working class groups such as the popular Mechanics Institutes intended to provide instruction and improvement. See, for instance, John Laurent, "Science, Society and Politics in Late Nineteenth-Century England: A Further Look at Mechanics Institutes."

with writers and readers of literary romance (O'Connor 3).[14] It was not by chance that geological writings were best sellers during the nineteenth century: they used the marketing strategies and, in many cases, the colorful, even extravagant, prose of their fictional competitors.[15]

Clearly, popularization set the stage for the concept of geological time to enter the public consciousness and become a source of conceptual manna (whether positively or negatively) for romance writers like Loudon and Haggard. But if we lower the curtain at this point, we have overlooked the second requirement for a new and emotionally satisfying theory of time—one that offered a humanly meaningful chronology. Writing for the Quarterly Review in 1827,[16] Lyell asserted that "All discoveries which extend indefinitely the bounds of time must cause the generations of man to shrink into insignificance and to appear, even when all combined, as ephemeral in duration as the insects which live but from the rising to the setting of the sun." Are humans then to be left adrift as insects floundering in the sea of deep time?

A second passage from Lyell suggests a more hopeful alternative:

> Although we are mere sojourners on the surface of the planet, chained to a mere point in space, enduring but for a moment of time, the human mind is not only enabled to number worlds beyond the unassisted ken of mortal eye, but to trace the events of indefinite ages before the creation of our race, and is not even withheld from penetrating into the dark secrets of the ocean, or the interior of the

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[14] A typical example was surgeon Gideon Mantell's promise to readers of his Illustrations of the Geology of Sussex (1827) that "'the realities of Geology far exceed the fictions of romance'" (qtd in O'Connor 3).

[15] See Bernard Lightman, "Marketing Knowledge for the General Reader: Victorian Popularizers of Science."

[16] This is the same year in which Loudon's The Mummy! is published; his Principles of Geology would be published in 1830, the same year as Loudon's Conversations, suggesting how closely scientific, didactic and literary works were interconnected during the nineteenth century.

solid globe; free, like the spirit which the poet described as animating the universe. (Principles 190).

The human body may indeed be an ephemeral inhabitant of the planet, but the human mind has a more exalted status: it enters into imaginative relation with the natural world and is able to restore even those ages which predated human existence.

One site for reconciling historical science(s) with human history is the practice of archaeological excavation. We may be mere sojourners on the Earth's surface, but excavation gives us access to its depths, taking us beneath the surface and allowing us to uncover what is hidden. In Excavating Victorians, Virginia Zimmerman explains that geology, paleontology, and archaeology were inextricably bound throughout the nineteenth century, sharing a methodological focus on excavation to unearth "truths" and a philosophical fascination with the significance of these uncovered truths to human existence.

In excavation, a fossil or artifact (often excavation of prehistoric and historic sites took place in the same location at the same time) is removed from geological strata, "layers of earth that signify the passage of time and re-presents the past. . . . The proximity of human remains to extinct faunal remains made the implications of geology for humanity very clear: people and their cultures are no more resistant to the passage of time than are bivalves or dinosaurs" (Zimmerman 3).   But the conceptual proximity of human and faunal remains also suggested that the latter require interpretation as much as the former. Excavation offers a strategy for reestablishing human mastery over time: only imaginative reconstruction could make sense of these otherwise meaningless traces. Archaeologists and paleontologists reconstructed stories as they reconstructed broken shards and shattered skeletons, and these temporal reconstructions "offered a way to imagine at

once time's expanse and the persistent value of the individual life" (Zimmerman 3).

Not surprisingly, these scientific narratives found their way into the fiction of the

nineteenth century. Both Loudon and Haggard engaged with the findings of

archaeologists, anthropologists, and/or geologists in their temporal romances.

Thus the human testimony that had ostensibly been exiled from the natural

sciences with the reification of the natural world as an objective record was restored

to its central role in the historical sciences. Yet the "value of the individual life" is by

no means a transparent ideal. It, too, has a history, having meant different things to

(and about) different people. Nineteenth century temporal narratives possessed their

own value structures that often had pragmatic (sometimes pernicious) effects. The

temporal narratives constructed by evolutionary biologists and anthropologists could

be used to label the poor as "atavistic" or aboriginal peoples as "primitive," to name

two well-known examples. The fascination with antiquity stirred by the narratives of

archaeology also led to the pillaging of nations. Valuable resources unearthed by

geological surveys could stimulate conquest. If deep time had been in some ways

domesticated by narrative, it may have been at the cost of creating new oppressive

structures.

Temporal oppression is only part of the story, however. Imaginative

treatments of time can offer outlets for social critique and innovation as well,

especially in the hands of novelists who could not only act as "literary pioneers in

probing time's ideological allegiances" (Murphy 2)[17], but could imaginatively rewrite

such alliances through their own uses of time. Perhaps inevitably, these literary

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[17] Murphy uses this phrase to describe *fin de siecle* New Woman novelists, but I believe it has broader application. While Murphy would definitely oppose its application to Haggard, of whom she is highly critical, I believe that she would not be displeased to see it applied to Jane Loudon who, though more conservative than the New Woman novelists Murphy addresses, nonetheless shares a number of concerns with her successors.

treatments of temporality can be problematic and paradoxical. Richard Albright

notes the "aporetic nature of time" in which a drive to manage our temporality

narratively comes into tension with the inarticulability of its conception (21)—Fabian's

"difficulty speaking about time." This resistance to articulation paradoxically

produces rhetorical elasticity: time can and is used in contradictory fashion, even

within the same text. Time, in all its aporetic incoherence, then, informs the narrative

strategies of the novels I now examine.[18]

The Apocalypse of Jane: Unveiling <u>The Mummy</u>'s Politics

  The mature, married Jane Webb Loudon, best known for her botanical texts,

might have been surprised, even dismayed, at being described as an apocalyptic

prophet. Certainly, she was no Joanna Southcott, believing that she would give birth

to the second Christ.[19] Nonetheless, apocalypse seems strangely fitting as a

description of her first work, <u>The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century</u>,

published when she was only twenty (1827). If I am to apply the term to <u>The</u>

<u>Mummy!</u>, however, it would be helpful to first unpack it.

  To use the word "apocalypse" in common contemporary parlance is to

suggest death and destruction, even the end of the world or the "end of history"

(Goldsmith 43). Such ideas are not unwarranted given the often violent imagery of

the Book of Revelation on which they frequently rely. In fact, the <u>Oxford Guide to the</u>

<u>Bible</u> identifies "cosmic cataclysm" as one of the common themes of apocalyptic

writing. Nonetheless, focusing on cataclysm can easily disguise another crucial

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[18] For an indepth and conceptually sophisticated discussion of the relationship between time and narrative, see Ricoeur's <u>Time and Narrative</u>.

[19] Joanna Southcott, English prophetess (1750-1814), developed a considerable following. In 1814, at age sixty-four, she claimed to be pregnant and that she would deliver the Second Christ. She died in December 1814, without having delivered a child, but the Southcottians continued, though in decreasing numbers, throughout the nineteenth century.

aspect of apocalypse—its concern with visionary revelation, with unveiling or uncovering (the literal meaning of the term) hidden truths in order to offer social criticism. Certainly, many of the millenarian movements that proliferated in the nineteenth century participated in this understanding of apocalypse, understanding themselves as bringers of enlightenment and a new moral order.[20] Apocalypse, from this perspective was not simply about endings, but about new beginnings.

The conventional view of apocalypse may be skewed in another way: it may ignore important differences in the ways that apocalyptic writing may be gendered. In his study of Victorian apocalyptic writing, Kevin Mills explains that Victorian women's use of apocalypse "tend[s] away from destruction and from finality, towards the overthrow of the dominant (male) order of things in favor of imaginative reconstruction—a new heaven and a new earth, maybe" (189). His description of feminine apocalypse seems particularly well suited to Loudon's strategy in The Mummy! In her romance, Loudon presents a prophetic vision not of destruction, but of reformation and renewal through human moral action, both on the personal and political levels. At once conservative and provocative, her apocalypse is a fascinating response to the period of republican enthusiasm and conservative backlash that characterizes the early decades of the nineteenth century, offering a reformist vision of government centered on moral leadership and what Mellor identifies as an "ethic of care"[21] (Mothers 87.)

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[20] See, for example, Ronald Numbers and Jonathan Butler, The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century; James Hopkins, A Woman to Deliver Her People: Joanna Southcott and English Millenarianism in an Era of Revolution; J.F.C. Harrison, The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism, 1780-1850; Ernest Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930; Grant Underwood, The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism; and Romanticism and Millenarianism, edited by Tim Fulford.

[21] Theorized by Carol Gilligan in In a Different Voice (1982), her influential critique of Kohlberg's moral stages, the "ethic of care" has developed a strong presence in feminist

Loudon frames her novel with a vision. The author/persona is walking in the country, contemplating her frustrating (and so far frustrated) desire to write a novel. The difficulty? She is unable to come up with any new ideas, especially an original hero. She complains that "heroes are generally so much alike, so monotonous, so dreadfully insipid—so completely brothers of one race" (I.iii). In discussing Loudon's narrative frame, Paul Alkon focuses on this romantic desire for originality, suggesting that the principal purpose of this frame is to "[challenge] readers to applaud her artistry as a teller of tales" (Origins 232). He argues that the novel's suspense is thus directed toward Loudon's success or failure in creating a new kind of hero (233). Alkon even claims that Loudon makes no "claim to serious consideration as a prophet or utopian thinker" (232). To make this claim, however, Alkon must largely ignore the latter two-thirds of Loudon's introduction.

In Approaching Apocalypse, Mills identifies three aspects of the apocalyptic form that are applicable to Loudon's strategy: 1) a prose account of a vision or visions that is, 2) narrated in the first person, and 3) "framed by a description of the writer's circumstances at the time of the visionary experience" (14). Using Mills' categories, Loudon's authorial concerns with novelty—her circumstances at the time—are secondary to the visionary aspect of her introduction. Having expressed her frustration with her literary ambitions, the narrator shifts into a different register. John Baillie notes that the recipient of revelation is "primarily passive" (19), and it is

moral theory. For additional discussions and critiques of Gilligan's theory, see An Ethic of Care: Feminist and Interdisciplinary Perspectives, edited by Mary Jeanne Larrabee; The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political and Global by Virginia Held; and Care, Autonomy, and Justice: Feminism and the Ethic of Care by Grace Clement. Linda Kerber's warning that scholars seeking to integrate Gilligan's theory into their own scholarship (especially feminist historians as her study "makes only a single, brief reference to women's history") should (re)think carefully and engage in a "careful reading of Gilligan's work" is a useful reminder of the difficulties of applying contemporary theories to the past and risking an anachronistic revisionist history (106). Nonetheless, using such a lens can be intellectually productive. I believe that is the case with Mellor's application of the ethic of care to women's Romantic political writing and my extension of her insights to The Mummy!

in resigning her active will that Loudon becomes receptive to the revelatory spirit.

Seating herself on a hillside, she resigns herself to the contemplation of nature—

nature, that is, as the Book of God, whose purpose it is to "elevate [the soul] to its

proper sphere" (II.131). She asks "Why should I seek to wander in the regions of

fiction? Why not enjoy tranquilly the blessings Heaven has bestowed upon me?"

(I.v). Sound and sight fade; and the author sleeps—or enters an alternate state of

consciousness—where/when she is visited by an azure-winged spirit who offers her

a scroll containing "the Chronicle of a future age" (I.vi). The spirit's message

identifies four concerns that will recur throughout the novel: 1) "new governments", 2)

"strange discoveries", 3) "the restless curiosity and research of man," and 4) the

unchanging nature of humanity revealed in the persistence of the same passions

throughout the ages (I.vii-viii).

The spirit further assures Loudon that she is the sole recipient of this vision,

positioning her as a privileged seer whose vision of the future has the authority of

divine revelation: a blessing bestowed upon her by Heaven. Mellor argues that

British women writers of the Romantic era "asserted both the right and the duty of

women to speak for the nation," often drawing on the tradition of seventeenth-century

female preachers to assert their literary and political authority (Mothers 9-10). I

believe that Loudon employs the apocalyptic form for a similar purpose. The narrator

assumes the authority of a prophet, but that authority derives from submission to a

transcendent voice that speaks from beyond the limits of human knowledge and time

(Mills 15 and Goldsmith 21). The introduction closes with the spirit showing Loudon

a panoramic view of "the scenes and characters, which I shall now endeavor to pass

before the eyes of the reader" (I.viii). The reader is thus rhetorically located not

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simply as the audience for a novel, but as the recipients of divine revelation as mediated through the visionary prophet/writer.

Not only does Loudon's use of an apocalyptic frame help to establish her authority, it also (and perhaps more importantly) locates the novel's action within a providential order of time. In apocalyptic narrative, "the whole of history is a unity under the overarching purpose of God" (Russell 36). If geological knowledge threatened to decenter the role of humanity in the history of the earth, Loudon's apocalypticism reasserts that centrality. Benedict Anderson identifies a temporal mode where "cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of men essentially identical . . . . root[ing] human lives firmly in the very nature of things" (36). This is a central assumption and strategy of <u>The Mummy!</u> Human action is deeply meaningful and inescapably bound to a divine order that is reflected and effected in the natural world. Human action that is "unnatural" is constructed as an affront to this providential order. Thus Loudon, for whom meaning and order are virtually indistinguishable, is able to use both history and nature to promote her socio-political and theological message.

What are the scenes and characters that pass before the eyes of the reader? A brief synopsis will prove enlightening. The novel proper opens in 2126 A.D. at the end of an English "golden age" (Loudon I.10). After a period of republicanism-fueled anarchy, the monarchy had been restored under a queen whose reign was renowned for wisdom, justice, prosperity, and peacefulness. She initiated a dynasty of virgin queens to be elected by the (male) public from amongst her unmarried female descendents, although she did designate her immediate successor, her niece Claudia. When an indolent Claudia simply allows her predecessor's practices to continue with little supervision, she unwittingly allows decay and corruption to set in.

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Her only notable act is hosting a "triumph" for General Edmund Montagu to celebrate his triumphs in battle. During the celebration, she is injured by a crashing hot air balloon, and her threatened recovery is abruptly (though discreetly) ended by poisoning from a political faction who wants to replace her on the throne.

The political focus of the novel then centers on the battle for succession between two cousins, Elvira and Rosabella, and their respective political parties. Gilligan explains that "a feminist ethic of care begins with connection, theorized as primary and seen as fundamental in human life" ("Hearing" 122). As the realm of interpersonal relationships becomes "morally paradigmatic," practices and actions that "[sever] connections [tend] to cause rather than solve moral problems" (Clement 2, 14). Just such a severing of relations occurs as a result of this battle for succession. As soon as Elvira's and Rosabella's familial relationship—they have been essentially raised as sisters—succumbs to rivalry, public as well as personal corruption begins to multiply. Loudon makes it plain that failures of personal relationship are, in fact, the source of public harm. In a telling scene, the sly and ambitious Rosabella is moved to repentance by seeing her uncle's pain at her disloyalty. As she recalls his past kindnesses, "Nature resume[s] her powerful influence" and she throws her arms around him to beg forgiveness. Caught up in his own feelings of betrayal, her uncle rejects her and "extinguish[es] forever every gentler feeling in his niece's breast. . . . These near relations, united as they were by the tenderest ties, parted in mutual hatred" (II.115). On both sides, it is the sacrifice of connection that creates a moral abyss. Played out on the stage of monarchical succession, Loudon makes evident the moral bankruptcy of a system that would place personal advantage ahead of relationships.

Meanwhile, Edric Montagu, [22] Edmund's brother, has ballooned to Egypt with

his tutor, Entwerfen, to try to resuscitate the recently discovered mummy of Cheops.

The attempt succeeds, but in a farcical scenario, a disoriented Cheops inadvertently

activates the balloon and sails to England, leaving Edric and Entwerfen to deal with

the Egyptian authorities and travel home via a series of Candide-esqe adventures.

In London, Cheops becomes embroiled in Rosabella's schemes against Elvira,

urging Rosabella and her accomplices into deepening acts of treachery that plunge

them into ever greater difficulty, while he simultaneously encourages and protects

the forces of virtue, as embodied in Elvira's party. Eventually, all is resolved with

Elvira being safely ensconced on the throne and married to Roderick II, the King of

Ireland, who has returned from a military campaign in Spain, with Edric and

Entwerfen in tow. Stability is restored, along with the promise of a rejuvenated and

morally sound government. The mummy returns to Egypt and his tomb, where Edric

encounters him one last time. Edric then learns that Cheops had been restored not

by Edric's scientific endeavors, but by divine fiat, and that some mysteries are best

left veiled.

These admittedly convoluted events take place in a world carefully elaborated

by Loudon, as at once deeply familiar and exotic. The spirit in Loudon's vision

promises that, though strange, this world is comprehensible because "much will still

remain to connect that future age with the present" (I.viii). An important aspect of

this estranged familiarity is developed through Loudon's depiction of futuristic

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[22] Lisa Hopkins points out the debt Loudon owes to Shakespeare in the names she uses. However, it seems likely that Edric Montagu also has a model in Edward Wortley Montagu (1713-1776), son of Lady Mary Montagu. A talented linguist and amateur Egyptologist, Montague published Reflections on the Rise and Fall of the Ancient Republicks, Adapted to the Present State of Great Britain (1759) which may have contributed to his interest for Loudon. A facsimile version of the 1806 edition of his text is available online through Google Books.

technologies, often highly imaginative extrapolations from existing ones. [23] In his

study of the origins of futuristic fiction, Alkon perceptively notes Loudon's concrete

formulation of her futuristic setting, stating that it is "more consistently portrayed in its

everyday details . . . than that of any previous futuristic fiction. Webb gives her

readers a concrete sense of actual life in a future distinctly different from their

present" (234).

This concrete depiction of the world is more than a futurist's imaginative play;

it is a significant aspect of Loudon's didactic strategy. Mellor emphasizes the central

role that "probability" played in women's Romantic political writing. By focusing on

the "mimetic theory of art," these women both distinguished themselves from the

visionary and supernatural aspects of male Romantic poets and established the

practicability of their reformist agendas (Mothers 92). Loudon, who employed the

visionary and supernatural in her frame and her mummy resurrection, largely

sacrificed conventional mimetic probability. But by carefully constructing a

"probable" world of the future, Loudon recuperated a sense of realism in the midst of

the exotic. This difficult (and perhaps only partially successful) balancing act allowed

her to merge apparently incompatible rhetorical strategies: suggesting the

practicability of her ideas via a "realistic" backdrop while creating a cognitive distance

that disarmed criticism by locating the problematic aspects of society in the future

and adopting prophetic authority.

Technological advances undeniably permeate virtually every aspect of

Loudon's future society from the domestic arts (chemical cooking and inflatable

mattresses) to agriculture (a mechanical milking machine and rainmaking

technology) to fashion (spun asbestos cloaks and gas illuminated headdresses in

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[23] For a useful discussion of Loudon's extrapolations from contemporary scientific
discoveries, see Rauch's introduction to The Mummy!).

exotic shapes) to travel (aerial navigation, houses that are movable by railway, steam-percussion bridges, and a tunnel between England and Ireland) to medicine (automaton surgeons and condensable medical kits) to justice (automaton lawyers and judges). At times, this picture suggests an "urban ideal" that "evoke[s] the construction of the New Jerusalem" (Mills 65). Loudon's depiction of the palace is a particularly compelling example: the walls of the Queen's reception hall are "literally one blaze of precious stones. . . . relieved by a colonnade of pillars of solid gold", while the carpets are a perfect "imitation of green moss, with exquisitely beautiful groups of flowers thrown carelessly upon it" (I.256-257). This idealized picture is undermined, however, by a description of London's urban sprawl as monstrous, ready "to stretch its enormous arms on every side and swallow up all the hapless villages which were so unfortunate as to fall within its reach" (I.147). In the face of such contradictory images, how does Loudon's treatment of urbanization and technological development actually function in the novel?

In his introduction to The Mummy! Alan Rauch claims that Loudon "tacitly accepts the belief that progress must be 'good' if its object is to advance civilization" (xix). He argues, for instance, that class bias blinds Loudon to inequities in the benefits conveyed by technological development. Loudon may indeed admire technological progress in some ways, but hers is at best an admiration accompanied by deep reservations. She certainly does not regard it as an adequate substitute for moral action (a fact that Rauch does acknowledge) nor is she unaware of the costs that may accompany "progress."   Without denying Loudon's obvious conservative class bias, I would suggest that Loudon's treatment of technology and progress is more nuanced than Rauch credits. It is actually a primary source of her social critique.

Technological and industrial progress are agents of conquest in Loudon's world (both the world she inhabits and the one she creates). Loudon's twenty-second-century England, like its nineteenth-century counterpart, is the heart of an empire, an empire largely dependent on technologization and industrialism for its success.

> New countries were discovered and civilized; the whole earth was brought to the highest pitch of cultivation; every corner of it was explored; mountains were levelled, mines were excavated, and the globe racked to its center. Nay, the air and sea did not escape, and all nature was compelled to submit to the overwhelming supremacy of Man. (I.3)

As I suggested above, Loudon's providential chronopolitics links the natural world to the divine, and the conquest of nature is counter to her vision of the right relationship between humanity and the Book of God. For Loudon, nature is intended as a corrective to human action, a means to elevate the soul and focus it on the heavenly sphere. "'When [nature is] undefiled by the follies and sins of man. . . .all the arts, the ambition, and the pitiful contrivances of man'" are placed in their proper perspective (II.131), but when the "devastating hand of improvement . . . wage[s] war against all the sublimer charms of nature," this relationship is distorted and corrupted (III.222). A relationship of conquest rather than cooperation damages not only the natural world, but the human agents (and objects) of this conquest.

Loudon's treatment of Egypt is particularly illuminating in this regard. Edric and Entwerfern arrive in Egypt by balloon. Their first view is therefore aerial, Egypt laid out maplike (and submissive) beneath them. It is worth quoting Loudon at some length.

> Different, however, oh! How different from the Egypt of the nineteenth century, was the fertile country which now lay like a map beneath their feet! Improvement had turned her gigantic steps towards its once deserted plains; Commerce had waved her magic wand; and towns and cities, manufactories and canals, spread in all directions. . . .

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> Macadamized turnpike roads supplied their place, over which postchaises, with anti-attritioned wheels, bowled at the rate of fifteen miles an hour. Steamboats glided down the canals, and furnaces raised their smoky heads amidst groves of palm trees; whilst iron railways intersected orange groves and pomegranates might be seen bordering excavations intended for coal pits. Colonies of English and Americans peopled the country; and produced a population that swarmed like bees over the land, and surpassed in numbers even the wondrous throngs of the ancient Mizraim race. (I.188-189)

Such is the grand vision of a new improved Egypt. In <u>Rule of Darkness</u>, Patrick Brantlinger challenges a longstanding idea that early nineteenth-century writers were not particularly concerned with imperial issues, arguing that "no period in the nineteenth century can safely be called anti-imperialist or even indifferent to colonial issues" (3, 7). Early and mid-nineteenth-century imperialism was less formalized, but "patterns of expansion and hegemony [were so thoroughly] established at home and abroad" that imperialism could safely be assumed and silently accepted (Brantlinger 23). Loudon's depiction of a colonized Egypt complicates this assumption.

Fabian describes the "denial of coevalness," a sort of "political physics" in which colonized land could be "emptied" of indigenous inhabitants by a temporal sleight of hand (31, 29). By identifying the natives as inhabiting an earlier time period, the colonizers displaced them from the contemporary landscape. Since to be disassociated from British time was to be denied political legitimacy and access to British power, such an act was an explicit tool of imperial control (Murphy 23). Such a "denial of coevalness" is apparent in Entwerfen's description of the Egyptians who greet their arrival as "'brutes . . . [who are] a century behind us in civilization'" (Loudon I.195). However, this passage is complicated when one realizes that the "brutes" under consideration are not native Egyptians, but the Anglo-Egyptian swarms who are, "like most colonists, somewhat conceited and not very ceremonious in their manners" and who benefit from these improvements, largely at

the expense of the natives (I.196). To some extent, this description reflects a social bias against English creoles— Englishmen born outside the mother-country as opposed to the "true" English at home,[24]—but it also problematizes a simplistic racial construction of Us versus Them. If not "anti-imperialist"—her appropriation of Egypt for her own imaginative construction arguably has an imperialist aspect—Loudon is also not an advocate of imperialism, which seems conflated in her estimation with the conquest of nature and a distortion of the web of human relationships.

Her ambivalence towards this double-edged sword is most apparent in her description of the pyramids, which she identifies as symbols of nature.

> Amidst all these revolutions, however, the Pyramids still raised their gigantic forms, towering to the sky; unchanged, unchangeable, grand, simple, and immovable, fit symbols of that majestic nature they were intended to represent, and seeming to look down with contempt upon the ephemeral structures with which they were surrounded; as though they would have said, had utterance been permitted to them— 'Avaunt, ye nothings of the day! Respect our dignity and sink into your original obscurity; for, know that we alone are monarchs of the plains.' Indestructible, however, as they had proved themselves, even their granite sides had not been able entirely to resist the corroding influence of the smoke with which they were now surrounded, and a slight crumbling announced the first outward symptom of decay. Still, however, though blackened and disfigured, they shone stupendous monuments of former greatness. (I.189-190)

Less liable to displacement than their human counterparts, the pyramids allow Loudon to construct Egypt as a symbolic counter to the values of modern civilization. In a sort of reverse "denial of coevalness," Loudon's pyramids deny modern structures a place in the timelessness of eternity, relegating them to ephemerality. The pyramids stand as a challenge to modern conquestial progress, a symbol of a more enduring concept of civilization, one that acts in concert with nature rather than in rivalry.

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[24] For a discussion of the hierarchization of creole and native populations, see Anderson, Imagined Communities, chapter 4 "Creole Pioneers."

Yet this symbolic counter is only partially successful. The pyramids are, after all, blackened and disfigured, monuments of a "former greatness" that has ceased to shape the world. Brantlinger explains that silencing of dissenting voices is one of the key factors of imperialist discourse where "the voices of the dominated are represented almost entirely by their silence or their alleged acquiescence" (174). Here the pyramids become a physical representation of that domination. Not permitted utterance, only their physical presence and incipient degradation speak of their suffering at the hands of modernizing and imperializing forces. In a very real sense, the (future) present has colonized the past, as Europe has colonized Egypt. Egypt-as-nature then is overdetermined as both alternative to, and victim of, modern imperialism and industrialism.

It is into this problematized Egypt that Cheops the mummy is resurrected. Cheops had been chosen by Entwerfen for this experiment in galvanic resurrection for pragmatic reasons: the combination of long interment with perfect preservation (I.38-39). Entwerfen explains to Edric that modern corpses suffered two drawbacks. If they had been dead so briefly that decomposition had not set in, one could not be certain that they were not simply in some state of suspended animation—a death trance, perhaps, as I mentioned in the last chapter. However, by the time "apparent" death had become certain through the processes of decay, the dead body would be unsuitable for resuscitation. Loudon resolves this problem by assuming a unique status for the Egyptian mummy: millennia dead, one could dismiss the risk of the death trance, but preserved using the oh-so-mysterious embalming techniques of the ancient Egyptians, one could rely on perfect preservation of the body. That Loudon herself was aware of the dubious status of this assumption is apparent in her shifting depictions of Cheops' corpse: at one point it is described as appearing simply

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asleep, at others as bony, desiccated and horrifying. However contradictory, Loudon

is unwilling to deny herself either representation of mummydom—as immaculate

symbol of eternity or dreadful sign of living death. Like the pyramids and Egypt as a

whole, Cheops' body is a fluid site for Loudon's imaginative construction.

Cheops' availability as experimental object is itself a result of imperialism.

Like early archaeologists who routinely took possession of artifacts with "total

disregard for local peoples and customs. . . and with little to no thought of the living

heirs of the cultures that crafted the vaunted remains" (Zimmerman 11-12), Edric and

Entwerfen arrive with their galvanic battery and experimental plan and with complete

disregard for the interests of the locals (natives or colonists) or of Cheops as a

potentially sentient being.[25] In fact, the coercive aspect of this endeavor is made

explicit, as Entwerfen enthusiastically endorses the idea of reviving mummies to

"'force them to reveal the secrets of their prison-house. It was Cheops raised the

pyramids from the dust by science, and Cheops, by the force of science, shall be

compelled to disclose their origin'" (I.40-41). Cheops is simply a biological trace, and

Edric and Entwerfen's scientific purpose authorizes their appropriation of his body.

Even science may be awed by the sublime timelessness of Egypt, however.

Edric experiences his first qualms as they approach the pyramid of Cheops with a

hired guide, illuminating another of the novel's "prophetic" themes: the "restless

curiosity" that leads men to pursue forbidden knowledge. Gazing upon the pyramids,

"the daring nature of the purpose he had so long entertained, seemed to strike him

for the first time" (I.202). Edric had undertaken his quest to become "great,

omniscient, and god-like" (I.87), but Loudon suggests that omniscience is not simply

a question of knowledge but of perspective—one that is supernatural, supertemporal,

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[25] In fact, locals placed little value on mummies, but such casual appropriation reflects typical imperial attitudes toward the rights of native peoples.

and ontologically beyond the capacity of a human. "'And what am I," thought he, "weak, feeble worm that I am! who dare seek to penetrate into the awful secrets of my Creator?'" (I.202). His thoughts suggest not an arbitrary, tyrannical Creator who forbids knowledge at a whim, but a wise Creator who forecloses certain avenues of research because humans lack the capacity to use such knowledge properly.

Edric's doubts continue, developing an ethical as well as theological aspect: "'Why should I wish to restore animation to a body now resting in the quiet of the tomb? What right have I to renew the struggles, the pains, the cares, and the anxieties of mortal life?'" (I.202-203). For the first time, Cheops is not simply an object, but a being, someone with rights of his own, including the right to a peaceful afterlife, free of struggle and care. Mere scientific curiosity does not entitle Edric to disturb Cheops' place in the natural order of life and death. Further, this ethical consideration extends beyond the singular to the public welfare, as Edric ponders the consequences of his actions for society at large. "How can I tell the fearful effects that may be produced by the gratification of my unearthly longing? May I not revive a creature whose wickedness may involve mankind in misery?" (I.203). Like Frankenstein's creature, a resurrected Cheops has the potential to bring not scientific insight, but destruction.[26] And Edric, engaging in an "unearthly" (that is unnatural and illicit) quest for knowledge, would bear the true responsibility for any "fearful effects. . . produced." Loudon's narrative suggests that Edric's unearthly longing would be the cause, Cheops simply an instrument, of any wickedness and misery.

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[26] For a discussion of Mary Shelley's influence on Loudon, see Lisa Hopkins, "Jane C. Loudon's The Mummy! Mary Shelley Meets George Orwell and They Go in a Balloon to Egypt." Hopkins describes The Mummy! as "Loudon's sensational but ultimately pious corrective to the pessimism and atheism of Mary Shelley." While Hopkins sheds useful light on the relationship between Shelley and Loudon, her description ultimately oversimplifies Loudon's work, ignoring its complex engagement with the issues of her time.

In The Imperial Archive, Thomas Richards describes a growing positivist confidence in the nineteenth century that "knowledge could be controlled and controlling" (7). Scientific endeavor, as the producer of knowledge, was its own justification. Loudon, however, seems to reject this positivist approach in favor of a sentimental ethics in which empathy serves as a limiting factor for scientific investigation. Steintrager argues that in sentimental ethics any quest for knowledge that would undermine pity and enhance indifference toward suffering was inherently illegitimate (71). Science, like politics, must comply with Loudon's ethic of care. Here, Edric's encounter with a spiritualized past in the form of the pyramids awakens his capacity for pity and empathy, a capacity that scientific curiosity has threatened to deaden. The eternal aspect of the pyramids places Edric's desires into perspective, forcing him to see himself in relation to others, rather than focusing exclusively on his own desires, even if those desires are ostensibly justified by the demands of knowledge and progress. A single (embodied) point in a chronology that extends before and beyond him, Edric cannot rightly judge the effects of his own actions and should acknowledge and submit to a supertemporal wisdom greater than his own. This wisdom is in part embodied in the Mummy who is allowed to move across time and carry the corrective force of the past into the (future) present, but even more so such wisdom is the attribute of the divine spirit that encloses all time.

Edric's feelings of awe only deepen as the company descends into the depths of the pyramid, and "it [is] with feelings of indescribable solemnity" that he enters the tomb itself (I.211-212). Edric and Entwerfen are silent as they ponder the puzzling images and hieroglyphic inscriptions on an alabaster sarcophagus, "for it seemed like sacrilege to disturb the awful stillness that prevailed even by a whisper"

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(I.215). [27] Again the immensity of time—the infinite opposed to the finite—warns

against presumption, as a "secret voice" whispers in their thoughts: "'And shall finite

creatures like these, who cannot even explain the signification of objects presented

before their eyes, presume to dive into the mysteries of their Creator's will? Learn

wisdom by this omen, nor seek again to explore secrets above your comprehension'"

(I.216). Though this warning gives Edric pause, it is not enough to stop the

impetuous young man whose wisdom has been compromised by a legacy of

centuries of positivistic and imperializing knowledge. Like the pyramids that have

been blackened and disfigured by smoke, Edric's higher self has been encrusted

with a layer of intellectual hubris that allows him to disregard "omens" of an older and

(to contemporary thinking) outmoded epistemological order.

    With a defiance that is as much desperation as determination, Edric applies

the battery to the mummy with seemingly cosmic effect: "Thunder now roared in

tremendous peals through the Pyramids, shaking their enormous masses to the

foundation, and vivid flashes of light darted round in quick succession. Edric stood

aghast amidst this fearful convulsion of nature" (I.219). In the midst of this

apocalyptic scene, Cheops awakens. This is the moment Scott Trafton identifies as

the "breach," the instant when, upon discovery or excavation or reanimation, the

trace exerts its independence. The mummy breaks free of all restraints and begins

"its rampage, whether it be savage or genteel" (Trafton 140).

    The ominous tone of this particular breach is unmistakable. Not only do we

have a "convulsion of nature" and increasing peals of thunder that seem to mingle

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[27] The alabaster sarcophagus and depictions of the tomb are undoubtedly owed to the recent
discoveries of Giovanni Belzoni that had been on display in London from 1821-1822. For a
very readable discussion of Belzoni's activities, see Brian Fagan, The Rape of the Nile: Tomb
Robbers, Tourists, and Archaeologists in Egypt, particularly chapter 7, which describes his
discovery of Seti I's alabaster sarcophagus.

with "yells and groans" (I.220), but as he awakens, Cheops fixes upon Edric a "withering glance. . . . [from eyes that] seemed to possess the fabled fascination of those of the rattle-snake" (I.219). Cheops rises, and "dry, bony fingers" grip Edric with tremendous force. This climactic moment is abruptly truncated, however, as Edric falls senseless (as presumably has Entwerfen). When he awakens, the Mummy has simply disappeared. I will return to the difficulties encountered by Edric and Entwerfen during their journey home, but for now, let us leave the adventurers and follow Cheops from the tomb.

The newly awakened Cheops is disoriented, utterly unprepared for the changed world into which he emerges. Loudon renders a picture of acute physical agony. "Horrible were the sensations that throbbed through every vein" as his circulation restarts (I.250-251). But more horrible is the intertwined awakening of memory and awareness. What initially seems "'wondrous, new and strange!'" is transformed into nightmare as he recalls his last scenes of life (scenes, we will later learn, of incest and patricide), "'horrors, which still haunt my memory like a ghastly vision'" (I.251). It is horror that colors his perception of this new world.

In what is arguably the most compelling scene in the novel, Loudon presents a moment of absolute loss, of apocalypse (in its popular use) realized. True, Cheops' pyramid still stands, but his world is gone: palaces, temples, cities erased from the face of the earth. Even the Nile is so changed as to be virtually unrecognizable. Making sense of this change through the only framework he has available, he identifies the unfamiliar Nile as "'the fatal river of the dead. No papyrine boats glide smoothly on its surface; but strange, infernal vessels, vomiting forth volumes of fire and smoke'" (I.252). Cheops' reaction to this "improved" Egypt denaturalizes the idea of progress: none of these "advances" are natural or even

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comprehensible to him. Instead they appear hellish. The balloon carriage becomes "'the boat of Hecate, ready to ferry me across the Maerian Lake, to learn my final doom'" (I.253).

His response is a fatalistic acceptance: "'I come! I come! I fear no judgment! *My hell* is here!' and, striking his bosom, he leaped into the car, and stamped violently against its sides" (I.253-254). The scene that follows as Cheops stumbles about, stamping his feet and inadvertently setting the machinery in motion, borders on the ludicrous—one can easily picture a Laurel and Hardy sketch of such a scene—but a profound poignancy undergirds the farcical: this is no Laurel or Hardy stumbling about but an ancient Egyptian God-king who has been transformed by temporal dislocation into a hapless buffoon. The absolute nature of Cheops' "fall" could not be more powerfully underscored. If readers are tempted to laugh at Cheops' fumbling, it is perhaps in denial of our own sense of cultural disorientation. Alkon notes that the "doubly estranging viewpoint of someone actually from the remote past. . . .whose ideas clash with the experience of a totally different future culture" amplifies the reader's own sense of temporal dislocation (Origins 240). Through Cheops, Loudon suggests that we must all scramble to keep our balance in a world that is shifting beneath our feet.

Of course, as readers, we know that the balloon is not in fact a boat to Hades, and when it takes off "like an arrow darting from a bow"—Loudon's metaphor is a pointed reminder that this is no random occurrence, but that providence has a trajectory for events—we can hardly be surprised when it travels to England (I.255). Unfortunately, Cheops' aerial arrival coincides with Claudia's triumph for Edmund Montagu and precipitates the disastrous series of collisions that injure Claudia (I.285-286). Contrary to Hopkins' claim that nearly everyone is willing to casually "enter into

conversation with [Cheops] and take his advice," witnesses take what happened as "a visitation from Heaven, in punishment of the sins of mankind" (I.290). When he stalks through the city, "his path, like that of a destroying angel, [spread] consternation as he went, and all he met [flew] horror-stricken from his sight" (I.295). Clearly, it is not only the ancient Cheops who can interpret events through a theological framework, even if the theologies themselves vary.

The issue of interpretation is important throughout the novel, particularly in terms of how to understand Cheops himself: he shifts during the narrative from historical trace and experimental object to disoriented revenant to heavenly visitor, punisher, and destroying angel. How are we, as readers, meant to understand Cheops' role in the novel? The Spirit's promise that his future chronicle will provide "'a hero totally different from any hero that ever appeared before'" suggests a starting point, but one that is problematic at best (I.vii). If heroes have all tended to seem like "brothers of one race" (I.iii), it is perhaps because they convey a shared set of values. To deviate from this heroic brotherhood is to some extent to redefine those values.

What values does our "hero" Cheops convey? As we discover at the end of the novel, he is guilty of incest and patricide, hardly conventional heroic actions. Indeed, his are among the most horrific violations of a relational ethic of care imaginable. Is his heroism then that of the repentant and redeemed sinner, as Rauch suggests? (xxiii, xxvi). This too seems problematic. I noted in passing the "yells and groans" that accompanied Cheops' revival, voices that suggest the "wailing and gnashing of teeth" of the biblical damned. If this was a single reference, it could easily be dismissed as simply adding to the gothic mood of the resurrection scene. However, associations of Cheops with the damned quickly multiply: Cheops

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does not fear judgment because his personal hell, "everlasting fire," dwells in his bosom (I.254,253). In his final encounter with Edric, he presses a hand to his breast, explaining that "'a fiend—a wild, never-dying fiend rages here. . . .It gnaws my vitals—it burns with unquenchable fire, and never-ceasing torment'" (III.298), language far more suggestive of the damned than of a redeemed sinner. When Cheops explains his "task" to Edric at the end of the novel, he states,

> "Permitted for a time to revisit earth, I have made use of the powers entrusted to me to assist the good and punish the malevolent. Under pretence of aiding them, I gave them counsels which only plunged them yet deeper into destruction, whilst the evil that my advice appeared to bring upon the good, was only like a passing cloud before the sun; it gave luster to the success that followed." (III.298)

While he explains what he did, he does not elaborate on is his own status. There is certainly no evidence that his "'never-ceasing torment'" is to be relieved.

Further, throughout the novel, Loudon linguistically aligns Cheops not with the virtuous characters, but with the novel's chief villains, Rosabella and her accomplice/mentor Father Morris. Note, for instance, the similarity between the above descriptions of Cheops with Rosabella, who presses her breast and describes the "'burning fire that rages here!'" (I.92), and Father Morris, who "like the votaries of Eblis . . . felt unquenchable fire burning in his bosom" (I.129). Further, Cheops' dismissal of Father Morris' repentance as "'a passing shade before a glowing fire, which. . . would soon be devoured by the flames!'" (II.120), when matched with his assertion that "'human nature is still the same even in this remote corner of the globe'" (II.112), undermines the likelihood of his own repentance.

How then should we understand his role? Hopkins notes Loudon's reliance on Shakespeare, and a line from Hamlet may prove instructive. Just after mistakenly murdering Polonius, Hamlet describes himself as heaven's "scourge and minister" (3.4.175). Fredson Bowers distinguishes between these two roles, noting that a

scourge, whose purpose is the destruction of the guilty, could be chosen among "those who were already so steeped in crime as to be past salvation. . . .Any man who knew himself to be such a scourge knew both his function and his fate: his powers were not his own" (94). Already damned, the scourge could stoop to any means to accomplish his mission. So far, so Cheops, incestuous, murderous villain that we learn he was in life. Bowers continues by explaining that a human minister, by contrast, "directly performs some . . . positive good. . .which acts as a direct retribution for evil by overthrowing it and setting up a positive good in its place" (95). Cheops' assistance in the downfall of Rosabella/Morris and the restoration of Elvira/Roderick seems to fit this category. Loudon then has created an anomalous character in Cheops who apparently embodies both roles simultaneously.

I believe that it is Cheops' amortality, his transgressive mortality, that compels Loudon to engage in this dual characterization of Cheops. On the one hand, his extra-temporal perspective—an embodiment of the corrective force of the past—is necessary for his corrective role, whether as scourge or minister. Loudon has created a sort of temporal hierarchy of perspective with a finite mortal perspective at the bottom, the supertemporal omniscience of God on top, and the extra-temporal perspective of the amortal (with a bit of divine guidance) in between. Cheops' ability to "read minds" is presented not so much as a supernatural ability, but as a characteristic of this extra-temporal perspective. And his amortality, his existence as a being out of time, possesses a temporal force that makes a direct impression on the minds and bodies of those he encounters, beyond the effect of his help and/or hindrance of their plans. Thus, we learn that people shrink from him because "there is indeed an invincible feeling implanted by Nature in the mind of man, which makes him shudder with disgust at any thing that invades her laws" (I.291). Nor is this

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exclusively an emotional effect: the body itself suffers if distance is not maintained.

When Clara Montagu, cousin of Edric and Edmund, spends time with Cheops, "her

health visibly declined. It was not, indeed, possible for human beings to hold daily

intercourse with Cheops without feeling their souls withered" (II.127). His reanimated

body somehow drains both the bodies and souls of those who remain too long in his

presence.

But why? Beyond a gothic tone, what is achieved by this demonizing of

Cheops? It reinforces the subordination of science to divine/natural order, one of

Loudon's key values. The subversive power of Cheops' amortality must be

contained by an atmosphere of threat and horror because for the bulk of the novel it

appears to defy the appointed order. It is true that on the novel's final page we learn

that Cheops' resurrection was an act of God—"'The power that gave me life could

alone restore it'" Cheops assures Edric—(III.299), but for the preceding three

volumes, Entwerfen's galvanic battery had apparently succeeded in defying divine

and natural law. Loudon, who has so closely aligned the natural and divine and who

has rejected the conquest of nature as acceptable science, must demonize Cheops

in order to limit the disruptive force of her own resurrection motif. Thus, Cheops'

body is made blasphemous by default, a preemptive strike against legitimizing

scientific endeavor undertaken in defiance of divine law.

Assuming that Cheops serves the dual roles of minister and scourge, what

exactly is he correcting? To answer this, I must first examine the governmental form

that Loudon rejects. If Loudon's future technologies demonstrate continuities with

the nineteenth century, so too does her vision of England's socio-political structure.

Her England is a constitutional (but matrilineal) monarchy, governing a (universally-

educated) population[28] that is nonetheless defined by class stratification. Alan

Rauch notes that the "threat of republicanism" provides a crucial context for Loudon's

political romance (xxii). Loudon, after all, grew up during and was writing shortly

after the Napoleonic Wars.[29] The Peterloo Massacre had occurred in 1819, and the

1820s were characterized by high food prices and a series of riots. Class conflict

was a threatening reality in Loudon's world, only heightened by anger over George

IV's extravagancies.[30] The possibility of republican overthrow of the monarchy

seemed all too close.

In Imagined Communities, Anderson explains that the eighteenth century had

marked the emergence of a new age of nationalistic thought that drastically changed

the face of Europe in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (11,

67). By the time Loudon writes The Mummy!, a "blueprint" for republican states (the

"new governments" mentioned by Loudon's Spirit) is available, its "validity and

generalizability. . .confirmed by the *plurality* of the independent states" (Anderson

81). Loudon's futurism counters republican success defined by numbers of

independent states with failure proven by time: the monarchy has been restored

because democracy had collapsed into anarchy. The freedoms of democracy had

become the seeds of degeneration: "The blessings of civilization were indeed fast

slipping away from them. . . and the most enlightened nation in the world was in

imminent danger of degenerating into a horde of rapacious barbarians" (I.6-7). In a

moment of lucidity, the people had recognized that "a division of labour and a

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[28] A central focus of Loudon's satire is the idea of universal education, whose only purpose seems to be to dissatisfy and disqualify the lower classes as functional members of society. Loudon's depiction of their overly-educated vocabularies, used at even the most inappropriate times, is the most obvious evidence of this educational folly.

[29] 1799-1815.

[30] Prince Regent from 1811-18120; King from 1820-1830.

distinction of ranks were absolutely necessary to civilization" and sought out a 'descendant of the former royal family to lead them (I.7). This too is a crucial aspect of Loudon's strategy: monarchy is presented not as an imposition on the people, an act of oppression, but as the deliberate choice of a people educated by the realities of time.

Nonetheless, Loudon does not ignore the importance of plurality as proof: her "blueprint" of republican failure is replicated throughout the novel: anarchy and/or despotism prove to be the true face of egalitarian government. Planning their voyage to Egypt, Edric and Entwerfen plan to visit some of the new republican states of inner Africa, for "It is generally instructing as well as amusing to watch the birth and struggles of infant republics; and to remark first how fast the people encroach, and then the governors. Whilst the rulers are weak, they are always liberal; but their exalted sentiments in general decrease in exact proportion as they become powerful'" (I.115). This obvious reference to the (relatively) recent French Revolution and even more so to Napoleon's self-crowning as Emperor, serves as Loudon's "blueprint" for republicanism, but she goes further. Not even instruction and amusement are sufficient temptations to visit the root of republican horror: "'From such despotism as that of the Americans, however, Heaven defend us!'" (I.116).

Nor does Loudon rely exclusively on expository rejection of republicanism. She paints a vivid portrait of republican evils during Edric and Entwerfen's sojourn in Spain. Through the Spanish adventure, republicanism is presented not as progressive but as atavistic, an abyss of superstition and brutality. Shipwrecked on the shores of Spain during their voyage home from Egypt, the pair find themselves near the tomb of a Bourbon ruler who had conquered (that is "civilized" and Christianized) the empire of Morocco. The ever unlucky (and unwise) Entwerfen

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pays homage to the "hero," only to be seized by soldiers for "'dar[ing] to praise the actions or worship the memory of the tyrannic Alfonso'" (II.154). Pleading for mercy, Entwerfen is assured that he is in a "'land of liberty. . .[where] the very name of tyranny and oppression'" are abhorred (II.154). "'How then can the admirer of a tyrant hope for mercy at our hands?'" asks the leader (II.154). The pair are dragged before a magistrate, Edric having been found guilty by association. They are "taught by this lesson that the liberty of republic Spaniards did not extend to the tolerance of any opinions except their own" (II.155), and just in case Loudon's point is still too subtle, readers are directly assured that "'all is not liberty which is called so, and that a mob can occasionally be as tyrannical as an emperor'" (II.155).

Republican intolerance reaches its culmination when Edric and Entwerfen are condemned to be burned at the stake. Spanish republicanism has replaced the Inquisition as the primary site for gothic judicial horror. This realignment is highlighted by the fact that Catholicism has been restored to religious primacy in England. Loudon generally seems less interested in specific doctrinal or denominational issues than in a broad conception of a Christian providential order. Loudon is not unequivocally pro-Catholic, acknowledging it as somewhat despotic, requiring an anti-intellectual "passive obedience" (I.2), but by juxtaposing the admittedly despotic Catholic faith with republicanism and finding the latter less tolerant, Loudon constructs republicanism as an atavistic and outmoded form of government—one that has already been abandoned by the more progressive English.

It is not enough for Loudon to reject republicanism as a form of government; she also offers an alternative: a monarchy reformed on moral terms. Mellor emphasizes the insistence of British women political writers that "the conduct of the

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British government must be moral—that political leaders should demonstrate the same Christian virtues that mothers and daughters—and fathers and sons—were expected to practice at home" (Mothers 11-12). Loudon's desired morality is no passive virtue; it must be active and effective. The indolent Claudia is little preferable to the ambitious and vicious Rosabella; each opens the gates to governmental corruption. By contrast, the Queen who restored the monarchy literalizes what Mellor identifies as "a new image of the ideal female as one who inhabits the public sphere, most broadly defined: she is rational, morally responsible, well educated, and takes the lead in governing herself, her children, and by extension society at large" (Mothers 91). When the people decided to restore the monarchy, they first offered the crown to a royal prince. When he declined because he did not want the responsibility, his more socially conscious daughter offered herself in his place and was eagerly accepted. "Possess[ing] common sense and prudence, united with a firm and active disposition, she contrived in time to restore order, and to confirm her own power, whilst she contributed to the happiness of her people" (I.9-10). Choosing wise counselors, enacting laws that were both clear and just, practicing public care giving via work projects for the poor, and behaving with a dignity that "made her universally respected both at home and abroad" (I.11), Loudon's queen is the exemplar of the moral leadership she espouses.

This exemplary government is highlighted by its contrast with what follows: Claudia's murder and the ensuing battle for succession. It is into this scene of corruption that the chastening form of Cheops is introduced. Elvira and Rosabella are daughter and niece to the Duke of Cornwall, respectively. I have already noted some of the failures of relationship that characterize this familial/public conflict, but a brief review of the parties involved will highlight this destructive scenario. Elvira is

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supported by her father and his friends, Sir Ambrose and Edmund Montagu.

Rosabella is supported by Father Morris (although he hides his intentions from his

patron the Duke), a number of powerful, but dishonorable courtiers, and (apparently)

by Cheops. It was this party who was responsible for murdering Claudia. Up to the

last moment, Rosabella appears to be the favorite, but when she gives her pre-

election speech (coached by Cheops), her arrogance alienates the crowd. Elvira, on

the other hand, is so overcome that she is entirely unable to speak. Edmund speaks

on her behalf and appeals to the chivalric impulses of the crowd to win them in her

favor, successfully securing the election for Elvira.

        "This trembling woman," as Edmund describes Elvira (II.142), bears little

resemblance to the model Queen of Loudon's golden age. If anything Elvira seems

to prove the inadequacy of a matrilineal monarchy, suggesting that the first queen

was the exception to the rule of female inadequacy. Certainly Elvira's early rule is no

model of effective government. Filled with idealistic plans for public improvement,

but little practical knowledge, it is only with Edmund's assistance that she achieves

anything. When Edmund's jealousy (he wished to marry Elvira, but his hopes were

dashed by her ascent to the throne), fanned by Father Morris, drives him into

Rosabella's political camp and arms, even these mediocre efforts fail. Again, the

breakdown of private relationships has serious public consequences.

        Despite this inauspicious beginning, Loudon does not ultimately espouse a

return to a patriarchal order. Rather, she suggests the need for a reformed order

where traditionally masculine and feminine strengths are developed and allowed to

temper one another: women must learn to act with good judgment and resolution,

while men must learn to abjure violence as a political tool. Both men and women

must learn to control their own passions. The political machinations of her enemies serve to chasten and mature Elvira, assisting her development into a proper ruler.

First, she must learn to act independently. Ironically, Edmund's misguided jealousy teaches her this first lesson. Edmund has used his popularity as a war hero with the masses to win the right for Elvira to marry, so long as her husband is a native Englishman, believing that he will thus be able to attain both his ambitions and his love. Father Morris, however, convinces him that Elvira is in love with the German Prince Ferdinand; and Edmund instigates a duel in the palace gardens. Both men are arrested, since it is illegal to raise a weapon in the palace grounds. The people are quickly convinced that Ferdinand is guilty of an even greater crime: daring to seek marriage with the Queen. Only reluctantly having ceded the right for the Queen to marry and bear a direct heir, thus abdicating their right to elect future rulers, their anger at this foreign "invasion" is bitter. The only appropriate punishment is death. (We see here the barbarism that lies under the surface of even the most "civilized" people, when they become a mob, another of Loudon's warnings against republicanism.)

In the "ethic of care" that Mellor identifies as emblematic of Romantic feminine politics, the highest value is "ensuring that, in any conflict, no one should be hurt" (Mothers 87). While justice is valued, compassion and mercy are superior virtues, the ethic of care a necessary corrective to an "ethic of justice" that may treat everyone equally under the law, but may utterly lack those higher values (87). It is such an ethic of care that informs Elvira's concern for Ferdinand, leading her to intervene on his behalf. Where she had been too overcome to speak before the election, the urgency of her mission of mercy gives her voice. "She forgot every thing but the cause that brought her there; and her mind, thrown back upon its own

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resources, rallied its energies . . . .her sylphic figure . . . assume[d] an almost awful dignity from the grandeur of the spirit that animated it" (III.235). She sues the people for the right to pardon Ferdinand, a right denied by the old Queen's laws (perhaps because of an "ethic of justice" interest in preventing abuse and favoritism?). A responsive crowd not only grants her the right to pardon, but swept up in enthusiasm gives her permission to marry whomever she desires and even abolishes the Law to give her absolute sovereignty (III.236-237). In the aftermath of this scene, she is emotionally overwhelmed, but regains her senses in time to interrupt Ferdinand's trial and offer him pardon and an apology for his ill treatment (III.249).

What Loudon offers is not a magic spell to repair Elvira's faults as a ruler; rather readers follow an ongoing process as Elvira learns to take moral action, even when there is not an urgent spur such as the threat to Ferdinand. A true ethic of care must become habitual, Loudon implies, a reasoned response to daily life, rather than a purely emotional reaction to crisis. Indeed Loudon suggests that the daily habit of moral action may be the most difficult, as it cannot rely on emotional intensity, which is at best short lived and highly suspect (as in the fickle emotions of the populace). Elvira's second lesson then is self-discipline. Once again despondent after the crisis with Ferdinand has ended, Elvira becomes disinterested in her duties. An exasperated Sir Ambrose challenges her to "'struggle then with your feelings: conquer those fatal passions which threaten to destroy you; show yourself worthy of your crown'" to little avail (III.256). The revolution which follows, led by Edmund and Rosabella, is hardly surprising: a ruler who lacks moral fiber and application to her duties can expect no better.

Even less surprising is the utter failure of Rosabella's self-indulgent reign. Edmund, disgusted by his own treachery, quickly disassociates himself from affairs

of state; and Rosabella is left to indulge her selfish caprices. The fickle crowd

quickly realizes its mistake and nostalgically recalls Elvira's rule that was, however

imperfect, demonstrably concerned with their wellbeing. Fortunately, the clever and

manipulative Cheops, with Clara's assistance, has provided for Elvira's escape from

Rosabella; and a happy ending is apparently ensured by the arrival of Roderick with

his army to restore Elvira to the throne.

Apparently. In fact, however, Roderick's army proves redundant, "for the

people every where, tired of the tyranny of her rival, received Elvira with open arms"

(III.283). Where effective moral government reigns, Loudon seems to suggest, force

becomes unnecessary (as it was under the first Queen's rule). A happy ending is

ensured not by force of arms, but by moral force. Thus, eliminating officially

sanctioned violence—or at least rendering it obsolete—appears to be the culmination

of Loudon's ethic of care.[31]

While virtually every other field of endeavor in the novel shows evidence of

technological advancement, futuristic warfare appears unchanged from that of the

nineteenth century or even earlier. Cavalry, sieges, cannon fire and hand to hand

swordplay are the methods of choice. It is impossible to believe that the author who

imagined multiple forms of aerial transport, including a balloon that could travel

beyond the atmosphere, could not at least imagine the possibility of aerial

bombardment of cities; so why this reliance on such traditional methods of warfare?

Alkon writes that Roderick's battles involve "protracted digressions from the twenty-

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[31] It is worth noting that the London Peace Society had been established in 1816 and
launched its periodical the Herald of Peace in 1819. By the time Loudon was writing, ideas
about peace were circulating throughout London. For a discussion of the history of peace
movements in nineteenth-century Britain, see Alexander Tyrrell, "Making the Millennium: The
Mid-Nineteenth Century Peace Movement." A broader overview of these concerns is
available in Istvan Kende's "The History of Peace: Concept and Organization from the Late
Middle Ages to the 1870s."

second century to intervals of romance time" (<u>Origins</u> 237). Such digressions might

be characteristic of what Nancy Rosenblum identifies as "romantic militarism," that

revolved around "imaginative recollections of an earlier aristocratic military tradition"

and romanticized war "as the opportunity for personal glory and self-assertion"

(Rosenblum 251). I would suggest that Loudon's depictions of war actually counter

romantic militaristic ideals. Her "digressions" actually represent war as an

anachronism, a strategy she has already used in her critique of republicanism. While

her representation of Egypt employed the past to counter a contemporary order, here

Loudon reverses her strategy, showing the past not as eternal and transcendent, but

as morally stagnant. For Loudon, war belongs to another time, one that a civilized

people should have outgrown.

She achieves this de-romanticization of warfare through another familiar

rhetorical strategy: presenting war as contrary to natural law and decrying the

readiness of "the savage rage of man to deface the beauty of nature" (II.179).

Unlike the romantic militarists who emphasize "the creative outcome of violence and

destruction in nature" (Rosenblum 254), there is nothing glorious in the images

Loudon presents.

> The plain that stretched to their left, lay covered with the bodies of the
> dying and the dead, whilst a multitude of horses broken loose,
> galloped over the field, plunging, snorting, and crushing beneath their
> hoofs, the bodies of the fallen riders.
> In some places, the branches of half broken trees strewed the
> ground, whilst their mutilated trunks, perforated with shot, remained
> as melancholy relics of their former beauty. Swords and helmets,
> mingled with overturned wagons and military utensils of all kinds,
> were scattered in wild disorder around. The earth, ploughed up by the
> cannon balls in furrows, save where the ridges had been beaten flat
> by the feet of the combatants, looked wild and uneven as the waves
> of the mighty ocean arrested in the moment of tempest. Blood lay in
> pools upon the ground; and clotted gore, mingled horribly with
> remnants of human bones and brains, hung to the still standing
> bushes, disfiguring the fair face of nature. (II.193)

Loudon, drawing on familiar newspaper reports of the 1815 Battle of Waterloo, paints a scene of death and destruction with no battlefield glamour, one where the horrors of human violence extend to nature itself. Nor is this violence mitigated by high motives: "Burning for conquest, and spurning the quiet of domestic peace," Roderick has undertaken the campaign to restore the Spanish monarchy simply because it "met his most ardent wishes" to engage in battle (II.162). Loudon presents the ultimate challenge to an ethic of care: war for its own sake.

Noting that "England did have heroes to look up to," Rauch points out the similarities between Roderick and the Duke of Wellington[32] (xvii). However, as I discussed above, "hero" is a problematic category for Loudon. Both Edmund and Roderick are explicitly identified as heroes, but their own actions complicate, even contaminate, this idea. Edmund, who is described as a "hero of antiquity" and "a living personification of the God of War" (I.20, 273), is a man whose unruly passions lead him to unjustified violence and treason. He is ultimately alienated from his family and mired in self-loathing. Roderick, the "Irish hero," is the epitome of chivalric values (and romantic militarism); but his hubristic folly leads to the senseless death of several of his followers (II.175). Even Edric, who has been rescued and befriended by Roderick and possesses an unwavering devotion to the King, is driven to criticize his friend's casual attitude towards the pillage that accompanies the army's movements (II.173). Any heroism that depends on causing death and destruction requires reexamination in Loudon's world.

No more fit than Elvira to lead a nation, however well he may lead an army, Roderick too must be reeducated into a truly moral leader. First, he must learn a

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[32] Arthur Wellesley. He was made 1st Duke of Wellington in 1814 for his defeat of Napoleon and became a national hero. In 1827, he became commander in chief of the British army. Interestingly, in this context, he became Prime Minister in 1828, although clearly Loudon would not have known this when she was writing.

greater maturity. Loudon explains that "Romance was, indeed, a leading feature in Roderick's character, he delighted in surprises and disguises, and loved to give a kind of theatrical effect to everything he did" (II.163)—traits that may be suitable to a boy or a young man without responsibility, but are unlikely to inspire confidence in the leader of a people. He regularly acts, not from grounded principle, but an excess of feeling that may be noble, but lacks depth. "Romantic generosity" may win adulation, so that "even his most discontented soldiers loved whilst they blamed him" (II.188), but the blame remains. Quixotic chivalry is not the virtue needed for an effective leader, although the nobler qualities of chivalry—courage and generosity—may provide a foundation to build upon.

Roderick's process of maturation begins with the burning of Seville. His initial response is typical of his romantic character: when he sees the city burning, he orders his men, "'Save them! save the inhabitants! . . . promise them quarter—peace! Any thing to save them! . . . Let us fight like men! It is beneath us to take advantage of misfortune!'" (II.187-188).   If his generosity in this crisis is more the result of concern for his own self-image—not to do what is "beneath" him—than genuine selflessness, it does provide an opportunity for his moral development. The long-term aftermath of the disaster demands a more reasoned and sustained response. Through "a task far more difficult and important than any he had yet undertaken, viz. that of organizing and of providing for the disorderly multitude that had thronged into his camp from the city" (II.191), Roderick, like Elvira, must learn the necessity of steady moral action that goes beyond the impulse of the moment. Acting with "a prudence and sagacity which would have done credit to far more advanced years" (II.191), Roderick undertakes this commonplace leadership role

and begins his transformation into a leader fit for a government founded on an ethic of care.

In enabling the marriage of Elvira and Roderick, Loudon does not simply valorize traditional feminine roles of wife and mother, but asserts the claims of an ethic of care upon both sexes and demands public space for a normative morality more commonly associated with domestic affairs. She also challenges "the fiction that maternity and public political authority are mutually exclusive experiences" (T. Bowers 50). The rule of celibacy that the first Queen had initiated depended on what Toni Bowers identifies as "symbolic maternity" where the Queen serves as mother to her people, but at the sacrifice of literal motherhood. In the context of The Mummy! this might appropriately be termed "symbolic neutering": only by denying an integral aspect of womanhood could one accept the role of queen. In demanding that Elvira be allowed to marry and enjoy the "'affection of children,'" Loudon denies the binary thinking that would force a woman to choose between a public and private role (III.236). Without abandoning admittedly stereotypical images of gender roles—Elvira is recognizably "feminine" in her beauty and gentleness, Roderick "masculine" in his physical courage—Loudon nonetheless offers a new vision of moral government based on the better qualities of each sex.

Cheops' return to the tomb indicates the successful completion/progress of the moral revolution he has instigated. The higher values of the past have been integrated with the advances of the future; the lesser values of the past—violence and warfare—have been made or are becoming obsolete; and rulers who embody an ethic of care are in position to guide the nation's continuing progress. Cheops himself has no further place in Loudon's imagined future. Sinner, scourge and dangerous carrier of transgressive potential, he must be relegated back to the past,

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to the world in which he belongs. His ultimate fate (redemption? continued

torment?), unknown to readers, is left in the capable hands of the providence that

called him forth. For Loudon, that answer is sufficient.

The Ascent of Ayesha: Transcending Darwin's Limits

If Loudon's apocalypse offers a neat ending and the promise of a comfortable

and ordered future, H. Rider Haggard is both less complacent and less neat.

Certainly, his tale is less comfortable and ordered, his amortal Ayesha less obedient

to the dictates of providence. In turning to Haggard, then, we must apply a different

set of expectations. The question is, what expectations do we apply?

In his author's note to Ayesha: the Return of She, Haggard indicates that

Ayesha should not be regarded as a sequel to She but rather as the conclusion to a

single "imaginative tragedy" (1). This vague, but provocative description is open to a

variety of interpretations, largely dependent on one's reading of Ayesha, "the

masterwork of Haggard's imagination" (Etherington 80). Read as yet another

example of the flawed ideal, Ayesha's amortality is itself the tragedy, trapping her

perpetually in an imperfect world.[33] Read as a love story, with Ayesha as the ever

unattainable ideal, the tragedy is the repeatedly doomed romance of Ayesha and

Kallikrates (or his reincarnated form, Leo Vincey). Read as a denunciation of the

New Woman, with Ayesha as the ultimate femme fatale, the tragedy is in Leo

Vincey's and Holly's succumbing to her deadly wiles. Read as an imperial romance,

with the Arabian Ayesha as both the racialized Other and an "arch-imperialist"

(Smith, "Beyond Colonialism" 107), the tragedy is the violent encounter between

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[33] See chapter one for my discussion of unnatural prolongevity as an inherently undesirable
state. The significance of this interpretation is apparent in Haggard's diary entry from June
22, 1920, where he notes that "I can imagine no fate more awful than that of 'She' left alone
like a hard, everlasting rock on a water-scoured plain" (198).

cultures that seems inevitably destructive. All of these readings are supportable from

the text and offer useful insights. However, I will argue that Haggard also explores

what he sees as a literal "imaginative tragedy," a failure of imaginative conception:

the reductive understanding of humanity in exclusively Darwinian terms, as a

biological organism without higher meaning or purpose. Finding the "doctrine of

blind chance . . . hideous" (Days I.22), Haggard "take[s] a higher view of man than

that which declares him to be but a physical accident" (Days II.258). He always

listens for "the still small voice of God directing us from on high" (Days II.258), a

perspective that his Ayesha romances reflect. [34] Thus, for Haggard, the key

ingredients of evolutionary theory—"randomness, the impersonal law of selection,

and the immensity of cosmic time" (Haught 233)—are rejected or subsumed within a

providential worldview, materialist philosophy subordinated to a spiritually rich

conception of human existence.[35]

Before I proceed, a summary of Haggard's plots is in order. Narratively,

Ayesha might best be considered a textual reincarnation of She, for it structurally

reproduces the earlier tale so as to accentuate and refine its themes. In both stories,

rugged and daring British heroes Ludwig Horace Holly and Leo Vincey undertake a

dangerous quest seeking Ayesha. In She, they set out seeking to prove or disprove

the existence of an ancient queen and possibly avenge her ages-ago murder of

Leo's ancestor, Kallikrates. This quest, undertaken based on knowledge recorded

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[34] At the end of his posthumously published autobiography, The Days of My Life (1926, written 1911-12), Haggard includes "A Note of Religion" from which I have drawn most of my information regarding his personal beliefs and attitudes toward faith.

[35] I will use evolution and materialism somewhat interchangeably in this chapter, reflecting their inextricable intertwining in Haggard's understanding. Haggard is by no means alone in this understanding. In "Darwin, Design, and Divine Providence," John Haught notes that opponents of evolutionary theory have frequently conflated it with materialist philosophy. Whether or not one accepts this reductionistic conflation, it is only in such terms that Haggard's position may be adequately grasped.

by Kallikrates' wife, Amenartas, and passed down from generation to generation in the Vincey family[36], takes them into the interior of Africa where they meet She-who-must-be-obeyed, the awful (in both senses) white queen of the cannibalistic Amahagger, degenerate descendants of the lost empire of Kor. Identified as the reincarnation of Ayesha's lost love Kallikrates, Leo becomes betrothed to Ayesha over the body of his murdered native "wife" Ustane. Ayesha leads Leo and Holly to a hidden pillar of fire in the heart of a volcanic mountain, promising Leo (near) immortality as her husband and rule of Britain once they leave the confines of Kor. Seeking to reassure a daunted Leo and Holly of the safety of the pillar of fire, Ayesha steps into it herself, only to lose her preternatural youth and (apparently) her life. Undergoing a process of rapid aging and degeneration that leaves her shrunken into a mummylike/monkeylike Darwinian caricature, the dying Ayesha nonetheless promises to return to Leo in beauty and power.

In Ayesha, Leo and Holly set out for Asia to find Ayesha, having been convinced by a vision that she has fulfilled her promise and returned. After wandering deserted wastes and studying at Buddhist monasteries for nearly twenty years, they finally discover a reborn Ayesha established as high priestess of Isis in a temple in Tibet, where she is the spiritual leader for the people of Kaloon and ruler of the savage and superstitious mountain tribes. When she unshrouds before Leo, she wears the shrunken form that she had possessed at the end of She, and he must choose between this horror and the beautiful Khania Atene (a reincarnation of Amenartas), ruler of Kaloon and Ayesha's rival. Determined to honor Ayesha's two

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[36] This knowledge is literally passed along as an archaeological trace. Kallikrates' Egyptian lover/wife, Amenartas, inscribed the story of Kallikrates' murder by Ayesha on a shard from an ancient Egyptian urn, along with a demand for her son or a later descendant to take revenge on Ayesha. Indeed the Vincey family name is explained to be a corruption of the Latin word for revenge. In the intervening centuries, various Vincey men have inscribed their own names before passing on the artifact and its attached demand for vengeance.

thousand year wait for him, Leo chooses her despite her appearance. Her beauty is restored (Holly speculates whether her degenerate form had not been an illusion meant to test Leo), and she again promises Leo amortality and rule not only of Britain, but the entire world, once they return to Kor and the pillar of fire. When a bitter Atene kidnaps Leo, Ayesha unleashes elemental forces and destroys the Khania and Kaloon in his rescue. In a particularly uncanny echo of She, the couple marry over Atene's corpse. Leo, however, dies during their first kiss, his mortality unable to bear Ayesha's amortal power. Ayesha then casts herself into a volcano to follow him into the next life, promising, however, to return for Holly at the end of his life. Readers are left with a strong implication that Ayesha has kept her promise and "saved" Holly in his last minutes, taking his spirit to live in eternal bliss with Leo and her.

What such broad plot strokes barely suggest is how completely Haggard's texts are dominated by bodies. Bodies that tell stories and raise questions. Bodies inscribed with meaning and with uncertainty. Bodies shaped (and disfigured) by Darwinian theory.[37] There is the body of narrator Horace Holly, whose baboon-like form "converted [a young woman] to the monkey theory" (She 2). There are the degenerate bodies of the African Amahagger, whose cannibalism displaces them from civilized time into a savage primitivism, and the decadent, feminized bodies of the court of Kaloon—both peoples degenerate descendents of once strong civilizations and a warning to the *fin de siecle* British. There are the eugenically-bred bodies of Ayesha's deaf and dumb servants and the (absent) bodies of the

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[37] For further discussion of Darwinian influences on Victorian fiction, see Gillian Beer, Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction; John Glendening, The Evolutionary Imagination in Late-Victorian Novels: an Entangled Bank; Joseph Carroll, Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature; Lisa Hopkins, Giants of the Past: Popular Fictions and the Idea of Evolution; and George Levine, Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction.

eugenically-bred giants that nature had doomed to extinction, despite her arts (<u>She</u>

115). There are the perfectly embalmed bodies of the nobles from "Imperial Kor" that

surround the adventurers as they reside in the ancient catacombs of Kor—bodies

used as torches by the Amahagger—that reveal the extinction of empires, as surely

as the extinction of species. And, of course, the degenerate(d) body of Ayesha that

dominates the climax of <u>She</u>.

But there are also bodies that suggest resistance to a materialistic

evolutionary theory: the doubled bodies of the dead Greek Kallikrates and the British

Leo Vincey that offer a hope of reincarnation, a theory of life in which physical rebirth

depends upon the spiritual status of the individual rather than inherited biological

traits. The bodies of Buddhist monks whose spiritual enlightenment balances the

infirmities of physical age. And, of course, the regenerate(d) body of Ayesha who

takes on a mystical capacity for transformation and transcendence by the conclusion

of <u>Ayesha</u>. Haggard is not content to accept the imaginative and spiritual limitations

of Darwinian bodies in "an increasingly oppressive and matter-of-fact industrial

society" (Katz 30). Believing that "the laws of Nature differ from the laws of God . . .

[and] sometimes tempted to argue that Nature, 'red in tooth and claw,'[38] is not

begotten of God alone" (<u>Days</u> II.255), Haggard presents a complicated dialectic

between nature and the divine that is played out in his embodiment of Ayesha.

Without denying the basic premises of Darwinism—Nature, he admits, does have its

own laws—, Haggard rejects the imperializing tendency of evolutionary theory to

explain the whole of human existence. If his fictional bodies are inevitably marked by

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[38] Tennyson's description of nature in <u>In Memoriam</u> (1844) was influenced by the evolutionary
ideas of Robert Chambers in <u>Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation</u>. Although published
before <u>The Origin of Species</u>, the phrase later became poetic shorthand for Darwin's
concepts of "survival of the fittest" and "the struggle for survival."

Darwinian conceptions, Haggard nonetheless offers a possibility for respiritualizing the human body and human existence.

How is this accomplished? In <u>Time Is of the Essence</u>, Patricia Murphy discusses Haggard's treatment of time in strictly gendered terms, juxtaposing (male) historicity with (female) ahistoricity. According to Murphy, Haggard aligns his British, male heroes "with a valorized model of masculinized linear time" while Ayesha's physical immutability links her to "a devalued [feminized] eternal present" that lacks legitimacy in progress-oriented British culture (31, 43). Yet Murphy's often intriguing analysis oversimplifies Haggard's use of time. It assumes first Haggard's unilateral acceptance of the "eternal" as something to be denigrated, when in fact, "eternity" is foundational to Haggard's existential position. As he states baldly in his autobiography, "If it is all to cease and be forgotten at the borders of the grave, then life is *not* worth living. Such, however, is no faith of mine" (<u>Days</u> II.233).

Second Murphy assumes that Haggard uses only one temporal model in his treatment of Ayesha. In fact, rather than a binary either/or treatment of Ayesha's temporality, her amortal status allows Haggard to employ a both/and approach. She possesses characteristics that identify her both with progressive time, as associated with imperialism and evolution, and with an alternative transcendent eternity, one that Haggard offers as a corrective to a sterile British utilitarianism. Moreover, Ayesha's temporal characterization shifts across the span of <u>She</u> and <u>Ayesha</u>. From a rival to British imperial power and exemplar of materialistic evolution who must be contained, Ayesha gradually emerges as the emblem of Haggard's resacralized humanity who must be exalted, spiritualized and given salvific capacity. In this complex embodiment of Ayesha, Haggard reveals competing impulses in his texts,

impulses that can only be paradoxically reconciled through Haggard's exploitation of time's aporetic elasticity.

Smith points out that biographically Haggard is so closely linked to the colonial service that his "[imperial] pedigree has inevitably conditioned the perception of his writings" ("Beyond Colonialism" 103).[39] Certainly, any reading of She and Ayesha is incomplete without consideration of their imperial themes. As Smith explains, Ayesha embodies "an image of a debased and violent colonialist attitude which, through exaggeration, provides a demonic version of British imperial ambitions" ("Beyond Colonialism" 107). Ayesha's rivalry with Queen Victoria, another "Queen with grand imperial ambitions, isolated in a profound and lengthy state of mourning for her lost love," is based on her role as a doppelganger/ caricature of the British queen ("Beyond Colonialism" 110). At once threat to, and mirror of, the British empire, Ayesha must be contained, both to protect Britain's self-image as a benevolent force, whose mastery of other cultures is justified,[40] and to demonstrate the insufficiency of a Darwinian-based evolutionary hierarchy—a hierarchy that has been increasingly employed to support imperial ideology.

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[39] For critical discussions of Haggard and imperialism, see Laura Crisman, Rereading the Imperial Romance: British Imperialism and South African Resistance in Haggard, Scheiner, and Plaatje; Wendy Katz, Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire: A Critical Study of British Imperial Fiction; Lee Anne Richardson, New Woman and Colonial Adventure Fiction in Victorian Britain: Gender, Genre, and Empire; William Scheick, The Ethos of Romance at the Turn of the Century; Andrew Smith, "Beyond Colonialism: Death and the Body in H. Rider Haggard"; Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914; Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest; and Rebecca Stott, "The Dark Continent: Africa as Female Body in Haggard's Adventure Fiction." For alternative readings that deliberately downplay the imperial aspect of Haggard's writings in favor of focusing on his work as depictions of a journey into the unconscious self, see Alan Sandison, The Wheel of Empire, and Norman Etherington, "Rider Haggard, Imperialism, and the Layered Personality."

[40] See Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism, for a discussion of the belief structure that allows decent people to "think of the empire as a protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior or less advanced peoples."

Richard Patteson, who identifies a variety of recurring motifs of the imperial

romance, including the quest, discovery of lost races, the importance of scientific

knowledge, romantic encounters with native women, and a descent into caves or

underground passages, not surprisingly considers Haggard's romances nearly "pure"

examples of the genre (113). Unfortunately, this classification has led to an often

condescending response to Haggard among scholars: viewing romance as

"juvenile," scholars often read Haggard monolithically, with little room for nuance or

multiplicity of ideas. Contradictions in the text are habitually viewed simply as

fissures that Haggard has unsuccessfully managed, rather than as evidence of

thematic complexity. Thus, for Katz, "a lack of vigorous intellectual struggle, if not

anti-intellectualism, prevails" in Haggard's writing (34), while in the Ethos of

Romance, William Schiek identifies Haggard with what he terms "eventuary

romance," characterized by encouraging a single (and simple) reader response: "the

self-gratifying, thoughtless consumption of the reassuring text as a transient and

renewable pleasure" (3). The idea of romance as inherently "reassuring" is central to

these readings.

Without claiming Haggard for the annals of "Great Literature" in Arnoldian

terms, I would argue that such assumptions truncate the possibilities for engagement

with the text. For example, when Murphy claims that, by ending with the graphic

image of Ayesha's devolved body, She ultimately supports the British status quo by

"annihilating its potent anti-heroine and applauding the restoration of order that such

a tidy closure presents" (33), this presumption of reassurance encourages her to

dismiss the repeated emphases on Ayesha's returns. In contrast, I believe that,

while Ayesha's "degeneration" reflects the mark of Darwin on her body, her returns

and eventual spiritualization indicate the mark of a higher (though not entirely

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orthodox) power—one that may actually destabilize the spiritual status quo. If this is reassurance, it is reassurance in a different register than Murphy acknowledges.

What is the connection then between Ayesha, time, imperialism, and Darwinian thought? In Ayesha's body, amortality is conflated with power more fully than in any novel I have examined so far. Haggard encodes imperial power in Ayesha's very name and title. The Arabic "Aisha" literally means "She who lives," while to the Amahagger, Ayesha is known as "She-who-must-be-obeyed." In this conjunction of name and title, Haggard thus presents a simple rule: She who lives (long) must be obeyed. Amortality becomes the basis for imperial power. This power is not simply the result of accumulated knowledge and wisdom, or even wealth, as in St. Leon and Zanoni, although Haggard does emphasize Ayesha's access to such attributes (particularly in Ayesha where she possesses the knowledge to transmute iron into gold). But where St. Leon's and Zanoni's amortality was the result of human knowledge—an elixir of life—Ayesha's is the result of bathing in a "pillar of fire" that Ayesha identifies as the source of life for the earth itself (She 217). While it does not convey absolute immortality, since even the universe is destined to end (Haggard's concession to the laws of entropy), the fire conveys life that will continue while the world continues (She 113). Though her current age is a mere two thousand plus years, Ayesha is as permanent as the earth itself, a human embodiment of deep time with all the advantages that knowledge, longevity and exemption from infirmity can confer.

But the pillar of fire offers more than this. It provides a purer quality of life, one undiluted by generations of distance from the source: by "'wash[ing] you in the living flames'" you partake of the flames' "virtue." This is life "'not as it now feebly glows without your bosoms, filtered thereto through the fine strainers of a thousand

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intermediate lives, but as it is here in the very fount and seat of earthly Being'" (She 217). Ayesha's pillar of fire promises to remove the human distance from the world's origin that the geologists' hammers had unearthed—a return to the origin of all species that adds originary vitality to Ayesha's other evolutionary advantages. And these advantages have political significance: "'If I arise amidst the Peoples, I must rule the Peoples, for how can I take a second place among mortal men?'" Ayesha asks Leo and Holly (Ayesha 150). The enhanced physiology that offers biological superiority promises political supremacy as well.

A crucial question then is, what kind of ruler would Ayesha be? If Loudon's ideal queen is a rational, self-disciplined woman whose rule is characterized by an ethic of care, then Haggard's Ayesha is her opposite. Willful, passionate, and murderous, Ayesha undermines the very idea of a coherent morality and rules her people through fear. Indeed the two are intertwined: denying any universal values or morality, Ayesha identifies her own desires as adequate justification for any action and for imposing her will on others. She assures Holly that it is no crime "'to put away [read kill] that which stands between us and our ends. . . . Therefore doth it not become us to say this thing is evil and that good, or the dark is hateful and the light lovely; for to other eyes than ours the evil may be good and the darkness more beautiful than the day, or all alike be fair'" (She 153).

Holly's reaction to this "Nietzschean morality" mingles horror with fascination (Etherington 79). "What may not be possible to a being who, unconstrained by human law, is also absolutely unshackled by a moral sense of right and wrong, which, however partial and conventional it may be, is yet based, as our conscience tells us, upon the great wall of individual responsibility that marks off mankind from the beasts?" (She 153). Underlying this depiction of Ayesha is the recognition that, in

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a Darwinian world, the separation between man and beast is fuzzy at best. The "snake-like" Ayesha's amorality only exaggerates the evolutionary recognition of human-as-animal (She 106).[41] This conflation of amorality and amortality is reiterated in Ayesha: "The most dread circumstance about her superhuman powers was that they appeared unrestrained by any responsibility to God or man" (151). Where creation has been removed from a spiritual order, Haggard seems to suggest, the disintegration of moral authority can hardly be unexpected. Indeed, it is a virtual corollary of Darwinian materialism.

Ayesha's amortality provides the power to subdue any opponents, and in the absence of moral restraint, power is its own legitimation. "'How thinkest thou that I rule this people [the Amahagger]?'" she asks Holly in She. "'It is by terror. My empire is of the imagination'" (132). Holly describes her ambitions as beyond those of the most "imperial-minded madman" (Ayesha 151). Between She and Ayesha, only the scope of her ambitions has changed: from the intent to rule Britain, she has progressed to an intent to rule the world (Ayesha 150). If she feels any regret in Ayesha, it is only that Holly and Leo lack the "imagination" to appreciate her vision, one where she would build Leo "'a throne upon the hecatombs of their [the conquered nations'] countless dead and crown thee emperor in a world regenerate in blood and fire!'" (151). It is only Leo's "'strange shrinkage from bloodshed'" that convinces her to "'tread a gentler path'" to conquest—one that may take centuries rather than being accomplished in a swift apocalyptic onslaught (150). Ayesha's imagined empire seems ineradicably an empire built on terror and destruction, an

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[41] This uncertainty over barriers between human and animal is emphasized by the language used to describe Ayesha. Her grace is repeatedly described as "snake-like" or "serpent-like," suggesting at once an affinity with the tempter(ress) of Eden and with the hybrid snake-women who populate folklore and post-Darwinian discourse. For an interesting discussion of Darwin's influence on discourse employing the human-snake trope, particularly in relation to the New Woman, see Casey Cothan, "Fanged Desire: the New Woman and the Monster."

empire defined by a "struggle for existence" dominated by Ayesha herself and in which the very forces of nature have been co-opted to her purposes. Not surprisingly then, it is an empire that Haggard, in both books, suggests must be contained, while he simultaneously questions the efficacy of containment.

Haggard uses two primary containment strategies: neutralization of Ayesha's transgressive potential through geographical isolation and through wifely submission to her British lord and master, Leo. Each strategy includes a temporal component, and each contains the seeds of its own failure. To identify geographical isolation as a containment strategy seems almost numbingly obvious; however, considering Haggard's presentation of Ayesha as physiologically determined for rule, the concept of her separation from the "civilized world" takes on a degree of urgency. This geological isolation—Kor is located in the remotest depths of Africa, up a scarcely navigable river, beyond treacherous swamps, and within a nearly inaccessible volcanic basin—is supplemented by temporal displacement. Katz claims that Haggard exhibits a "naïve pseudo-anthropology" in his depictions of native cultures (32), but his writings clearly reflect anthropological assumptions and practices prevalent at the time. As Fabian points out, anthropology "emerged and established itself as an allochronic discourse; it is a science of other men in another Time," necessarily creating "petrified relation[s]" between observers and observed (143).

Anne McClintock reminds us that "geographical difference across *space* is figured as a historical difference across *time*" (40) and that this geo-temporal construct supports an evolutionary approach to human development: "the distance along the path of progress traveled by some portions of humanity could be measured

only by the distance others lagged behind" (46).[42] Within this framework, Africa can

be imaginatively "superannuated by history," her peoples existing in "anachronistic

space" that is "prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place in the

historical time of modernity" (40). Haggard's Amahagger clearly reflect such

assumptions. Descendants of a lost (white) civilization, they are degenerate in

action (savage cannibals) and knowledge (ignorant of their own heritage of scientific

and cultural wisdom). Nicholas Daly identifies them as "epigones, the inheritors of

vast and majestic ruins of which they have no proper knowledge" (107). Confining

Ayesha amongst such "primitive" people effectively curtails her influence on the

world. Even she can do little more than curtail the Amahaggers' most brutal

practices. More animal than human, they are too savage for any but the most limited

forms of cultural development. Ayesha then has been temporally as well as

geographically stranded in Africa.

While the location of Ayesha's isolation changes between novels, the

containment strategy itself remains intact. The mountainous temple where Holly and

Leo eventually rediscover Ayesha is even more inaccessible than Kor. For much of

the year, it is completely cut off by the winter snows, and it too is protected/isolated

by savage tribes. Once again fate or providence has placed Ayesha in a location

where arduous geo-temporal distance acts as a protective buffer, minimizing the

evolutionary advantage conveyed by amortality and thus limiting the extent of her

devastating power. While this geographical isolation limits her effective threat, that

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[42] This type of temporal imperialism was by no means uncommon in Victorian imperial fiction. In Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad's metaphor for traveling up the Congo is a trip back in time: "Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world" (30). Conrad's description could be seamlessly grafted into the story of Holly and Leo's journey up the river toward ancient Kor. The similarity of passages from these imperialist novels suggests how ubiquitous this treatment of Africa had become by the late nineteenth century. Haggard's characters, however, encounter a further temporal anomaly in their journey to the past: they discover that the "river" they are following is actually an ancient canal from a civilization that predated Egypt's.

limitation nonetheless relies on her willingness to remain bound to a specific locale, a fact emphasized by her reaction to Leo's arrival in <u>She</u>.

Having seduced Leo into becoming her betrothed, Ayesha assures Leo that once he has been reborn in the pillar of fire, they will leave Kor and travel to England, where they shall "'live as it becometh us to live. Two thousand years have I waited for the day when I should see the last of these hateful caves and this gloomy-visaged folk, and now it is at hand, and my heart bounds up to meet it like a child's towards its holiday. . . . thou shalt rule this England'" (192). Leo's disconcerted response that England already has a queen is easily dismissed by Ayesha: "'She can be overthrown'" (192). Both the assertion that their queen "was venerated and beloved by all right-thinking people in her vast realms" and that, in practical terms, a popular government ruled democratically are also dismissed (192).

Even the warning that attempts to overthrow the government would result in a confrontation with the law and "probably end upon a scaffold" is waved aside: "'I am above the law, and so shall Kallikrates be'" (<u>She</u> 192). Confronted with her ambition, Holly can only conclude that "It might be possible to control her for awhile, but her proud ambitious spirit would be certain to break loose and avenge itself for the long centuries of its solitude. . . . In the end she would, I had little doubt, assume absolute rule over the British dominions, and probably over the whole earth" (<u>She</u> 193). The same assumptions of evolutionary superiority that have underpinned British imperial conquest make Ayesha's triumph seemingly inevitable. Aware that only her distance from the seats of power has limited Ayesha's disruptive force to this point, Holly seems equally aware of the impossibility of containing her once she has determined to relocate.

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If Ayesha's continuing isolation is dependent on her willing submission, the question must be "why does Ayesha submit?" The answer is apparent in Haggard's second containment strategy: wifely domestication. In spite of her transgressive behavior, a proper Victorian attitude of submission to her master/mate has held Ayesha in check. Ayesha is every man's (or at least every man as Haggard conceives manhood) fantasy wife: beautiful and devoted beyond compare or reason. Her beauty is presented as utterly unique, the result not simply of her physical form, but of her baptism in the pillar of fire. And it is a beauty exempt from the ravages of time. Her lover need never look upon her faded and wasted by age, and since she offers him the same gift, he need not fear aging in his turn and being left behind, as Bertha was in "The Mortal Immortal." For a nineteenth-century audience that shared an "aesthetic predilection for young wives" and "fears of aging as a rampant disease" (Godfrey 3, 11), such physical stasis must have been tempting indeed.

Ayesha has more to offer Leo than eternal beauty, however. Before encountering and identifying Leo as Kallikrates, she assures Holly that she only

> "herd[s] here with barbarians lower than beasts. . . because I wait for
> him I love. . . . The day must come, it may be when five thousand
> more years have passed, and are lost and melted into the vault of
> Time . . . when he, my love, shall be born again, and then, following
> the law that is stronger than any human plan, he shall find me *here*,
> where once he knew me." (She 112)

Loyalty may be understood as a temporal virtue, one that depends on time for evidence, and Ayesha has demonstrated a loyal devotion to her lost love, Kallikrates, that surpasses any common wifely devotion. This same devotion has kept her sexually pure: "'I am for no man, save one, who hath been, but is not yet'" Ayesha asserts (She 115). In Ayesha, worried for Leo's safety, she even exhibits a maternal tenderness: "'Can I help it if, like some mother who sees her little child at play upon a

mountain's edge, my soul is torn with agony when I know thee to be in dangers that I am powerless to prevent or share?'" (147). Perhaps most notably, She-who-must-be-obeyed pledges submission to Leo as her "lord" (She 214) and scolded by him, "submit[s] to the chastisement meekly," even weeping at his anger (Ayesha 147). Devotion, sexual purity, maternal tenderness, and submissiveness. The virtues Ayesha exhibits within the bounds of this relationship are those of a proper Victorian woman. Even her offer of British rule is described as a dowry that she will bring to Leo.

She describes her betrothal to Leo as "this first most holy hour of completed Womanhood," suggesting that until now she has been incomplete, her transgressions caused by her lack of male control (She 214). With his guidance, she pledges to "'abandon Evil and cherish Good. . . . [and] be ever guided by thy voice in the straightest path of duty'" (214), her theology of amorality yielding to his more orthodox faith. Later, as a bride, "Ayesha grew human. . . . Radiant and more radiant did she seem to grow, sweeter and more sweet. . .no longer the Valkyrie of the battleplain, but only the loveliest and most happy bride that ever gladdened a husband's eyes" (Ayesha 179). Her "masculine" qualities chastened into feminine gentleness, Ayesha seems to promise her chosen spouse incomparable marital bliss. Holly notes that love for Leo is Ayesha's Achilles' heel. It "left her heart mortal, that through it she might be rendered harmless as a child, who otherwise would have devastated the universe" (Ayesha 151). Ayesha's submissive love for Leo suggests that transgression need not be annihilated, if it can be tamed and channeled.

Haggard's portrayal of Ayesha's love for Leo reflects the same assumptions about femininity as Margaret Trelawney's belief that the desire for love motivates the actions of Queen Tera in The Jewel of Seven Stars. Yet just as Margaret's

assumptions about Tera seem insufficient to explain her quest for power, so too does this containment strategy seem insufficient to suppress Ayesha's. Her amortality finally proves too powerful for mere human containment. Their marriage results in Leo's death, as he proves unable to endure union with someone who is his physical, intellectual—and spiritual?—superior. The inequality of the relationship seems to make this failure inevitable. Their physical inequality is readily apparent. In her study of January-May marriage, Esther Godfrey points out that age and gender produced a complicated structure of power relations in Victorian fiction. Authority typically rested with the older male husband, but power could potentially be subverted by the youthful attractiveness of a much younger bride. Age could serve as a force of instability within marital relations because it is "transitory in nature, constantly rewriting one's contract with gender and power" (Godfrey 91). As aging continuously realigns the attractiveness and the vitality/weakness of those involved, power relationships are likewise realigned and redefined.

In this inverted January-May marriage, the potential for power realignment is minimal because, for Ayesha, aging has been stopped. Haggard makes it clear that, even before entering the pillar of fire, Ayesha defied the Victorian predilection for a childlike-bride: though a "young woman of certainly not more than thirty years" she is in "the first flush of ripened beauty"—not that of a bud yet unfurled (She 116). She escapes both the infantilizing effect of permanent physical childhood and the debilitation of age. From a biological perspective, Leo cannot ever reach true equality with Ayesha as she possesses a doubled form of temporal power—the experience that accompanies age and the vitality that accompanies youth. It is true that Leo has been promised a similar stasis once he enters the pillar of fire, but having missed his opportunity in She, he has gained experience only at the cost of

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also losing some of his youth and vitality. The beautiful twenty-five year old hero has

become the forty-odd middle-aged man. Haggard admittedly presents him as still

desirable; but he is undeniably no longer the mirror image of the Kallikrates that

Ayesha has adored across the centuries; and the more time that passes before he

enters the fires of Kor, the greater the physical gap between them becomes.

Leo is also presented as relatively callow. Nina Auerbach not unfairly

describes him as "a muscular, somewhat cloddish Victorian adventurer" (37), and

Katz' charge of the novel's "anti-intellectualism" might with some justice be applied to

him. Nor is this simply an anachronistic criticism imposed by modern feminist

scholars: Haggard's editor, Andrew Lang, wrote Haggard that Leo "is not made a

very interesting person. Probably he was only a fine animal" (qtd in Haggard, Days

I.247). Unlike Ayesha or even his mentor Holly, Leo demonstrates little depth of

thought. His is the mindset of the determinedly conventional, even in the midst of his

greatest adventures. While Holly can perceive in Ayesha's threat to Britain the

potential for social and political change that is "materially for the better" (She 193),

change is inherently undesirable to Leo. Challenged by Ayesha to admit that her

intended reforms would benefit society, Leo responds not with a rejection of her

goals but of change itself.

> "What of it if I do discomfort those who think more of pelf than of courage and of virtue. . . ? What if I uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed against the ravening lusts of Mammon? Why, will not this world of yours be happier then?
> "I do not know," answered Leo. "All that I know is that it would be a different world, one shaped upon a new plan, governed by untried laws, and seeking other ends. In so strange a place, who can say what might or might not chance?" (Ayesha 156)

An adventurer only in physical terms, Leo does not have the intellectual or spiritual

courage to match Ayesha's vision. Even his continued religious orthodoxy—in

Ayesha, he rejects "heathen idolatries" and determines to hold to his own religion

(128,134)—seems less like firm principle than dogged inability or unwillingness to change his thinking.

His death results directly from this incapacity to embrace something that transgresses conventional understanding. Admitting that he is "'drawn to her by an infinite attraction,'" he nonetheless wishes that she "'were a little more human, even as human as she was in the Caves of Kor. I don't think she is quite flesh and blood'" (Ayesha 128). And flesh and blood is exactly what Leo desires. Valuing Ayesha's unique beauty and matchless devotion, he prefers her other attributes to be those of a conventional Victorian woman. When she would postpone their marriage until their return to the pillar of life so that they can be more evenly matched, Leo resists, asking her to abdicate her powers—to "'forget thy greatness and be a woman and— my wife'" (Ayesha 178).   When Ayesha complies, attempting to "[grow] human" and womanly, her kiss is nonetheless fatal, as her spiritual transformation cannot be so easily rescinded, once accomplished. As she had feared, Leo's "'little stream of life drain[s] into the great ocean of [her] life'" (179). It is not only the conversion of Kor that he lacks, however, but the transcendent awakening of his own soul. And his death ultimately releases Ayesha from the one-dimensional role of love interest (demonic or otherwise) into a redemptive force in the story. Love remains a crucial theme, but love with spiritual, even cosmic implications—and one that has become less exclusive: it makes room for Holly, as well as the two lovers.

In a diary entry from November 15, 1917, Haggard describes rereading Ayesha. He admits the book has "some weaknesses" but also "think[s] that it contains some fine things—the transformation of Ayesha, for instance, and all that it symbolizes" (Diaries 121). I believe that "all it symbolizes" is the process of spiritualization that has taken place over the course of She and Ayesha, a

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subordination of the Darwinian body and mindset to a spiritually revitalized concept

of life. I have already mentioned Leo's fear that Ayesha is not quite flesh and blood,

but a concrete illustration of this transformation may clarify my claim. In She, Ayesha

is leading Holly and Leo down a set of stone steps in the crypts of Kor. At the

bottom, Ayesha notices Holly examining the grooves that have been worn into the

stone stairs.

> "Wonderest thou whose are the feet that have worn away the rock, my Holly?" she asked. "They are mine—even mine own light feet! I can remember when these stairs were fresh and level, but for two thousand years and more have I gone down hither day by day, and see, my sandals have eaten out the solid stone!"
> I made no answer, but I do not think that anything that I had heard or seen brought home to my limited understanding so clear a sense of this being's overwhelming antiquity as that hard granite hollowed out by her soft white feet. How many hundreds of thousands of times must she have passed up and down that stair to bring about such a result. (She 177)[43]

These footprints do not only evidence Ayesha's amortal longevity, but also her

essential physicality. Like fossils unearthed by archaeologists, they are the traces of

a passing body, literally impressed into stone. Matter marking matter.

In Ayesha, however, it is the absence of such a trace that is revealing.

Threatened by vicious "death hounds," Leo and Holly are guarded by "the figure of a

woman clad in some dark garment" (later identified as Ayesha) who stands on the

shore of the island and raises her hand toward the approaching beasts, which are

"paralysed by fear" then flee. The unfamiliar figure vanishes with the threat, leaving

confusion in her wake. "That it left no footprints behind it I can vouch, for in the

morning we looked to see" (Ayesha 81). What has transpired between these two

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[43] In his autobiography, Haggard describes a conversation with Dr. Wallis Budge, when the Egyptologist described visiting a newly opened Egyptian tomb. Budge mentioned that the footprints of those who had borne the corpse to burial were still impressed in the sand, despite the thousands of years that had passed. Haggard notes that "those footprints always impressed me very much" (I.259). I suspect that that conversation influenced his use of footprints as a sign in She and Ayesha.

scenes? How—and why—has Ayesha the amortal whose sandaled feet eroded

stone steps become a mysterious entity whose passage leaves no physical trace?

A critical moment in this transformation occurs during Ayesha's

"degeneration" in the flames of Kor. Although Ayesha reenters the flames ostensibly

to convince a reluctant Leo and Holly of their safety, a second and deeper purpose is

also at stake. She warns that the flames produce a sort of spiritual as well as

physical stasis that has held her in its grip over the millennia. Because her heart was

full of anger and hatred toward Amenartas when she first entered the flames,

"'passion and hatred have been stamped upon my soul from that sad hour to this'"

(She 219). Her "re-baptism" is intended to transform her spiritual state into

something purer: "'Now is my mood a happy mood, and I am filled with the purest

part of thought, and so would I ever be'" (219). Her warning extends to moral

guidance for Leo and Holly:

> "When in turn thou dost stand in the fire, empty thy heart of evil, and
> let soft contentment hold the balance of thy mind. Shake loose thy
> spirit's wings . . . and turn thee toward the vision of the highest good
> that hath ever swept on silver wings across the silence of thy dreams.
> For from the germ of what thou art in that dread moment shall grow
> the fruit of what thou shalt be for all unreckoned time." (219)

From absolute Darwinian amorality, Ayesha is shifting toward moral exemplar. This

shift encompasses both a radical transfiguration—"a dread moment" of drastic

physical change—and an organic process of growth as she gradually transforms

spiritually to match her regenerated body. Her second immolation then represents

the destruction of the old and the initiation of Ayesha's transfiguration into something

new. Her rapid degeneration—a caricature of evolution in reverse, ending in a

"hideous little monkey frame" (She 223)—requires that her physical form be

discarded in favor of a new body ruled by spirit rather than biology. Indeed her very

wish to be always "'filled with the purest part of thought . . . to turn . . . toward the

vision of the highest good'" demands such a change, as does Haggard's need to transform a Darwinian imperialist into a redemptive force.

Evidence of Ayesha's changed status appears early in <u>Ayesha</u>, when a despairing Leo becomes suicidal. Holly has delayed Leo's suicide by warning that losing him would destroy Holly himself, but recognizing that this is only a temporary solution, Holly prays to Ayesha for salvation: "'Ayesha!' I cried, 'if you have any power, if in any way it is permitted, show that you still live, and save your lover from this sin and me from a broken heart. Have pity on his sorrow and breathe hope into his soul'" (8). Although Holly subordinates Ayesha's power within a broader providential order that would "permit" her action, he also explicitly identifies her with a salvific force. She is to "save" Leo from "sin" and "breathe hope into his soul." The answer to this prayer comes in the form of a vision that sends the pair on their quest to find the reborn Ayesha (9-10).

Is this prayer to Ayesha simply a blasphemy? Is she being constructed as a false messiah with Holly and Leo as misguided followers, seeking salvation along the wrong path? Is the vision "false" as even Holly wonders at first (<u>Ayesha</u> 9)? Such a reading is certainly plausible. Rebecca Stott describes Ayesha as a "Pandora figure" whose veiled beauty is a curse, waiting to be unleashed upon men to their destruction (74), while Jennifer Hedgecock identifies her as a prototypical *fin de siecle* femme fatale, "a beast bent on destroying men" (192). Haggard's own descriptions consistently link Ayesha's beauty to a sense of dread. Holly's first sight of her reminds him "most forcibly of a corpse in its grave-clothes" though he soon recognizes in the "swathed mummy-like form. . . a tall and lovely woman, instinct with beauty in every part" (<u>She</u> 106). His description of her unveiled beauty is particularly telling: "I have heard of the beauty of celestial beings, now I saw it; only this beauty,

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with all its awful loveliness and purity, was *evil*—or rather at the time, it struck me as

evil. . . . Never before had I guessed what beauty made sublime could be—and yet,

the sublimity was a dark one—the glory was not all of heaven—but none the less

was it glorious" (She 116). Far from being repulsed by this (apparently) evil beauty—

or at least not wholly repulsed—Holly admits that "the very *diablerie* of the woman,

whilst it horrified and repelled, attracted in even a greater degree" (119).

Murphy develops this treatment of Ayesha as femme fatale in explicitly

theological terms, arguing that Haggard twists religious references into

"blasphemous revisions," thus demonizing Ayesha and constructing her as a female

antichrist (50). Leo's subjugation provides particularly compelling evidence of her

interpretation. Witnessing her murder of Ustane, the native woman he had accepted

as wife, Leo threatens to kill Ayesha in retribution (171). Denying her identification of

him with the dead Kallikrates, Leo savagely rejects her proffered love (172). Within

moments, however, her unveiled beauty seduces his senses and destroys his moral

integrity. "With the corpse of his dead love for an altar, did Leo Vincey plight his troth

to her red-handed murderess—plight it forever and a day. For those who sell

themselves into a like domination, paying down the price of their own honor, and

throwing their soul into the balance to sink the scale to the level of their lusts, can

hope for no deliverance here or hereafter" (173). Apparently, damnation is the price

for worshipping Ayesha. In Murphy's estimation, the only possibility for redemption

comes from annihilating the female demon/demigoddess who tempts men into

idolatry and degradation (53).

I would argue that Haggard offers another possibility: redeeming the

"demigoddess" and using her to reinvigorate a "materialised and eviscerated

Christianity" that has been so infected by contemporary pragmatism and skepticism

that it lacks redemptive potential (Days II.244). In She, Holly admits that he is afraid

to talk about religion with Ayesha because she is more likely to convert him, than he

to convert her (146). Indeed, she refers to him as her "disciple" (146). Notably,

however, the blasphemies that threaten to convert him are not her religious

references, but a sterile rationalism similar to what he has heard preached by

nineteenth century materialists who "[hurl] statistics and whole strata of geological

facts at your head" (She 145). (The geologists' hammers strike again.) Such

rationalism has so "eviscerated" Protestant Christianity that it has become, for many,

a faith in name only. Even Leo's capitulation to Ayesha's wiles may be attributed to

this failure: his watered-down, "materialised" faith lacks the potency needed to

overcome the demands of the senses. Having largely forfeited its own sublime

aspects—rigorous self-discipline and a belief in the Mysteries and miracles (traits

Haggard admires in the Catholic faith)—, such faith has no power against Ayesha's

dark sublimity, as the sublime acts on a level deeper and more primal than that of

rationality.

Despite acknowledging Ayesha's "diablerie" Holly regards her as "made

more perfect—and in a way more spiritual—than ever woman was before" (She 142).

The sublime acts viscerally on the body and soul, calling forth a response at once

physical and spiritual. As James Usher explains, "At the presence of the sublime,

although it be always awful, the soul of man seems to be raised out of a trance; it

assumes an unknown grandeur; it is seized with a new appetite, that in a moment

effaces its former little prospects and desires" (147). Bereft of his sensitivity to the

sublime, man "would fall to the condition of a sagacious brute" (154). [44] The sublime

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[44] While theories of the sublime vary substantially, they generally share an emphasis on the elevation of feeling that arises from an encounter with something magnificent, powerful and/or immense. Besides Usher's Clio, or a Discourse on Taste (1769), two discussions of

is inherently a transgression of the commonplace; and in Ayesha's transgressive sublimity lies the potential for something higher, more vibrant and vital, than Victorian convention allows.

Haggard's diary entry from November 15, 1917, reinforces this intermingling of the devilish and the spiritual. He remembers having considered for a sequel "some celestial—or infernal—scenes," suggesting how ambiguous Ayesha's status remains throughout the texts, how inassimilable to conventional morality (121). It is in this provocative tension, this "negative capability," if you will, that room for redemption and revitalization lies.[45] This permeability between the divine and demonic also problematizes any hegemonic reading of Ayesha's role in the text, maintaining space for her both/and status. Indeed, a recurrent theme throughout both texts is the mystery that surrounds Ayesha. Questions about her past, her character and her identity abound, the answers perpetually shifting. Repeatedly, Haggard suggests that mystery is central to Ayesha's personhood—just as Mystery is central to a vibrant spirituality.

In this light, Nina Auerbach's reading of Ayesha in Woman and the Demon may be informative. Auerbach identifies Ayesha as an example of "divine-demonic women" whose "disruptive spiritual energy" have the potential to revitalize Victorian spirituality (36, 1-2). For Haggard, to whom complacency seemed spiritually deadening, such disruption would have seemed less threatening than challenging and promising—the spiritual equivalent of an African adventure. Although Haggard

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the sublime that particularly inform my ideas in this section are Edmund Burke's A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1759) and John Baillie's "An Essay on the Sublime" (1747).

[45] In a letter to his brothers dated December 21, 1817, John Keats defines negative capability as "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." It is a state of mind that accepts uncertainty and lack of resolution as desirable, as it produces a receptivity to new insights and experiences.

was an avowed Anglican, his Christianity was quite idiosyncratic, mingling orthodox readings of the Bible with Buddhist teachings on reincarnation (<u>Days</u> II.241). His description of Jesus as "a God-endowed Being of supernatural strength [who] did show signs and wonders before the eyes of His generation, and for the subsequent instruction of mankind" (<u>Days</u> II.240) has tantalizing parallels with Ayesha herself, especially when he acknowledges in his "Note on Religion" that there "may exist other roads to salvation" than Christianity (II.241). In ascribing redemptive authority to "a God-endowed Being" rather than to a singular "Son of God," Haggard at least provides imaginative space for alternate messiahs, who may also be "God-endowed" and possess supernatural abilities to perform miracles. Thus, though he typically privileges Christianity, his faith is not exclusive, but open to other spiritual possibilities. What seems to matter most to Haggard is the spiritual color and texture of one's faith: an effective faith must embrace the riches of mystery and the miraculous. Any faith that rejects the miraculous (including contemporary Protestantism) is, in his estimation, anemic at best (II.240). Such a faith should, indeed must for the spiritual health of its followers, be disrupted.

Ayesha is just such a force of disruption. Already a spiritual force of no small 'means—as her elemental destruction of Kaloon demonstrates—she clearly has the potential for social and political disruption. What is more important to Haggard, however, is her potential to disrupt spiritual complacency by demonstrating the shortcomings of a life lived only in naturalistic terms—however prolonged and grand. Her voluntary "death," like that of Zanoni, is a submission to a higher providential order, one to which nature (and human nature) is clearly subordinate. As she reassures Holly, "'Think not that I am conquered, for now my name is Victory!'" (<u>Ayesha</u> 186). Her blood thirst has been subdued, her "'sin and pride'" relinquished,

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the higher good she had sought at the close of <u>She</u> finally within reach. Even her

grand imperial ambitions are abandoned in favor of a cosmic vision that takes her

beyond materialism into Haggard's far more valued eternity. And the "truth" of her

vision is validated in a scene witnessed by Holly's physician upon his death.

Before dying, Ayesha entrusted her scepter to Holly and enjoined him to call

her when he was near death, when she would come for him (<u>Ayesha</u> 186). After

Holly's death, his attending physician posts the manuscript of <u>Ayesha</u> to Holly's

publisher, along with a strange jeweled scepter and an explanatory letter. In the

letter, the doctor describes following a dying Holly to a primeval monolith, "'a sort of

miniature Stonehenge,'" once devoted to Isis.[46] Approaching the monolith, the

doctor witnesses Holly holding the scepter and "'uttering some invocation—in

Arabic'" (<u>Ayesha</u> 5). In apparent response, "'something bright and glorious which

gradually took the form of a woman upon whose forehead burned a starlike fire'"

emerged from the shadows. "'Whilst I stood thus it became clear to me that Mr.

Holly also saw something. At least, he turned towards the Radiance in the shadow,

uttered one cry—a wild, glad cry, and stepped forward; then seemed to fall *through it*

on to his face'" (5). When the doctor reaches him, Holly is dead. Ayesha, it would

seem, has kept her promise. And Holly, who in embracing the mystery of Ayesha

has embraced Mystery itself, has been saved—released from a body and a time-

space defined by evolutionary principles into a spiritual eternity. By extension,

Haggard suggests the possibility for a sense of Mystery to likewise redeem the

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[46] Intriguingly, Haggard states in his autobiography that he "venerate[s] Isis, and always feel[s] inclined to bow to the moon" (<u>Days</u> I.255). Identified as a nature goddess in <u>She</u> and <u>Ayesha</u>, Isis seems to provide an interesting intermediary figure between the Christian deity and the Darwinian nature that Haggard challenges in his writing. As her votary, Ayesha may be seen to bridge this division, suggesting how the "natural" human may take on the elements of the divine.

Victorian age from its own materialist damnation by opening it to the Radiance of the eternal.

A more cynical reader might deny this image of salvation and regard Holly's submission to Ayesha at death as evidence of his damnation, seeing my redemptive interpretation as a romance in itself. Perhaps that reader is correct and I have, like Holly and Leo, been seduced into literary blasphemy. I will simply defend myself with a few last words from Haggard's diary. Noting that he had often been told that his later works could not compare with She, he writes, "As though a man's brain could harbour a host of 'Shes'! Such literary polygamy is not possible. Only one love of this kind is given to him'" (Days I.250). My defense is simple: Haggard loved his creation too dearly to make her purely evil—darkly sublime, yes, but always with a spark of the divine. If I have been seduced so too, I believe, was Haggard.

Providential Romance

I titled this chapter "Romances of the Fourth Dimension" to highlight its emphasis on the role time plays for these authors. In retrospect, another generic identification seems useful: providential romance. As I have suggested, both Loudon and Haggard are engaged in an act of epistemological mapmaking, reestablishing a coherent pattern of meaning in the face of a new chronology and a "disenchanted" cosmology. Despite their diversity of tone, style, and content, they share a providential mindset. Standard understandings of providence refer to the idea that everything that occurs in the universe takes place under an omniscient and omnipotent God's sovereign control. I would add that romantic providence is "omnitemporal."

In The Hand of God in History, or, Divine Providence Historically Illustrated (1855), Hollis Read emphasizes the temporal aspect of providence: "All veritable

history is but an exponent of Providence. . . . He that would rightly study history must keep his eye constantly fixed on the great scheme of human salvation" (13). Writers of providential romance take this idea of divine power working in history a step further: they use the imaginative freedom of romance to assert that a providential power can move in, through and around time in ways that disrupt the natural order. Time becomes malleable, as do all aspects of existence that are time-dependent, including aging and death. These writers espouse a romance teleology that allows for, even exalts, temporal improbability: the awakening and transport of a 3000 year old mummy to England or the marooning of a 2000 year old arch-imperialist in an evolutionary backwater to wait for the reincarnated doppelganger of her murdered love.

A shared providential perspective does not prevent these writers from exhibiting markedly different interests and goals. Their distinctive treatments of nature is a case in point. In Loudon's providential romance, written prior to the advent of Darwin, nature reflects and expresses the divine order. Thus, that which harms or seems to be in opposition to nature—technological conquest or warfare—can be critiqued through that relationship: to oppose nature is to oppose the divine. By contrast, Haggard's approach to nature is directly colored by his hostility to materialism—one that he equates with a Darwinian nature "red of tooth and claw." While he believes in an overarching providence, it is a providence that works, not in concert with nature, but by containing and subordinating nature. Clearly, then, what is means to be under God's providential reign is not identical for Loudon and Haggard.

Their "chronopolitics" are equally distinctive. Loudon's interest in moral reform focuses on action in the world—action that has direct political application.

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Her amortal Cheops is transported to (future) England specifically to intervene in the

political affairs of the nation's rulers. His task is completed and he is returned to the

grave once this political reform is accomplished. He is once more a historical

footnote, interesting for what he reveals of the past, but lacking contemporary

influence. Time has been restored to a normal flow, and future political

developments rest in the hands of the morally reformed English leaders. By

contrast, Haggard is interested in spiritual transformation which, while it certainly has

the potential (perhaps the goal) to produce social and political change, has a more

otherworldly emphasis than does Loudon's. Ayesha, in fact, is directly prevented

from approaching Britain while her focus is conquest, as she has nothing politically

transformative to offer. She has appeared throughout the novel as a mirror (even if

exaggerated) of the imperial mindset already in place in Britain. Despite her claims

that she will encourage reform, replacing one imperialist queen with another simply

maintains the status quo. It is only once Ayesha has shifted her focus to a more

exclusively spiritual dimension that she can enter England, as a personal savior for

Holly.

Is Haggard simply more content with the status quo than Loudon, as Murphy

might argue? By displacing Ayesha's political force into the spiritual realm, has he

abdicated responsibility for change in this world (a charge that has often been made

against the Christian faith)? Perhaps, but I believe the answer is a bit more

complicated. Notably, unlike Cheops, Ayesha has not been rendered passive and

powerless at the end of Ayesha. Rather her intervention on Holly's behalf suggests

ongoing potency and the ability to continue intervening in the world. Perhaps

Haggard is less confident of the effectiveness of a single intervention to promote

change and believes instead in a spiritual renewal that may work progressively

through a series of interventions. Since Holly's salvation is followed by the

successful transmission of his manuscript to his publisher, Haggard may be hinting

at the role of (romance) writers in furthering this task of spiritual renewal in this world.

Apocalypse and adventure. Future London and ancient Kor. Reanimated

mummy and immutable beauty. Moral reform and spiritual transcendence. However

one ultimately assesses their political messages, one must admit that both Loudon

and Haggard offer fascinating counterbeats to the sounds of the geologists'

hammers. A concern with the battle between materialist philosophy and a spiritual

conception of existence likewise informs my next chapter, as Ludwig Achim von

Arnim and Bram Stoker seek to revitalize language as a spiritual and moral force.

CHAPTER 5

Living Words: Amortality, Materialism, and <u>Homo Logos</u>

"Lo! Thy dread Empire, CHAOS! is restor'd;
Light dies before thy uncreating word:
Thy hand, great Anarch! Lets the curtain fall;
And Universal Darkness buries All."
                              --Alexander Pope, <u>The Dunciad</u>, lines 653-656

As I have argued throughout this study, amortal bodies are sites of transgression. They are also explicitly discursive constructs that exist only in the meeting of imaginations between author and audience, mediated by words on a page. In this sense, they are "blasphemous" in a more literal sense than I have addressed to this point: their bodily transgressions are, in fact, linguistic transgressions. While on a literal level this is true of all of the amortals I have addressed in this study, this recognition is particularly crucial to my examination of the authors covered in this chapter.

Both Ludwig Achim von Arnim in <u>Isabella of Egypt</u> (1812) and Bram Stoker in <u>Dracula</u> (1897) demonstrate a concern with the value of language, with its power to shape reality, to establish (and undermine) barriers. Employing a magico-mystical approach to language, Arnim's novella is populated by a veritable menagerie of amortals—all of whom are somehow animated, reanimated and/or defined by words. For Arnim, language has ontological significance. It is quite literally the force that gives life, while simultaneously distinguishing between life that is legitimately human and life that is blasphemous. In <u>Dracula</u>, a text that repeatedly calls attention to its

own textuality, language is equally central, if less mystically-oriented. Stoker, whose primary concern is with control of language, directly addresses not only the concept of textuality but modes of communication that facilitate or deter appropriate use of language, which is then a direct signifier of moral stance and status. Whether through reliance on telegrams, voices being reproduced on the newly invented gramophone, or telepathic communication between minds, Stoker demands that his readers acknowledge the power of language—for good or evil. He advocates its responsible and morally sound use, especially by authors who have the greatest mastery of and, therefore, greatest responsibility for, language's influence on society.

While it is hardly surprising that authors, for whom the written word is their livelihood, should foreground language, the reason for the urgency of these authors' attempts to sanctify language as a mystical and moral force may be less obvious. Christine Ferguson explains that Victorian authors often responded to "a prevalent Victorian crisis about the meaning, value, and future of language as a human species characteristic" (Language 1). I will argue that this debate not only predates the Victorian era, it extends beyond the value and future of language as a characteristic of the human to play a crucial role in an ongoing debate over the nature and value—indeed the very definition—of being human. The crisis of language is a crisis over human ontological certainty, as crucial to the Romantic Arnim as to the Victorian Stoker.

"The Fortress of Language":[1] Buttressing the Boundaries of the Human

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[1] Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), a German-born, British philologist, largely responsible for popularizing comparative philology in Britain, defines language as "the fortress. . . which, as yet, stands untaken and unshaken on the very frontier between the animal kingdom and man" ("Lecture" 22).

In Psalm 8, the psalmist asks God, "What is man that thou are mindful of him?" He responds to his own question with an answer that locates "man" in a privileged position in a divine hierarchy: "You have made him a little lower than the angels." Centuries later, Carl Linnaeus approaches the same existential question of the nature of humanity. Placing mankind in a scientific taxonomy, rather than a divine hierarchy, Linnaeus identifies him as *homo sapiens*, the wise or thinking man. [2] Others have followed Linnaeus' example, seeking to define humanity according to some distinctively human trait: *homo faber*, tool-making man. *Homo religiosus*, religious man. *Homo loquens*, speaking man. While the answers have varied, the desire to distinguish what is human from the rest of creation has been pervasive in Western culture.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the search for the distinctively human took on a particularly urgent cast as the barriers between human and machine and human and animal came increasingly under assault. These apparently distinct, even opposed, concepts—animal vitality versus mechanism— became intertwined, if not indistinguishable, as vitality came to be seen as a result of mechanical forces. As early as 1637, René Descartes had hypothesized that animals were "beast-machines" whose thought and behavior could be explained in mechanical terms. [3] By the mid-eighteenth century, the bond between nature and machine had become seemingly "irrevocable," as the machine had become the primary model for "a nature that is regular and therefore knowable" (Englestein 156-

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[2] Carl Linneaus (1707-1778). Swedish naturalist who developed a binomial classification system for plants and animals. He identified *homo sapiens* in his 1758 edition of Systema Naturae. In the original 1735 edition, humanity was identified as *homo diurnis*, "man of the day."

[3] French philosopher, physicist and writer (1596-1650). He discussed the "beast-machine" in his Discourse on Method, volume 34, part 1.

157). Nor did this model apply only to a "lower" nature from which humanity was somehow exempt. While Descartes had distinguished between humans and other animals by claiming a "rational soul" for mankind, many other philosophers would soon attribute all human experience to mechanical forces working on and through the body. As the title of his most famous work, "Machine Man" (1748) suggests, for instance, French materialist Julien Offray de la Mettrie openly identified man as an organic, thinking machine.[4] This mechanized model of human life "slowly dismantled the integrity of the human body itself" (Englestein 2). And with the body, it threatened theological understandings of the mind and soul, as these increasingly came to be viewed as simply products of physiological processes (however imperfectly understood).

Had such ideas remained solely in the realm of abstract philosophy, they might have seemed less threatening; however, it quickly became apparent that these ideas had real-world applications and implications. Gaby Wood notes that Enlightenment physicians often studied medicine in terms of mechanical laws (11). Anatomists such as William Harvey, Herman Boerhaave, and la Mettrie himself examined physiological systems ranging from the circulation of blood to the functioning of lungs and brain activity as mechanical processes.[5] Such perceptions of the body had significant epistemological impact. For instance, scientists came to understand eyes and ears as "complex tools" rather than "sacred mediators of truth" (Hankins and Silverman 225), a conceptual shift that transformed the relationship

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[4] French physician (1709-1751).

[5] Harvey (1578-1657), English physician who correctly described the properties of blood and its circulation in <u>De Mutu Cordis</u> (1628). Boerhaave (1668-1738), Dutch physician considered the founder of clinical teaching and the academic hospital. Le Mettrie studied under Boerhaave. His medical studies convinced him that mental processes could be attributed to organic changes in the brain and nervous system.

between the body and its surroundings, as well as the nature of the surroundings themselves—no longer a revelation of the divine, but a purely phenomenological reality. Likewise, communications systems designed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were largely "inspired by the structures of living bodies" (Otis 4). Telegraphy literally integrated body with technology, as the "hands, ears, nerves, and brain" served as organic senders, receivers and interpreters (Otis 134).

If physicians and philosophers blurred the boundaries between human and machine, mechanical engineers gave their concerns concrete form in the shape of automaton figures that showed a sometimes uncanny capacity to simulate life.[6] While it is easy to dismiss such mechanical marvels as Jacques de Vaucanson's flute player and digesting duck, Wolfgang von Kempelen's mechanical chess player, or the Jaquet-Drozes' writing and harpsichord playing androids as mere toys, however ingenious, to do is to ignore their deeper significance. [7] As Eric Wilson

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[6] Notably, the idea of the uncanny is inescapably entwined with the idea of the automaton. In his 1906 essay On the Psychology of the Uncanny, Ernst Jentsch identifies a key source of the uncanny as "doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might be, in fact, animate" (8). The effect is most powerful when "imitations of the human form not only reach one's perception, but when on top of everything they appear to be united with certain bodily or mental functions" (10). In his famous analysis of the "unheimliche" or uncanny (1919), Sigmund Freud elaborates on this concept, identifying the automaton as the epitome of the uncanny.

[7] Vaucanson (1709-1782), French inventor of automata. His flute player used bellows and pipes to simulate breathing, and the fingers were covered in skin (or possibly leather), integrating the mechanical and organic. This flute player was discussed extensively in Diderot's Encyclopedie   under the entry "androide." Von Kempelen (1734-1804). Hungarian inventor whose chess playing automaton known as "The Turk" was exhibited in London in 1783-84. While the chess player actually enclosed a live human who was working the mechanism and determining the moves, the illusion was both fascinating and disturbing to its audiences. Pierre Jaquet-Droz and his son Henri-Louis, French automaton engineers. The writing automaton is still in existence, continuing to produce its "eerie philosophical joke" (Wood xiv): "I think, therefore I am." Their "Musical Lady was exhibited in London in 1776. For extended descriptions of these automata, see Gaby Wood, Edison's Eve. For additional discussions of automaton engineering, see John Cohen, Human Robots in Myth and Science; Diedre Coleman and Hilary Fraser, "Minds, Bodies, Machines: Essays in the Cultural and Intellectual History of Technologies"; Thomas Hankins and Robert Silverman,

points out, far from being mere entertainments, such automata served as "arguments for the structure of the universe," a spiritually-evacuated "clockwork cosmos" that lacked existential meaning and value (101, 100). Coleman and Fraser note that some eighteenth-century automata "were so lifelike that they . . . [troubled] the supposed opposition between the terms 'life' and 'mechanism.'" Automata seemed to exemplify "the idea that the physical processes of life are capable of being explained in the same way as other physical phenomena, and, therefore, that the living body is a mechanism" (Huxley 555). The dual definitions of automata given in the Oxford English Dictionary emphasize this confusion. On the one hand, an automaton may be simply "a figure which simulates the action of a living being." On the other, it may be "a human being acting mechanically in a monotonous routine." Once human beings become identifiable as automatons, the ontological status of humanity becomes increasingly problematic.

Not surprisingly, in response to such confusions, a wide array of automaton fiction quickly appeared. While E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman" (1816) is perhaps the best known of such stories,[8] it is certainly not alone in depicting automata as "assault[ing] the ineffable core of human experience" (Hankins and Silverman 226). As scholars and storytellers alike reveal, automatism was about more than mechanical engineering. It was about the nature of life and of the human. And as many of the stories told reveal, a concern with protecting the status of humanity from assault—whether from philosophers, physicians or engineers—

Instruments and the Imagination; Lisa Nocks, The Robot: The Life Story of a Technology: and Eric Wilson, The Melancholy Android.

[8] Hoffmann's "Sandman" is the story addressed by both Jentsch and Freud as an exemplar of the uncanny.

quickly grew to accompany the new mechanistic views. What then was the role of language in this quest?

Language became one of the key sites of contention between the "materialist" school and its "idealist" opponents—whether those opponents appeared as Romantic philologists or Christian theologians. Materialism was a loaded term during the nineteenth century. Bernard Lightman notes someone identified as a materialist could be "criticized for a host of mortal sins" (210), including a "morally objectionable abuse of language, which undermined the existence of truth . . . . [and the] integrity of language" (212-213).   What was the "morally objectionable" materialist position on language? In accord with the philosophy already described, language was the result of mechanical, physiological processes. And what was the "truth" that it undermined?   For the idealists,

> Man is that being on earth who does not have language. Man *is* language.
>   It is by virtue of the procreative power of language, which grasps, shakes, and transforms, that man is man. For nothing really human can be so without this meaning, whether the language be uttered or silent. (Anshen 3)

Thus, a philosophy that challenged the unique status of humanity as the sole possessor of language, by extension, challenged the core of human identity.

For the materialists, language possessed no existential "truth" or ontological significance, nor was it unique to humanity. It was at least theoretically as available to machines or animals as to humans. In "Machine Man," for instance, la Mettrie argues that man learned language through a natural process and that it would be possible to teach animals language (13, 11). While he admits that language use distinguishes mankind from other animals, the barrier is one of degree and training not innate nature.   Likewise, writing a century later, Robert Chambers in his

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Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (1844) denies the "historical and

biological specificity" of language to humans (ctd in Ferguson 23). Following

Chambers, Charles Darwin takes a somewhat intermediate position. For Darwin, the

development of speech precipitated the intellectual development that distinguishes

humanity from the lower animals. Thus, he acknowledges the vast gap between

human "articulate language" and the inarticulate, yet communicative, cries of

animals, but also sees this gap as a product of natural evolutionary development

(Darwin, "Mental Powers" 140). Later yet, at the end of the nineteenth century,

William Whitney still acknowledges a significant gap between the mental

"endowments" of the lower animals and humanity, but claims that "it is the height of

injustice to maintain that there is not an approach, and a very marked approach,

made by some of the lower animals to the capacity for language" (305). While even

the "materialists" were reluctant to fully relinquish language as a distinctive human

accomplishment, they refused to acknowledge it as a decisive species characteristic,

one that irrevocably separates human from animal.

 The concern with "brute language" was only one side of the coin, however.

Materialist philosophy also lowered the walls between human and machine

language. For instance, speaking could be studied as the product of mechanical

actions of the vocal cords, actions that could be mechanically reproduced via

speaking machines that duplicated vocal anatomy (Hankins and Silverman 197).

Homo loquens, speaking man, has thus lost his unique status, leaving writing as a

solitary guardian of communicative singularity. As the production of writing

automatons and the phonautograph demonstrated, however, writing too could be

mechanically reproduced (Hankins and Silverman 134). If such mechanical

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reproductions still required human involvement and action, they nonetheless seemed to increasingly separate language from any intrinsically human status.

Further, the rise of linguistic science "raised a spectre of autonomous language—language as a system blindly obeying impersonal phonological rules in isolation from any world of human values and experience" (Dowling xii). Under such a system, language was yet another aspect of humanity that ceased to have significant ontological value—an entirely unacceptable position for linguistic idealists for whom "language is not only logical but, first and foremost, ontological" (Anshen "Language," 15). What Jeffrey Masten and his colleagues identify as the "idealist tradition" attacked materialism at its linguistic roots. They "constantly attempted to separate language from its machines. Language, if it was to be the defining human characteristic, needed to be segregated from the material form which implicated all forms of life" (Masten et al, "Introduction" 2). Despite the authoritative claims of some nineteenth-century materialists that theories of language's supernatural origins had "long since been exploded" (Hannigan, "Literary" 401), "whispers of divinity within the machine of language persisted throughout the nineteenth and even into the late twentieth century" (Prickett 170). This persistence can be largely attributed to the efforts of Romantic and theological opponents to linguistic materialism. Seeing the body-machine conflation and the neo-grammatical movement as culminations of a materialist philosophy that threatened to destroy any transcendental conception of humanity, they eagerly took up their pens against this enemy.

In an 1886 article for the Fortnightly Review, W. S. Lilly explicitly contrasts materialism to a spiritual conception of reality by opposing materialism to the Biblical concept of the *Logos*, the creating and living Word. Materialism is the "uncreating

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Word'"[9] that destroys "human causality, human spontaneity, human responsibility"

and morality—in other words all that it means to be human (586). To be a materialist

was to be philosophically, theologically and linguistically unfit—at least in the eyes of

the idealists.

The idealists then sought to redeem the word, the *Logos*, as a spiritual

concept, one that restored the ontological status of humanity by reestablishing the

link between language and some form of transcendent reality. While it was common

in Christian orthodoxy to identify the *Logos* with Jesus Christ and to understand

language as a divine gift given to Adam in the garden,[10] many Romantic philologists

took a less orthodox stance, seeing language as neither a "reflex response" (a

materialistic concept) nor directly as the "gift of a [single] divine revelation." Rather

language could be understood as springing from "an inner, creative necessity of

man's nature. . . . the paradigm of something not made but growing" (Burrow, "Uses"

186-87). For such Romantic philologists, language appeared "as a continuing

process, a relation between men—all men—and God" (Burrow, "Uses" 193).

Nonetheless, with greater or lesser theological orthodoxy, Romantic philology

rejected materialist theories of language "that deeply threatened every older notion of

language as *logos*, of words or speech as the revelation of a divine or a divinely-

bestowed intelligence" (Dowling xiii). They developed an implicit theology of

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[9] Lilly's phrase is borrowed from Alexander Pope's <u>Dunciad</u> line 653 and substitutes "materialism" for Pope's "Chaos." Both rely heavily on the Johannian concept of the *Logos* as the creating Word.

[10] See, for instance, Thomas Stackhouse's <u>Reflections on the Nature and Property of Languages</u> 1731); Rev. J. F. Denham's "On the doctrine of the Logos" (1849); and R.C. Trench's "Introductory Lecture from <u>On the Study of Words</u>" (1851) for theological discussions of language's divine origin.

language that served as a locus for their "refutation of materialist doctrine" (Burrow, "Uses" 187).

The man who is arguably responsible for popularizing Romantic philology in Britain is Friedrich Max Müller. Between 1861 and 1863, Müller delivered an extensive and popular series of Royal Institute lectures on comparative philology that attacked materialist approaches to language. Müller's lectures are known for "enacting glowing, quasi-metaphysical scenes of linguistic revelation and staging epic battles between the forces of the articulate and the silent" (Ferguson 29). For Müller, language is "sacred ground" (Müller, "Science" 13), "something more palpable than a fold of the brain, or an angle of the skull" ("Theoretical" 354); the "great barrier between the brute and man" ("Theoretical" 354), and (as the heading to this section acknowledges) "the fortress" which protects the "frontier between the animal kingdom and man" ("Lecture" 22). Irreducible to anatomy and mechanical forces, language inhabits a space unique to the human, space that is at once sacred and inviolate—inaccessible to the subhuman but providing access to the transcendent for humanity. While for Darwin, the pre-eminent quality of language was its providing the opportunity for intellectual development, Müller's descriptions point to a quality of language that extends beyond the rational intellect. Not irrational, language might best be understood as supra-rational. It does not merely allow us to think, but to conceive of a realm of the spirit that surpasses thought.[11] In this light, language might be considered a manifestation or expression of the numinous.[12]

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[11] See Paul Tillich for a discussion of the limitations of "discursive language" for describing and expressing the "holy."

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I want to argue then that, over the course of the nineteenth century, these linguistic idealists shared in constructing an unofficial species identity that asserts the numinous aspect of our linguistic nature: *homo logos,* man as the divine-language user and maker.[13] Within this conceptual schema, language is at once sacred and sacralizing: it both establishes and demonstrates the spiritual nature of humanity. Thus the defense of language becomes a defense of humanity's spiritual nature and of our place "a little lower than the angels" in the divine hierarchy. Or perhaps it places us slightly higher than the angels as co-creators with the divine: endowed with a creative capacity for language, we are able to use words for our own creative endeavors, whether these are constructing novels or planning "roads and houses and bridges" (van Buren 46). It is this spiritual conception of *homo logos* that undergirds the writings of both Achim von Arnim and Stoker, as language use is both idealized and constructed as a normative force. Writing decades apart, in different countries and different languages, both men understand language as possessing spiritual and ontological significance, and both engage this capacity for language in a battle against a materialist conception of existence.

Words Made Flesh: *Homo Logos* in Achim von Arnim's Isabella of Egypt

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[12] The numinous, as described by Rudolf Otto, refers to that aspect of the holy which is beyond its rational and moral aspects. The term seems to capture the aspect of language that Romantic philologists were anxious to defend against the onslaughts of linguistic materialism.

[13] Frank Heynick argues that *Homo loquens*, or talking man, is a useful designation for understanding our species' linguistic nature (7). His term is certainly useful in highlighting a concern with orality that arose in the eighteenth century and colored much of the discussion of language use and authenticity, particularly in relation to folk literature. For my purposes, I believe the classification of *homo logos* is more fitting, as it possesses the dual benefits of emphasizing the spiritual aspect of language use and accommodates the written aspect of the texts I am studying. Nonetheless, orality will play a significant role in the language concerns of these works.

It is a scene worthy of a Monty Python sketch: Cornelius Nepos, a three and a half foot tall mandrake-man, scurries around the sixteenth-century city of Ghent, seeking to "prove" his humanity by providing written testimonials from members of the court stating that he is, in fact, human and thus eligible for a commission in Prince Charles V of Germany's army. Once he arrives before the Prince, triumphantly clutching the precious letters of attestation in his gnarled, root-like hands, Cornelius' hopes are dashed. Each attestation is "conditional" (Arnim 70). He is probably human except . . . or he would be human if only . . . . Later, Cornelius wants to duel anyone who calls him a mandrake, but is ineligible unless proven human—the very identification under question. While at first glance this may seem little more than a cheap joke, the farce demonstrates a key theme of Isabella of Egypt: the role of language in defining and justifying human existence—a concern that is repeatedly highlighted and problematized through Arnim's amortal array.

Blending "seemingly incongruous and irreconcilable elements" (Lokke 21), Arnim acknowledges the complex, multi-faceted texture of language and its role in shaping reality. Specifically, he uses a mystical approach to language that acknowledges what William Graham refers to as the "generative power of the spoken word" (65).[14] Steven T. Katz explains that "most mystical streams are keenly sensitive to the energizing ontic possibilities that (certain) language, employed with spiritual integrity and in normatively efficacious manner, is said to possess" ("Mystical" 20). Arnim's mystical language acknowledges these "ontic possibilities" in

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[14] Graham discusses the shift from a predominantly oral to a predominantly written orientation to language in Western culture, a shift that is particularly that he suggests reaches a highpoint during the nineteenth century (18). While ideas about orality and literacy were certainly important during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, for the purposes of this chapter, I will generally treat speech and writing as complementary rather than competitive modes of language, both of which these authors understand as part of the fundamental linguistic capacity of the human.

endowing matter with life, but also explores the harmful effects of ontic language used without spiritual integrity and in a blasphemous manner. If in mystical traditions, "essence is embodied in the material substance of language itself . . . rendering language the mystical basis of empirical reality and all true knowledge of it" (Katz, "Kabbalah" 110), then in Arnim's appropriation of mystic thought, false language by default produces false life. Bodies engendered by such language are blasphemies made flesh.

And in Arnim's quirky novella such bodies abound. Within a mere ninety pages, we encounter Cornelius Nepos, a humanoid root given sentience by the combination of a hanged man's tears and a young girl's devotion; the Bearskinner, a reanimated corpse so grimy he sprouts parsley; and a golem, a human simulacrum formed from clay and a captured mirror-image. These folklore figures share five significant characteristics: 1) physical grotesquery, 2) a marked relation to death, 3) materialistic values, 4) a life-force grounded in the creative power of language, and 5) a flawed relation to language. For Arnim, it is this unique melding of physical and (illegitimate) linguistic characteristics that produces amortality.

The most obvious parallel between Isabella and other fictions of amortality is the blurring of distinctions between dead and living bodies, a characteristic noted by both Kari Lokke and Sheila Dickson. As Dickson points out, Arnim's bodies—human and inhuman, organic and inorganic—demonstrate a profound tension between material and spiritual realities (300), yet the body is not simplistically associated with the material. Rather it coexists as a material and spiritual form; it is when the material is allowed absolute possession of the body that it becomes deadened to the numinous. And for Arnim this deadening is marked not simply by bodily form but by language use: amortality is characterized by distance from the ideal of *homo logos.*

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Even non-amortal characters such as Bella's guardian Braka are described in linguistic or textual terms. The highly unethical Braka, for instance, is compared to "a malicious letter that the girl had let drop from her hand in horror and yet still wanted to read," while Bella herself is heir not only to a gypsy crown, but to "a box with old writings that she could leaf through, some decorated with marvelous seals and written on wonderful paper in strange languages that she had never learned" (Arnim 6, 9). Even Bella's sense of self is at least in part textually-based: she tells Braka that in reading her father's books she "found such wonderful stories that I'd like to become a ghost myself'" (10). Bella thus uses words both to influence her world and to contemplate her own identity. As such, Bella is the locus of a matrix of complex language events shaped by Arnim's unique theology of language—a distinction between Bella as *homo logos* and her companions as rhetoricians or even mere parrots.

For my analysis of Arnim's theology of language to make sense, it is important to provide a summary of this little known work. The novella opens with Isabella learning that her father Duke Michael, the king of the gypsies, has been hanged for theft. Unsure of her future, Isabella remains in the abandoned house where they had been squatting, "protected" by an old gypsy woman, Braka. Shortly thereafter, they learn that Prince Charles[15], who recently passed the house and heard of its reputation for ghosts, plans to prove his courage by spending the night there and driving out the spirits. In turn, Braka convinces Isabella to sneak into the Prince's room, pretending to be a ghost, to drive him away. However, if he is sufficiently brave to grab her, Braka advises Bella to "tell one little lie, that you

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[15] Charles V of Germany (1500-1558) became King of Spain in 1516 (as Charles I) and Holy Roman Emperor in 1519. Arnim's casual appropriation of this important historical figure provided a key target for critics who opposed his unconcern with historical accuracy.

sneaked in out of love for him, and maybe your fortune'll be made'" (11). During the

midnight encounter, the naïve Bella falls in love with the Prince, who is likewise

enchanted with the "ghost" whose memory haunts him in ensuing days.

After his departure, the infatuated Bella, convinced by Braka that only money

could provide her access to the Prince, uses her father's books of magic to learn the

secret of creating a mandrake man, who possesses a gift for uncovering treasure.

She completes the rite and finds herself burdened with an avaricious, sly, and

jealous mandrake child/suitor, who as promised locates a treasure—although it

comes with an inconvenient attachment: its previous owner, the reanimated

"Bearskinner" who becomes Bella's servant. Eventually, the now-wealthy Bella

encounters the Prince again and in a series of extravagant misadventures, including

the creation of a golem Bella that temporarily steals the real Bella's place, she

becomes pregnant by the Prince. The Prince plans to make her his mistress,

promising to restore her people to Egypt, but Bella recognizes his lustful and

materialistic nature and leaves for Egypt with the gypsies, fulfilling a prophecy that

her son will become king and savior of the gypsy people. The novel closes with

parallel scenes of premature entombment for Charles and Bella, who seek and

receive judgment and redemption as they lay living in their coffins.

As this brief summary suggests, Isabella of Egypt is a challenging piece to

describe and to study. Its peculiar pastiche of melodrama, mysticism, and farce has

puzzled critics since its original publication in 1812. In his translator's introduction to

Arnim's Novellas of 1812, Bruce Duncan notes that even other German Romantics,

who shared Arnim's "[delight] in befuddling readers . . . . [with] confusing plots and

strained similes" found Arnim's work difficult and sometimes excessively abstruse

(vii). Two of Arnim's staunchest early critics/supporters were the Grimm brothers, to

whom the 1812 novellas were dedicated and whose comments set the tone for reception of Arnim's work. Particularly notable and persistent were complaints about Arnim's lack of historical accuracy when incorporating historical figures into his romances. Such criticism, coming as it did from highly respected peers, troubled Arnim, who nonetheless persistently rejected historical fact as a privileged category of truth. For Arnim, historicity was "just one of many realities, meaningless outside the continuum it forms with other truths" (Duncan x). Contemporary scholars, conscious of the constructedness of the historical record, have become more tolerant of this "defect."

A more comprehensive criticism is of Arnim's uneven narrative scope. As Wilhelm Grimm writes, "What bothers me is your habit of taking a story that is complete in itself and, after it has lived to a certain point within this constraint, suddenly opening up doors on all sides for it to rush out into the great world and often wind up an event of universal significance'" (qtd in Duncan viii). While Arnim's claim that his works "are like the Kingdom of Heaven: only the few may enter'" may seem more defensive than enlightening (qtd in Duncan viii), it does offer insight into Arnim's intermingling of the mundane and mystical. Duncan describes Arnim's technique as "a contrapuntal style that moves in and out of simultaneously existing, interpenetrating planes of meaning" (viii). What Grimm identifies as an arbitrary breaking of narrative constraint is, for Arnim, an irruption of the numinous into a world deadened by materialism. Only those awake to the numinous, characters and readers alike, can experience these encounters as meaningful rather than inexplicable and jarring. It is thus that one can encounter such disparate descriptions of Arnim's writing as exhibiting "a spirit of consecration" (Liedke 4), serving Arnim "as a conduit for divine Truth" (Hoermann 13), and "vacillat[ing]

between the earthy-irreverent and the chillingly demonic-macabre" (Lokke 29).

Arnim does not so much vacillate between these modes as integrate them into a

problematic whole.

The first of Arnim's foils to Bella's *homo logos* is Cornelius Nepos, the

mandrake, whose amortality and linguistic failings clearly locate him as one of the

spiritually dead. At first glance, it may seem problematic to characterize the

mandrake as an amortal. Unlike the other amortals I have examined in this study,

each of whom began life as a fully human being, only to transgress their mortal state,

the mandrake begins its existence as a simple root. As Thierry Zarcone reveals,

however, the mythos of the mandrake has always contained seeds of

anthropomorphization. These odd, hybrid "plant-humans" grow from the sperm of

executed men who quite literally "father" the mandrake (although Arnim bowdlerizes

his mandrake by having him grow from Michael's tears rather than semen) and, at

least in Arnim's version, can only be "birthed" by a young girl "who loves with her

whole soul, without the carnal desires of her sex, for whom her beloved's mere

proximity suffices" (Arnim 15). Thus, the mandrake man is effectively the

(incestuous?) offspring of two humans, Duke Michael and Isabella. He is also the

product of language: in her father's books, Bella discovers a "lengthy description of

how to obtain mandrake roots" (15), and this spell becomes the quickening force for

the mandrake's semi/sub-human existence.

More than this, in folklore the mandrake possesses the defining attribute of

the human: it is "gifted with language" (Zarcone 123). It could "moan, scream, sob,

speak and sing" (116). Arnim, however, makes an important revision to this mythos:

his mandrake initially possesses only cries and screams—the sort of "inarticulate"

communication Darwin would later attribute to animals. Like his three and a half foot

body, Cornelius' language is stunted. He only attains articulate language as a result of his treasure-hunting gift (the epitome of materialist values): he locates and consumes a "speech-root" (23). This illegitimate source of language provides exceptional linguistic ability: Cornelius becomes a skillful speaker who "often shamed his rhetoric teacher with his eloquence" (38). Nonetheless, this rhetorical eloquence is limited; like a parrot, he "could cleverly imitate most people's manner of speech but had none of his own" (38).[16] Further, his ability is immediately abused as Cornelius spouts "empty, derisive wit" and "cynical banter" and engages in gossip and bragging that causes "friction" throughout the town (23, 38).

The mandrake's story ends with an apparent implosion of anger that leaves him "torn and motionless" with a smell of sulfur in the air (89), yet his final speech act is to curse Charles, leaving a linguistic legacy of "demon[ic] rage" that torments Charles for the remainder of his life (89-90). Thus, Cornelius' language ability is distinguished throughout the novella from the innate capacity of the human *logos*, both in origin and in use. From an inarticulate "birth" to an illegitimate language acquisition, Cornelius is disenfranchised from the human race. And his death curse only perpetuates the effects of his wrong language, leaving a linguistic stench to linger with that of the sulfur. Arnim presents Cornelius as an embodied blasphemy, an anti-*logos*, whose intrusion into human society has far-reaching and harmful consequences.

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[16] Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century debates over rhetoric inform Arnim's treatment of rhetoric in the text. Gradually moving from its classical role of an "educational ideal" to an elocutionary art often associated with "affectation and flowery insincerity of speech" (Graham 24-25), rhetoric, for Arnim, is more closely associated with the latter. Thus, Cornelius' rhetorical mastery suggests not Arnim's ideal of *homo logos*, but a lesser imitation of that ideal.

The second of Arnim's folklore characters, the Bearskinner or "Barnhauter," is equally a product and problem of language. Cornelius, with his unerring nose for treasure, has uncovered the Bearskinner's hidden treasure, and Braka proceeds to tell Bella and the mandrake the Bearskinner's story. When a German mercenary who "believed in no god," fled a battle, he encountered a ghost who promised him a fortune if he served him for seven years (27). During those years, he was to wear a bearskin and to refrain from cutting or washing his hair, beard or nails. Moreover, he was forbidden to say the Lord's Prayer during his service, no great sacrifice, as he admits he had never much liked praying anyway. Not surprisingly, after seven years, he bore little "resemblance to God's image"—literally growing parsley from his filthy skin—and had nearly forgotten how to speak (27). Like the mandrake, he has become physically and linguistically subhuman.

Also like the mandrake, the Bearskinner is called into amortality by words. When Braka is recounting the Bearskinner's story, the telling serves as an invocation. Spoken not by a priest, but by the "malicious letter" Braka, the story does not invoke the presence of God or the Holy Ghost, but an unholy ghost/revenant, a grotesque and anomalous figure. When the Bearskinner first appears to Braka and her audience, he appears as a disembodied form and is identified as a ghost whose first words are spoken in a "coarse voice" (30). For Arnim, for whom body and language are intertwined, the voice, as the embodiment of language, reveals character: a coarse voice suggests an equally coarse mind, one obsessed with material rather than spiritual concerns. Although a materialist might question a disembodied body having any voice at all, since it lacks the anatomical mechanisms of vocal chords, tongue and mouth, for Arnim the concern is with the spiritual state of the being: a "spirit" can be as "material" as a body, if its focus is materialistic. And,

as with the mandrake, the Bearskinner is an exemplar of materialism. Greedy during

life, he is doomed to stand guard over his hidden fortune in death (30). A coarse

voice emanating from the disembodied Bearskinner is thus ideologically coherent for

Arnim; indeed it accords well with his idealistic view of language as something

beyond the mechanical.

However, Arnim complicates the role of the Bearskinner by reanimating him

as a revenant. After agreeing to serve Bella in order to earn back his treasure (a

concession cleverly exhorted by the mandrake), the Bearskinner promises to return

in the morning with his body "as well as [he] can fix it up by then" (31). Long buried,

he needs to clean out his arteries and borrow appropriate clothing from a "proper

gentleman's servant" who is buried beside him (31). He is revealed to have been

conscious in the grave—a further indication of Arnim's unwillingness to simply

segregate body and spirit—and his dual status as simultaneously dead and alive, or

perhaps more accurately, neither fully dead nor alive, provides Arnim with a further

avenue for pursuing his anti-materialist agenda.

The Bearskinner's first act as a revenant is to help Bella and her companions

prepare a journey to Ghent, where Bella hopes to find the Prince, but in helping them

pack, he again demonstrates his imperfect relationship to language: he throws

Bella's books into the stove (32). Just as his coarse voice revealed his coarse spirit,

his destruction of the books reveals his inability to judge the worth of things except in

material terms. The being who guards wealth even in death cannot recognize the

value of old books, just as those who comprehend language in mechanical terms

cannot recognize its true spiritual character.

As the story progresses, however, the Bearskinner becomes increasingly torn

between his living and dead states. Arnim notes that his "earthly nature took on new

life"—so much so that he worried whether he would be able to lay it to rest again in the grave when his service was complete (42).

> And occasionally there arose such a battle between his living and deceased bodies that his whole hide twitched and itched. A similar conflict characterized his attitude toward his service: his dead body felt loyalty toward Lord Cornelius, while his rejuvenated one was wholly devoted to Lady Braka and the lovely Bella and considered the master no better than a toadstool. As the one side or the other dominates, we shall soon see him act first in favor of this person, then of that one; yet he never betrayed one to the other. (42)

In this battle between his "bodies," we see literalized the battle of materialism against the spirit. The dead body—the mere mechanical form, if you will—follows its fellow materialist and anti-logos, while the rejuvenated form, one in which a spiritual spark is flickering, follows Bella, Arnim's *homo logos.*

This conflict is further illuminated by a conversation the Bearskinner has with Bella, after she has been displaced by her golem double. Wandering disconsolate near the cemetery, Bella encounters the Bearskinner, who has been occupied in his coffin, busily counting his recovered treasure. He weeps when he sees her, admitting that he had immediately recognized her double as "a false, imitation figure" but had been too afraid of losing his position (and thus access to his fortune) to say anything (70-71). Arnim hints that the Bearskinner's unwillingness to defend Bella—a failure of linguistic integrity—reveals his failure to complete his "resurrection" into spiritual life. Linguistic sins of omission are apparently as damning as sins of commission, and in refusing to speak up for the human against the "machine," he abdicates his own human status.

The Bearskinner's internal conflict (and final linguistic failure) comes to a climax during a crucial confrontation between Cornelius and the Prince. Golem Bella has died at the Prince's hand, and Bella has been restored to favor as a Princess of

Egypt and potential consort to the Prince. Cornelius, however, unaware of the existence of the doppelganger, believes that Bella has abandoned him for the Prince and goes before the court to lay claim to his wife. The Bearskinner is called to testify on Cornelius' behalf and willingly recounts the lies for which Cornelius has paid him. However, when Bella calls him to account, his better self "answered, like a corrected edition of his nature, maintaining the opposite in a bright voice: human – inhuman, married to Bella. . . . He contradicted himself so thoroughly that his testimony, after the judges had gone around in circles enough, was worthless" (83). His language, lacking a foundation in the *logos*—the source of both truth and meaning—is no more coherent than the incomprehensible noises of an animal. Further, once his incoherent story is told (or fails to be told), the Bearskinner essentially vanishes from the novella, cursed and driven out by the enraged mandrake. He is doomed to "appear on Judgment Day as poor, disunited, and desolate as at the present moment" (83). The Bearskinner's "epitaph" is a mere footnote: Arnim explains in a note that the Bearkskinner could be easily recognized by his "self-contradictory assertions" and thus avoided (83). Arnim seems to suggest that, lacking linguistic integrity and coherence, the Bearskinner likewise lacks meaningful identity and existence. Linguistic nonbeing is paralleled by narrative absence: his own incapacity for language essentially annihilates him.

The last of Arnim's amortals, the golem Bella, inhabits a particularly intriguing intersection of mysticism and mechanism. As Covino points out, "while the golem is a creature of the word-made-flesh, he functions like a machine" (Covino 363). Or more specifically, the nineteenth-century Romantic golem, representing the "shift of a magico-mystical topic into a popular legend" (Idel xvii), employs the techniques of mysticism to portray the Romantic fear of the "rise of the machines" (Wilson 86). The

golem that enters gothic discourse is not then the golem of Jewish tradition, but a

first cousin to the automatons of the engineering laboratory. Nonetheless, the

Jewish tradition of the golem has a long and complex history that Arnim both uses

and subverts for his anti-materialist argument.

Within the Jewish mystical tradition, golems are creatures of language, words

manifested as living flesh, as a body shaped from clay is animated by "pronunciation

of combinations of letters" over the form and the inscription of the sacred word for life

on the being's forehead (Idel xxvii). Arnim's golem tale directly reflects this tradition.

He writes that golems

> are clay figures, formed in the image of a particular person, over
> which the secret and miraculous *shemhamphoros* has been spoken
> and on whose forehead the word *æmæth* ("truth") has been written,
> by which means they come to life; . . . one need only rub out the *æ* on
> their forehead, so that only *mæth* remains, which means "death," and
> they instantaneously collapse into a heap of dust. (52-53)

In the Hebrew tradition, golem making was typically considered "a celebration of the

divine" (Sivan 37) and a "realization of spiritual potential" (Wilson 83), as only the

righteous could employ God's creative power to bring life to senseless clay. If

golems demonstrate that "language is pregnant with creative potency, that language

has the power to create worlds as well as words," then the golem legend also

traditionally reveals that we, as humans, share God's creative capacity and that this

ability is to be cherished and embraced (Sherwin 6, 3-4).   Although itself usually

mute—intriguingly the golem tradition hints that it is easier to animate clay than to

infuse the capacity for language, an ability that remains exclusive to God himself—, a

"golem is the product of and testament to perfect language" (Covino 368).

As the golem legend escapes Jewish mystical texts and enters the popular

imagination, a shift occurs. Golem creation is no longer a righteous "celebration of

the divine" but a blasphemous usurpation of divine power and authority. From being

proofs of linguistic purity, golems become emblems of human hubris and

promethean overreaching (Yair and Soyer 1). They become, as Ruth Anolik writes,

"monsters of language" (40). In her feminist study of Jewish golem tales, Anolik

claims that golem stories belong to the Jewish tradition of midrash, "an imagined

narrative created in response to a lacuna within a canonical text, a retelling that

attempts to explain and embellish the narrative of the canon" (53). For heuristic

purposes, it may be useful to extend Anolik's conception to include Isabella of Egypt,

treating Arnim's novella as a midrash on language that employs a mixture of

Germanic and Jewish folklore to explain and embellish the canonical narrative(s) of

language produced by both theologians and materialists.[17]

     I am aware that this is a problematic claim. To identify the distinctly Jewish

genre of midrash with the work of the anti-Semitic Arnim is incongruous, if not

antagonistic. [18]   Nonetheless, I believe such an association may help illuminate both

Arnim's personal understanding of his work as a quasi-scriptural task and the way in

which Jewish mysticism informs his writing. For Rabbinic writers of midrash, "the

whole of Scripture provides the linguistic signs of God's deeds and personality. . . .

[and] the exegete constructs mythic fabulations from its words so that the hidden

light of God might appear" (Fishbane 99). Arnim's intent is a Romanticized literary

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[17] Arnim's folklore study is a significant component of his work.

[18] Arnim's anti-Semitism is well-documented; for instance, he helped form the Christian-German Table Society that excluded Jews and women. Nonetheless, von Mucke's statement that his writing demonstrates "sinister racist and anti-Semitic aspects" (202) may be somewhat overstated. Not only was he married to Bettina von Arnim, an outspoken Jewish advocate, but some of his own writings are relatively sympathetic to the Jews (Garloff 233). Garloff argues that Arnim's attitude was characterized by "inconsistency and ambivalence, a simultaneous attraction to, and revulsion from, Jews and Judaism"—a stance that was typical of Romantic anti-Semitism" (427). Despite his anti-Semitism, Arnim exhibited an appreciation for Jewish mysticism (Garloff 427) that informs his mystical approach to language in Isabella.

form of this practice. For him, language is the sign of humanity's relation to the divine, and his "mythic fabulations" bring this relationship, obscured by a materialistic society, to light.

It is as a "monster of language" that Arnim portrays golem Bella. She is a product of the ontological power of language put to materialistic use. Created by a "learned Jew" at the request of Prince Charles, who wants to use her as a distraction for Bella's mandrake "fiancé," so that he can seduce the real Bella, the golem has been molded by a partnership of carnal and mercenary motives that corrupt the creative process before it even begins. Unlike her amortal counterparts, however, golem Bella's grotesquery and degraded status is not visibly apparent. A literal mirror copy of Bella, the golem is physically flawless with the ironic exception of the word "æmæth" (truth) sketched on her forehead and hidden by her luxuriant tresses (52). Golem Bella is anything but an embodiment of truth, however. She is rather a living lie, at once a blasphemy against God's creative power and against humanity as the image of God. Further, the partnership that begins in lust and greed continues with deception. Bella is tricked into looking into a magic mirror that captures her image which can then be used as a model for the golem. Once animated, this replica has the memories of Bella and the "pride, lust, and greed" that characterized her creators (54). What she lacks is any capacity for "spiritual striving," any will, or human affection (54, 56).

The golem also lacks that, oh so crucial, human trait—access to the *logos.* It is true that, unlike many golems who are literally mute (Yair & Soyer 27; Anolik 42; Covino 361), golem Bella can speak. She can repeat conventional phrases or parrot Bella's memories, but she cannot use language humanly. As Trench argues "man is not a mere speaking machine; God did not teach him words, as one of us teaches a

parrot, from without; but gave him a capacity, and then evoked the capacity which He Gave" (1). Golem Bella, by contrast, is basically a speaking-machine, a vocal automaton. She is not, in other words, human. [19] On the rare occasions when she does more than parrot memories from Bella, her words are still flawed—lies and accusations against that "pre-creation of God," her biological template, Bella (76). Unfortunately for Bella, her linguistically fallen companions are incapable of recognizing this distinction. Demonstrating their own alienation from *homo logos*, they accept golem Bella in her place—Cornelius, in fact, marries the duplicate—and leave the city, abandoning the human Bella.

Even Bella's beloved Prince is eventually seduced by the golem. Having succeeded in seducing Bella (and in accord with the prophecy impregnated her), he later falls prey to her doppelganger. Unlike Cornelius and Braka, he quickly senses something amiss, acknowledging, "Surely instead of God's image, I have embraced an earthly figure that pulls at me with a base passion repellant to my heart'" (69). Despite this recognition, however, his lower self conquers him, and he sacrifices the "higher pleasures" of spiritual love for "the known conquest of his senses" (70). It is only when a direct confrontation between the two occurs and golem Bella attacks her double that the archduke intercedes, erasing the æ from the golem's forehead, leaving only the word mæth (death) behind. In accord with golem legend, where word and life-force are directly linked, linguistic erasure causes physical annihilation; and the golem collapses back into a "formless heap" (76).

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[19] Sherwin points out that in Medieval philosophical Hebrew the term "ha-medaber," meaning "one who speaks" became a common synonym for human being (7). Speech was assumed to be limited to those who had human souls (6). The characteristic muteness of golems thus distinguished them as nonhuman and non-soul bearing, even in the classical tradition.

Three amortals. Three concrete embodiments of materialism and flawed

language. Depicting these figures of anti-*logos* on their own is insufficient for Arnim,

however. Crucial to his argument is representing a linguistic and spiritual alternative,

a normative *homo logos*.   It is Arnim's heroine, Bella, who plays this role in the

novella—or rather Bella who <u>becomes</u> this normative figure because Arnim follows

Bella through a sort of linguistic bildungsroman as she attains fully human status

through her use of language. The word "golem" literally means "unformed," and "a

human being in a state of unfulfilled potentiality" is essentially a golem (Sherwin 10).

Thus, Bella herself begins as a metaphoric golem, and her journey is from a state of

linguistic potential to full humanity—*homo logos.* Arnim establishes Bella's

normative status through four classes of language use: 1) creative capacity, 2)

linguistic integrity, 3) access to the numinous, and 4) a unified, coherent linguistic

identity. Arnim's novella presents these characteristics as intertwined; transgression

of one all too easily results in the failure of all. Bella's status then depends

simultaneously on rejection of false language and use of right language.

The first of these traits is perhaps the most consistent throughout the novella.

Within the idealist tradition, "the use of language was itself creative and in turn the

condition for all further creativity" (Aarsleff 165). The imaginative use of language is

one of the highest evidences of this creative potential. Bella is described as having

"sails [that] billow with the powerful winds of imagination" (15) and her first speech in

the novella reveals her metaphoric powers: of the moon, she exclaims, "Oh, look at

that angel . . . how it's smiling at me!'" (5). Later in the story, after having been

abandoned by her companions, a cold and hungry Bella mistakenly takes some pear

and apple slices from a group of traveling musicians. When the troupe demands a

song in payment for the fruit, the frightened Bella pulls away and stubs her foot on a

stone. She transforms the physical pain—and her emotional suffering—into a song so moving that the troupe leader gives her their remaining fruit and money (75). Unlike the parrot-like mandrake and golem, Bella uses language to make experience—whether a vision of the moon or human suffering—meaningful. In other words, she exhibits the creative capacity of the artist.

I have already noted that Bella also uses the ontic potential of language in bestowing sentience on the mandrake, and the text makes it clear that, unlike the golem's makers, Bella herself is spiritually pure, capable of selfless and spiritual love (15). Although her intent in creating the mandrake is to gain wealth, she has no interest in wealth for its own sake, only because it promises the chance to attain her love. Once the mandrake is alive, however, even her infatuation with the prince loses intensity, replaced by a maternal love for her creation. Arnim reminds us that "It is most holy, this devotion to anything that we have created, and, while we recoil from the world's and our own loathsome qualities, it proclaims to our souls the words from the Bible: 'For God so loved the world of His creation, that He sent His only begotten son'" (21).

Still, Arnim suggests that misuse of the creative power of language carries its own punishment, as Bella's holy love quickly becomes blasphemous, leading her to sacrifice her own higher nature. Arnim is not content to make us aware of Cornelius' own alienation from right language. Instead, he presents Cornelius as a source of linguistic contagion. The mandrake's "birth" causes Bella to tell her first lie, as she seeks to hide his existence from Braka (Arnim 20). And this singular lie quickly becomes practice: Bella now "felt capable of inventing all the things that she would in future find necessary to say about her little mandrake" (21). She soon joins Cornelius in deceiving Braka (24). Then later, (shortly after questioning her ability to

pray, this separation from the numinous a clear sign of her shaky spiritual state,)

Bella joins Braka in tricking Cornelius by pretending to love him. Although she asks

whether such deception is not wrong, Bella is satisfied by Braka's answer that it

would only be wrong if he was human (41). What both overlook is the cost of lying to

Bella's own humanness. In Arnim's theology of language, wrong use of language

debases the human, and Bella's willingness to lie—to sacrifice the integrity of

language, the second of Arnim's essential characteristics—alienates her from truly

human language use and thus from the best of humanity. Infected by Cornelius'

blasphemous false language, Bella's status as *homo logos* is compromised. Only by

rejecting false language will she eventually be able to redeem herself.

This process begins when she chooses honesty in her dealings with the

prince. Having been seduced (one might argue raped, given Arnim's description of

the event) by the prince (56), Bella informs him in straightforward terms of her

history, her procreative purpose, her fraudulent activities in Ghent, and her fears of

being left without money by the vindictive mandrake (57-58). Her renewed honesty

faces a more difficult challenge when Charles himself wants her to participate in a

deception against his tutor, the Cardinal Adrian. Having only recently been rescued

from the street and reunited with the prince, Bella "wanted very much to forget her

past misery at her Charles's side, even though this prank made her feel uneasy"

(77). She reluctantly participates, only to find herself quickly involved in a much

more serious deception, "a left-handed wedding" to Cornelius that would allow

Charles to gain the Mandrake's wealth-making services, while enjoying Bella as his

own mistress (85). Just as the first lie regarding the Mandrake led to a pattern of

lies, one deception at the Prince's behest promised to lead to a lifetime of deception.

Again, Bella must reject such falsity, if she is to fulfill her role as *homo logos*, and in

the novella's climax, she does. She kisses the sleeping Prince farewell and leaps out the window into the waiting arms of her people, whose song had recalled her to her duty (86-87).

The concern with linguistic integrity also manifests in another way in the novella. In the same speech when Bella tells the Prince her story, Bella rejects the idea of language lessons: "Why should I speak Latin and Spanish? Why do I need to learn: "amo: I love amas: you love"? All I know is that I love you and you love me'" (58). Is Arnim inconsistent here in his treatment of language, seeming to devalue the language he has elsewhere been idealizing? Rather, Arnim is criticizing language learning as a social status symbol, just as he criticized the mandrake's mastery of rhetoric. Bella had been learning Latin and Spanish as part of her effort to pass in high society, an act of simultaneous deception and self-promotion. As surely as lying, it shows a lack of linguistic integrity. In choosing honesty over deception and an "innate" language over the language of social status, Bella is well on her way to regaining her normative status.

Arnim's third linguistic characteristic is the supra-rational aspect language as access to and expression of the numinous. As I mentioned above, while in thrall to the mandrake, Bella loses this access, as signified by her inability to pray. To reawaken her spiritual awareness, Bella undergoes an experience of purgative suffering. Having been abandoned by her companions and narrowly escaping being sold into prostitution, Bella collapses beside a roadside where she experiences a vision of her father, "wearing a splendid crown, sitting on top of the Egyptian pyramid that he had often sketched for her" (63). This "dream-vision" is more than a visual encounter, however; it is a linguistic encounter, a dialogue in which her father

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acknowledges that she has fulfilled her destiny of conceiving a child by the prince and encourages her to be fearless and faithful in the face of further suffering.

Later, immediately following her encounter with the musical troupe, she has a second spiritual encounter, this time with the Virgin Mary, who acknowledges that the gypsies' sin of refusing succor to the Holy Family when they traveled to Egypt has been expiated. The way is now open for Bella's people to return to Egypt. Again, Arnim demonstrates the interconnection between forms of language use. It is following her song, her unsullied act of artistic creation, that the numinous vision of accepted atonement is given. Using the *logos* in song opens a doorway to spiritual communication, which then manifests in practical form as Bella responds to the gypsies' own song by rejecting a false life in favor of rejoining her people.

Arnim's final characteristic, countering the type of incoherence and fragmentation of identity that characterized the Bearskinner, is a unified identity as *homo logos*. Bella's gypsy heritage is worth noting in this regard. The Romani language had "an elevated status" for some early philologists and ethnologists, who were fascinated by its mysterious origins (Nord 7-8). Identifying his heroine with the gypsies then allows Arnim to provide Isabella with a valued linguistic heritage. While Friedrichsmeyer argues that Arnim creates a "linguistic boundary between the Gypsies and Isabella . . . and the Germans" that essentially marginalizes the gypsies and Isabella (58), he fails to acknowledge the spiritualization of this boundary. It is neither German nor Romani language use that becomes normative, but Isabella's spiritually informed language. *Homo logos* relies not on a specific language, whether German or Romani, but on the qualitative use of the language. Romani, however, provides a concrete symbol of Bella's choice between two models of language—and two modes of life. In choosing the Romani people and thus her native language, she

has chosen both a coherent linguistic identity and, as a corollary, an identity as one who lives according to values of community and integrity rather than materialism and deception.

This identity reaches fruition once she returns to Egypt with her people. The Bella of Germany, Bella *in potentia* as it were, becomes Isabella of Egypt, mature *homo logos*. (Notably, she is consistently referred to as Bella until the epilogue that occurs once she is in Egypt, at which time Arnim substitutes the full Isabella.) The Egyptian Isabella's identity is centered and grounded, as she has accepted her linguistic, ethnic and spiritual heritage. This Isabella is "a holy embodiment of the spirit" (Hoermann 101) who, during her reign, "create[s] something akin to an earthly paradise in Egypt" (Friedrichsmeyer 58). And the climax of her reign is a linguistic rite: an oral judgment passed on her life at Isabella's own behest.

Near the end of her life, Isabella calls her son and court together and explains her "dearest wish that the old and holy custom of a final court not be delayed until her real, physical death, but that each and every one of them would pass by as she lay in her coffin and under oath give a true and frank opinion of her" (93). Oaths taken, each takes his turn and "[utters] his well-considered judgment so that she could hear it clearly" (93). This oral judgment is then "entered into the royal book" and into the communal memory where it continues to be recounted centuries later (92-93). There is no contradictory testimony as in the trial at which the Bearskinner spoke because Isabella's life has been consistently characterized by integrity, devotion to duty, and spiritual maturity. Unlike the incoherent, fragmented Bearskinner who is reduced to a footnote, the words passed over Isabella validate and subsequently memorialize her life and status. They demonstrate Isabella's full attainment of humanity, her identity as *homo logos*.

It is the parallel "burial" scene of Charles that perhaps fully illuminates Isabella's status, however. Having long sought penance for the greed and worldliness that cost him Isabella, he eventually has a splendid tomb built and has himself placed "alone and still alive in the coffin" (91). In his last moments, "he saw Isabella greet him consolingly and lovingly from the fields of eternal thoughts, where human failings and the burdens of physical existence turn to dust. She waved to him, and he soon followed and saw a bright, dawning light in which Isabella showed him the way to Heaven" (91). In these final moments, Isabella's visionary access to the numinous has been transformed: from having visions, Isabella has become the object of a vision—a spiritualized being who shares in the salvific capacity of the holy, leading Charles into redemption.

Has Arnim overextended himself here? In idealizing Isabella so absolutely, has he lost the normative capacity of *homo logos*, making it appear less a quality of the human than of a higher spiritual being? Certainly, he walks a fine line; however, I believe the bildungsroman motif he employs is meant to balance Isabella's sanctification. Lokke points out that Arnim "stresses the contrast between what is and what ought to be at the same time that he gives his ideals the quality of potential realities" (27). The distinction between the absolute linguistic disenfranchisement of the amortal characters and Isabella's innate but undeveloped language capacity maintains the normative status of *homo logos*. Isabella's choices are what fulfill her innate nature, choices to wisely use her creativity, integrity, and spiritual awareness in construction of a unified identity. These choices are equally available to other humans such as Charles, as his ultimate redemption suggests. Thus, Arnim ultimately presents a picture of true humanity as an innate species quality that

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nonetheless only emerges through the right use of language. *Homo logos* is thus both the ideal and the norm.

Divine Judgment: Bram Stoker, Censorship and the Sacralized Author

At first glance, there seems to be little in common between the German Romantic Arnim and the Irish Victorian Stoker. Arnim's array of amortals often seem as much burlesque as grotesque, while Stoker's aristocratic vampire is darkly magnetic. Arnim's heroine is a gypsy princess, while Stoker's is a stenographer cum devoted wife. Arnim's romance takes place in a carnivalesque sixteenth-century Germany, with a detour to Egypt, while Stoker's primary setting is a London well-known to be "up-to-date with a vengeance" (Dracula 60). Nonetheless, as I suggested above, Stoker does share with Arnim a profound concern with language. If there is a Victorian linguistic crisis as Ferguson suggests, then Stoker is undeniably a participant—whether as victim or rescuer only a closer examination can determine.

Where should we begin this examination? Perhaps at the very place Stoker scholars have tended to stop short. They have apparently taken to heart the mad Renfield's admonition: "To hell with you and your souls! . . . Why do you plague me about souls? Haven't I got enough to worry, and pain, and distract me already without thinking of souls?" (Dracula 273-4). Emphasizing sexuality, technology, imperialism, authorship and other contemporary concerns, the soul—in the sense of Stoker's Christian moral worldview—has been virtually exorcised from Dracula scholarship. The question is, why has Stoker's religiosity been so marginalized in academic circles, even in the face of a novel where good and evil—and the threat of eternal damnation—seem to play such a central role? As Roger Pooley notes in

"What Does Literature Do?", the literary establishment has "tended to favor difficult texts, demanding a heroism of interpretation on the part of its readers" (24). <u>Dracula</u> clearly offers scope for just such "heroic"—read non-transparent—interpretation, but not, perhaps, if its Christian doctrine is privileged. Most scholars have long since accepted Lyotard's denunciation of the "grand narrative" (15) and are perhaps reluctant to examine Stoker's very "modern" novel as an exemplum of the Christian grand narrative. To do so might seem to endanger the complex texture that makes the novel so fascinating, transforming it into a sort of doctrinaire text. At the very least, inquiry into the novel's religious aspects would appear to have less cultural cachet than other areas of exploration.

Yet Stoker's understanding of the value of language and writing are inextricably intertwined with his Christian worldview. After all, unlike Renfield, Stoker is very much concerned with souls. Specifically, for the concerns of this study, Stoker is concerned with the effect authors have on souls, a point that can be demonstrated by placing <u>Dracula</u> in dialogue with another of Stoker's works, his neglected 1908 essay "The Censorship of Fiction." Examining the two texts in conjunction can illuminate both the role that religious orthodoxy plays for Stoker and its significance in Stoker's construction of the author as the exemplar of *homo logos*.

That Stoker's work on censorship has been virtually ignored is hardly surprising. If my explanation for the neglect of study of the Christian aspects of <u>Dracula</u> is valid, then the overtly dogmatic nature of "The Censorship of Fiction" would clearly be even less palatable to current scholarly tastes. Richard Altick's loaded descriptions of Victorian censorship practices as "mush-mouthed" and "finicky" apparently still have cultural currency today, discouraging, though certainly not eliminating, serious attention to proponents of censorship (194, 195). Altick's

pitting of "advanced" authors with a "sophisticated view of humanity" against "parochial" and "straight-laced" Evangelical supporters of censorship hardly seems atypical of contemporary attitudes toward the question of censorship (200, 201).

Even for scholars interested in the essay, however, it can be difficult to reconcile the apparent disparity of Stoker's two texts. At first glance, Dracula and "The Censorship of Fiction" may almost seem to have been written by different authors—one in each of Altick's camps. Stoker the First (hardly mush-mouthed or finicky) presents a provocative tale of transgressive sexuality and eroticized violence, while Stoker the Second champions censorship, warning—as generations of novelists and moralists before him had done—against the threat of morally corrupt and corrupting literature. How is one to understand the relationship between the two texts? Despite its highly charged content, neither Dracula nor any of Stoker's other fiction ever received particularly harsh moral criticism (Belford 312), so the essay cannot be understood simply as a defensive response to his critics nor, since it was written a decade after Dracula when public opinion of the novel was well established, as an attempt to forestall potentially harmful criticism.

Christopher Herbert's charge that the essay is evidence of Stoker's tendency to "moral panic and to religious vindictiveness" provides little insight into the broader significance of the essay to Stoker's conception of authorship and literature (114).[20] Nor does Barbara Belford's casual statement that "lacking a forum in which to demonstrate his debating skills, Stoker joined the controversy over censorship," as if

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[20] While Herbert's article offers a number of interesting ideas, his continuous pathologizing of the religious elements of the novel ensures a dark and disturbing reading of the text, untempered by any effort to understand the Methodists he critiques on their own terms. Fixating on what he identifies as the "ghoulish appetite that so powerfully energized Victorian religious feeling" (117), Herbert offers a reading that is at once fascinating and profoundly unbalanced.

the censorship debate was merely a social activity, offer significant insight (311).[21]

Like Herbert's pathologizing approach, Belford's offhand dismissal of the censorship

essay results in a lost opportunity to explore Stoker's understanding of authorship. It

also trivializes the significance of censorship as a social issue. Censorship was an

important concern in Victorian society (as it is today) because its proponents

recognized the power of the written word. Disdain for dogmatism aside, the

recognition that censorship was perceived as part of a constructive, not simply

repressive, social program is crucial to understanding not only Stoker, but the wider

context of Victorian print culture.

As Sue Zemka acknowledges in the introduction to *Victorian Testaments*,

many Victorian authors "undertook cultural projects wherein art, politics, and

theology were related not only to one another but also to a self-reflexive discourse on

the power of literacy and print" (3). I would argue that Dracula and "The Censorship

of Fiction" engage in such a "self-reflexive discourse" wherein the links between

theology and authorship are simultaneously interrogated and constructed. Thus, far

from being discordant, the messages of these two texts correlate closely, the role

and purpose of the author and the written word being central to each. Despite David

Schmid's claim in "Is the Pen Mightier than the Sword?" that writing records but

does not "contribute substantially" to Dracula's defeat and that it is Dracula's own

weapons—"blood, violence, and money"—turned against him that produce Dracula's

downfall (128), I argue that writing—and more broadly language as a whole—is

central to Stoker's redemptive vision. It is a narrative construction—the written

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[21]Belford discusses Stoker's involvement with debate while in college and suggests that his eventual participation in the censorship controversy was a way of reentering an arena in which he had been successful in his younger days.

compilation of Dracula's activities—that facilitates the vampire's destruction and the

restoration of Christian moral order. The word, in its sense of fully human

communication, both defines and defends right order in Stoker's novel. Throughout

the text, what can and should be spoken and written is emphasized—by Jonathan

Harker, by Mina Harker, by Lucy Westenra, by Dr. Van Helsing—and their choices

between reticence and revelation determine not only their individual fates, but the

triumph of good or evil in society. The word, wielded well, becomes salvific within

the text.

In "The Censorship of Fiction", this motif of the moral function of the word is

developed most explicitly. It is a virtual manifesto of Stoker's vision of *homo logos.*

In his essay, Stoker unhesitatingly claims for novelists—at least for those who

choose their words wisely—a priest-like authority for promoting spiritual well-being.

Reticence, which Stoker identifies as the "highest quality of art; that which can be

and is its chief and crowning glory" (480) becomes not merely a personal decision of

what to write or withhold, but literally an act of divine judgment, as the author-priest

intervenes on behalf of a literary congregation—the "weak" masses of readers who

are incapable of protecting themselves from the evil effects of the imagination gone

wrong.[22] For Stoker, reticence is arguably the defining characteristic of *homo*

logos—one that encompasses both the creative capacity and the linguistic integrity

that Arnim advocates, but in a single overarching act of judgment. The author, like

the vampire hunters of <u>Dracula</u>, acts as a bulwark against the invading forces of evil.

Censorship becomes necessary only when this sacred trust has been abandoned in

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[22] Reticence has a long history as a standard for maintaining literary quality and moral values,
For a useful discussion of reticence and its subsequent decline as a primary standard for
literary judgment, see Peter Keating's chapter on "An End to Reticence" in *The Haunted*
Study: A Social History of the English Novel, 1875-1914.

favor of mercenary interests. Thus, Stoker's essay can be understood less as a literal call for censorship than as a manifesto proclaiming the author's exalted role as moral arbiter—as *homo logos*.

Before I examine his construction of the author in detail, I want to review Stoker's understanding of the social role of the novel in general. In her 1911 introduction to *Robert Elsmere* (1888), Mrs. Humphry Ward wrote that during the Victorian era "the Christian problem was first and foremost a literary problem'" (qtd in Marsh 169). This definition of the relationship between Christianity and literature as a "problem" is notable—as is the claim of premier status for the literary problem. It is not the encroachment of Darwinian thought, the increasing interaction with foreign religions, or any of a myriad of other issues that defines the Christian problem: it is a question of the book and the word. Admittedly, as a novelist, Mrs. Ward may have been somewhat biased, but her claim is telling nonetheless. While this problem had several aspects, ranging from the status of fiction as a tissue of lies to the disturbing recasting of the <u>Bible</u> as literature,[23] the problem that underlay the censorship controversy was that of the effect of literature on its readers. Indeed, as Barbara Leckie argues, "censorship only makes sense in the context of imagined effects of reading" and of the recognized "capacity of words to shape, and possibly transform, social reality" (8).

While Stoker may not portray the ontic power of language in the concrete forms employed by Arnim, he is no less concerned with language's direct impact on individuals and society. Stoker is passionately concerned with the potential for words, particularly fiction, to shape and transform society—for good or ill. It can

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[23] For a discussion of these concerns, see Marsh, <u>Word Crimes</u>, (169).

elevate readers to a higher moral and spiritual plane—to full humanity as Stoker

might understand it—or degrade them, bringing out their lower, animalistic instincts

such as are revealed in the Count himself. Stoker writes that "Fiction is perhaps the

most powerful form of teaching available. It can be most potent for good; and if we

are to allow it to work for evil we shall surely have to pay in time for the consequent

evil effects" ("Censorship" 484). This is no light claim. Fiction is definitely not a

neutral force in Stoker's conception. Rather it has a powerful social impact.

Deliberately locating fiction at the center of society—not only as <u>a</u>, but as "<u>the most

powerful</u>" teaching tool available—Stoker has also implicitly located the teacher, the

author, at the center of society.

It is in this context that Stoker's call for censorship must be understood.

What Stoker seeks is, notably, not external censorship.

> The writer [Stoker himself] does not, for one, wish such a thing as
> censorship of fiction to be brought about if it can be possibly avoided.
> . . . He glories, like the others of his calling, in the freedom of letters. .
> . .It is the coarseness and unscrupulousness of certain writers of
> fiction which has brought the evil; on their heads be it. ("Censorship"
> 486)

What Stoker seeks is to create a distinction between certain classes of writers. One

class has abandoned reticence—the exercise of moral and ethical judgment and

self-restraint—in order to cater to low tastes for financial gain. This group

> found an art wholesome, they made it morbid; they found it pure, they
> left it sullied. . . .they so abused the powers allowed them and their
> own opportunities, that continued freedom becomes dangerous, even
> impossible. They in their selfish greed tried to deprave where others
> had striven to elevate. (485)

Like Arnim's mandrake, Bearskinner, and golem and Stoker's own Dracula, these

writers are "monsters of language," dangerous embodiments of the anti-*logos*.

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By contrast, the second group, those who "[strive] to elevate"—with whom Stoker, of course, identifies himself—practice reticence. They know what may be said and what must not. Censorship becomes not only a way of protecting the audience, but a way of distinguishing and validating a class of authors who write and act within a Christian worldview. For this group to be judged worthy "teachers," they must be distinguished from their degenerate fellows—those whose reputations are tarnished by commercial concerns.

On one level, Stoker's diatribe against "selfish greed" could be viewed as simply another entry in a long debate over high versus low (popular and commercial) culture and the damaging invasion of market values into the realm of aesthetics. Stoker's construction of the ideal author, however, goes beyond merely distinguishing authors on commercial grounds, as the language of the above quote suggests. Wholesome versus morbid. Pure versus sullied. This is the vocabulary of morality and of religion, and indeed Stoker casts the role of (good) author in unequivocally religious terms by explicitly linking the author-as-teacher with the Great Teacher: "The highest of all teachers and moralists, Christ Himself, did not disdain it as a method or opportunity of carrying great truth. But He seemed to hold it as His chosen means of seeking to instil [sic] truth." What is it? The novel of course, for "What is a parable but a novel in little?"

Stoker then provides an extended discussion of Christ as author, who uses the technique of fiction to "win their hearts through the force of imagination." Christ, the master storyteller, the incarnate Word, "did not hesitate to give even presumably fictitious details which might enhance the force and conviction of His story—just as a novelist of to-day does" (484).

Author-as-teacher. Christ-as-author. Should the next association then be author-as-Christ? Stoker does not take such a provocative (and blasphemous!) step. Rather, he stops with establishing Christ as exemplar for the author and the author as the carrier of the torch, or rather the pen, of the *Logos.* "When Christ taught in such a way, are we to reprobate the method and even to forego it?" he demands. "Should we not rather encourage and protect so potent a form of teaching, and guard it against evil use?" (484). Arguably, authorship becomes for Stoker a form of *imitatio Christi*, a way to become Christ-like through morally and responsibly using the written word. If unfaithful authors, who abuse the power of language, must be understood to have "crucified Christ afresh'" (485), the faithful author may be understood to act as Christ's priest, offering the opportunity for spiritual transformation through the novel. The word, quite literally, becomes salvific, at least *in potentia*.

To uncover Stoker's ideal author in "The Censorship of Fiction" is quite simple, but how does such a representation map onto the opaque terrain of <u>Dracula</u>? First, the ideal of reticence, which is so central to Stoker's discussion of censorship, is also an important concept in <u>Dracula</u>, as several of the characters openly question what they should and should not express in writing. The first character to express such a concern is Jonathan Harker, while he is held captive in Dracula's castle. Ferguson points out that Harker experiences an "increasing linguistic diminishment" as he approaches Castle Dracula (142). Dracula's native territory itself displays an "unearthly silence" (142), and, unfamiliar with the local language, Harker is in danger of being silenced—one of Dracula's primary weapons against his victims (142). What Harker retains, however, is his ability to write and to write in shorthand, a

"language" inaccessible to Dracula.[24] It is in his journal that we see his concern with reticence.

When he encounters the vampire sisters, he writes in his journal, "I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. It is not good to note this down, lest some day it should meet Mina's eyes and cause her pain; but it is the truth" (69). Even though this is a journal, an essentially private document, the awareness of a potential audience reminds Jonathan of the responsibility that is demanded of a writer, as he must choose between two conflicting concerns: the desire to spare Mina pain and the need to express the "truth"—to exhibit linguistic integrity,a concern that we likewise saw in Arnim's novella. Jonathan must decide which concern is to rule his pen. In this case, the need for truth outweighs the risk to Mina's feelings, and Jonathan chooses revelation. Stoker validates this choice by having Jonathan's journal play an important role in Dracula's defeat: when Mina reads the journal, she is not overcome with grief at his having been tempted by the vampire ladies, but is motivated to begin typing the manuscript that will function as the vampire hunters' primary source of knowledge in their battle against Dracula (<u>Dracula</u> 216). Reticence, as Stoker understands it, is not simply the act of remaining silent, but the act of judgment that determines <u>when</u> and <u>why</u> to remain silent—or to speak or write.

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[24] While I will not focus on the role of communications technology in this chapter, it is worth noting that shorthand and other technologies of communication—the typewriter, telegraph, and phonograph, in particular—become one of the distinctions between the vampire hunters and their enemy. Unlike Dracula, the humans are able to adapt their language use to accommodate new technologies. Dracula is restricted to embodied language—although this can be extended telepathically—while the humans can extend their language in a variety of ways. While I do not believe Stoker would advocate "machine language" of the sort claimed by the material school, he is clearly open to the use of technology as an extension of human communication.

Compare Jonathan's choice to Lucy Westenra's. Having received three proposals in one day, Lucy writes to Mina, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it" (91). Of course, she has said it—and not only in a journal, but in a letter. The certainty of an audience does not prevent Lucy from writing what should not be written. The acknowledgment that her words are a "heresy" is, of course, an obvious clue that this is something that should not be expressed. A reticent, morally-conscientious author simply does not express heresy—or if it is expressed, it is so bracketed as to ultimately reinforce orthodoxy, as when Renfield's blasphemous claims are situated as the words of a madman who is in the power of the evil Dracula. As William Hughes points out in Beyond Dracula, such ideas would be only "momentarily displayed before, seemingly inevitably, the powers of orthodoxy" restore order (10). Nor, unlike Jonathan's journal entry, does Lucy's statement perform any positive function in the novel. It is simply there, a bare sentence that should never have been written, all the more damaging because Lucy herself is aware of its impious implications. It is no mere innocent mistake, but a choice to neglect the moral demands of authorial reticence.

Stoker does not arbitrarily condemn Lucy for feeling what she does or for briefly imagining that life would be more comfortable if she could marry three men. As he states in "The Censorship of Fiction," "No one has the power to stop the workings of the imagination, not even the individual whose sensoria afford its source. But the individual producer or recorder can control his own utterances; he may have to feel, but he need not of necessity speak or write" (482). Stoker places a great deal of responsibility on the individual author, as author. Writing is an act, and it is by acting, by writing, wrongly that Lucy fails. (The issue of what immodest actions or

words elicited the excess of proposals is a question for another paper.) If, as Stoker

claims, "the measure of the ethics of the artist is expressed in the reticence shown in

his work" (480)—or in this case her work—Lucy has clearly failed the test.

Is the distinction between Jonathan and Lucy as much a question of gender

as of their actual activity as authors? It is true that in "The Censorship of Fiction"

Stoker accuses women of being "the worst offenders in this form of breach of moral

law" (485), but how exactly should such a claim be understood? It is here that

Dracula can shed light on Stoker's arguments in the censorship essay, by examining

the role of Mina Harker. It is Mina who acts as the primary "author" of Dracula, her

mind that collates, organizes, and makes sense of the morass of documents that

comprise the bulk of the novel; her fingers and her typewriter that transform those

documents into a single, coherent text.[25] In the vocabulary of biblical scholarship,

Mina might be identified as the redactor. Redactors

> made up finished versions of texts out of sources available to them—
> sources that may have consisted of complete alternative versions or
> several partial versions. . . .[they] may well not have been limited in
> their sources to the manuscripts on the desks before them. It is
> equally possible that at times they contributed material of their own to
> the texts, behaving in effect like authors. (Gabel et al 11).

It is to the redactors that we owe our knowledge of the Bible—and to Mina that we

owe our knowledge of Dracula, to Mina that the vampire hunters owed their

knowledge of how to fight him. It is Mina then (as well as Stoker himself) who serves

as the *homo logos* of Dracula.

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[25] For interesting discussions of the role of typewriting in the text, see Jennifer Wicke,
Jennifer Fleissner, and Laura Otis. It is worth noting that David Schmid argues that feminist
critics overemphasize Mina's importance and claims that ultimately Mina and writing prove
"irrevelant" to the battle (126). As I have already suggested, I find his arguments less than
convincing.

It is the failure of the male vampire hunters to fully recognize this fact that actually places Mina in danger. Having just acknowledged Mina's extraordinary abilities, that "the good God fashioned her for a purpose'" and that her assistance has been invaluable, Van Helsing proceeds to announce that "after tonight she must not have to do with this so terrible affair'" (274). He tells Mina that "When we part tonight, you no more must question. We shall tell you all in good time'" (281). Unsurprisingly, the other men agree with this decision to ban Mina from their councils, leaving her alone and thus vulnerable to Dracula. Here, then, reticence goes awry. As I stated above, reticence is not simply about remaining silent, but about judging rightly when and why to remain silent. Basing their decision on flawed assumptions about Mina's feminine fragility, the male vampire hunters have exercised not good, but poor judgment.

Intriguingly, it is Renfield who attempts to warn them against this mistake. "You don't know whom you wrong, or how; and I may not tell. Woe is me! I may not tell'" (286). Notice Renfield's emphasis that he "may not tell." Renfield's words are restrained not by personal reticence but by the censorship of Dracula. As noted above, a key aspect of Dracula's strategy is to "[render] his victims essentially silent" (Ferguson 146). Ironically, the misjudged reticence of Van Helsing and his compatriots works hand in hand with Dracula's own external control of Renfield to prevent the open communication that would protect Mina. Renfield pleads with Seward, "By all you hold sacred—by all you hold dear—by your love that is lost—by your hope that lives—for the sake of the Almighty, take me out of this and save my soul from guilt! Can't you hear me, man? Can't you understand? Will you never learn?'" (286). Of course, Seward does not understand. Failing to recognize in Mina their best "hope" for success against the vampire, he and the other men cannot hear

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or understand Renfield's message. Eventually, they will learn, but only after having jeopardized Mina's body and soul.

It is significant that Dracula's final attack on Mina, the occasion on which he forces her to drink his blood, is explicitly linked with his attempt to destroy the manuscript describing his activities (322, 325). It is immediately after he is expelled from Mina's room that Dracula "made rare hay of the [study],'" burning both the manuscript and the cylinders of the phonograph (325). Not only is it clear that Dracula recognizes the significance of the manuscript, but the link between Mina and the manuscript is reinforced. Both Mina's and the manuscript's safety—"Thank God there is the other copy in the safe!'" (325)—are critical to the successful defeat of the vampire.

Although there is a shift in emphasis to oral communication in the later parts of the novel, the ideas of reticence and censorship in the text remain central. For instance, immediately after Dracula's assault, Mina painfully forces herself to relate the attack to her companions, despite the difficulty of having to put this "fearful thing" into words (326). Like Jonathan's reluctant decision to record his attraction to the vampire ladies in his journal, Mina's decision reflects her willingness to speak what it necessary, even when she would prefer to remain silent. Reticence, Stoker suggests, may at times demand sacrifice on the part of the speaker/author. Indeed, the potential to practice self-sacrifice is one of the characteristics that distinguishes the humanity of the vampire hunters from the inhumanity of the amortal Dracula. It is a capacity exhibited both linguistically and in physical action.

At this point, however, the issues of reticence and censorship become complicated by Mina's liminal status: belonging at once to the world of the vampire hunters and, through her psychic blood connection with him, to Dracula. His

violation of her body has given him the opportunity for likewise violating her voice, and taking advantage of their bond, Dracula intervenes to prevent Mina from speaking freely to her companions. In his diary entry for October 5, Seward notes "I fear that in some mysterious way poor Mrs. Harker's tongue is tied. I know that she forms conclusions on her own, and from all that has been I can guess how brilliant and how true they must be; but she will not, or cannot, give them utterance" (362). As with Renfield, "truth" which should be spoken is being artificially withheld. The corollary danger is that "the same power that compels her silence may compel her speech" (363), causing her to reveal the hunters' plans to Dracula. Whether through compelled silence or compelled speech, reticence, the power of self-censorship, has been bypassed by Dracula's external control. This complicated interplay of speech and silence, repression and compulsion, illuminates the complexity of Stoker's ideas about censorship and authorial responsibility. Clearly, it is as important to express what needs to be stated as to repress what should not. The human capacity for language includes the capacity for making these decisions wisely. They come closest to the subhuman status of the amortal when those choices are restricted.

Indeed, Dracula's status as anti-*logos* within the text is based on his own failures of language. Ferguson notes, for instance, that Dracula "equates language mastery with other kinds of mastery" (143), eagerly seeking language instruction from Jonathon Harker. His precision language use, however, is closer to the technical perfection of a language machine than that of a human speaker. As Ferguson points out, he is unable to capture the fluidly of language that comes naturally to human speakers (144). His other speech is that of the brutes, as we see in his communication with wolves and his own transformation into a dog. Thus, linked linguistically to the machine (in its materialistic form derided by the idealists) and to

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the beast, Dracula's language use is doubly materialized. His linguistic power is not communication, the characteristic of human language, but the ability to disrupt communication, to silence or censor his victims, limiting their human capacity for practicing reticence.

Within the context of the novel, the challenge of balancing these competing demands creates a dilemma for the vampire hunters. On the one hand, they have agreed to an end of "concealment" as "nothing of any sort—no matter how painful— should be kept from her [Mina]" (330). Having acknowledged her human ability—and right—to accept suffering in pursuit of a higher good, they respect the need for open communication. On the other hand, they must, for pragmatic reasons, withhold some information from Mina in order to withhold it from Dracula.

Not surprisingly, it is Mina herself who helps to resolve this problem. Recognizing before Seward and the others the hold that Dracula has over her voice, Mina demands that Van Helsing hypnotize her. Contrary to Jennifer Fleissner's claim that hypnosis transforms Mina into a passive conduit of information between men (442), Mina actively chooses hypnosis as a means for regaining her voice and thus a degree of autonomy. Note the firmness of her command to Van Helsing: "I want you to hypnotize me!' she said. 'Do it before the dawn, for I feel that then I can speak, and speak freely. Be quick, for the time is short!' Without a word [emphasis mine] he motioned her to sit up in bed" (352). By contrasting Mina's speech with Van Helsing's silence, Stoker reinforces the active role that Mina plays in this exchange. Admittedly her control is restricted, but Mina nonetheless reclaims her voice as fully as circumstances will allow, and it is information that she provides under hypnosis that helps them track and outwit Dracula.

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The importance of defeating Dracula, it should be remembered, is not based on a purely physical threat. The battle with Dracula is not merely one of life or death, but of salvation or damnation. Both the urgent efforts to preserve the lives of Lucy and Mina and the staking of Lucy, so easy to dismiss as a "sadopornographic spectacle of gang rape and murder" (Herbert 114) must be understood in this context. To read Lucy's staking solely as a scene of violent erotic pleasure (I will not deny that such eroticism exists as a subtext that may or may not titillate the reader) is to ignore the lengths to which her male companions first went to preserve her life. It is only after that battle has been lost that the staking becomes necessary. The "glad, strange light that broke over [Arthur's] face," dispelling its "gloom of horror," is not pleasure at the wanton destruction of a female body, but joy at the release of a trapped soul from the "curse of immortality"—amortality—lived outside the bounds of Christian salvation (Dracula 255, 252). Van Helsing warns Mina against taking her own life "though death would seem a boon unspeakable" precisely to prevent a recurrence of the previous horror (331). He wishes to save her soul without resorting to the physical brutality, however necessary, that was enacted on Lucy's Un-Dead body.

Van Helsing reminds the group that they are "ministers of God's own wish: that the world, and men for whom His Son die, will not be given over to monsters.'" They will "go out as the old Knights of the Cross to redeem [souls]'" (360). But if the men are Knights, it is Mina who is the novel's author-priest. This may seem like a strange claim; it is after all Van Helsing who possesses an "indulgence" to handle the sacred Host (248). Yet it is Mina who is described as "one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth'" (226). It would be easy

to dismiss this description as a typical Victorian "angel of the house" sentiment[26], but in the context of the novel as a whole, it is a much more powerful claim for Mina's special status. At one point, for instance, she is described as having eyes that "shone with the devotion of the martyr" (330). And Mina's spiritual insight is profoundly contrasted with that of her companions in her plea for mercy toward Dracula: he must be destroyed but not as a

> "work of hate. That poor soul who has wrought all this misery is the saddest case of all. Just think what will be his joy when he too is destroyed in his worser part that his better part may have spiritual immortality. You must be pitiful to him too, though it may not hold your hands from his destruction." (349)

The men (and readers) are reminded that even Dracula himself is one of God's creatures whose body must be sacrificed, not solely for Mina's salvation, but ultimately for his own. It is here that she most directly wears the mantle of priest, offering moral instruction to her companions and tempering the militant language of Van Helsing's crusading metaphor with a call for mercy. The language of the *logos* is, after all, first and foremost creative and constructive, not destructive. It is intended to be a life-giving force, and Mina-as-*homo logos* reflects this aspect of the Word.

Even Mina's mark, that symbol of her physical and spiritual pollution, may equally be understood to signify her status as the Chosen one within the novel. Such an interpretation would recognize the burn caused by the Host not as a sign of Mina's damnation-in-waiting, but as evidence of her sacred role—a Stigmata in keeping with the crucifixion wounds reputedly impressed upon the bodies of certain

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[26] Patmore's poem "The Angel in the House" had been published in1854 and helped define standards for appropriate Victorian femininity, in particular her role as a spiritual light for her male family members.

saints.[27] It is evidence of Mina's connection to the numinous. As such the mark's disappearance at the end of the novel demonstrates not purification—though the two interpretations are not mutually exclusive—, but the successful completion of her task. Indeed, this is reinforced in the novel's culminating scene, set seven years after Dracula's destruction (and salvation).

Two "documents" of the adventure remain—one a living body, the Harkers' son whose "bundle of names links all our little band of men together" and one "a mass of type-writing" with "hardly one authentic document" (368). Mina's life-giving role has been validated. Having given spiritual life through her typed and spoken words, she has also given physical life to another human being—one that would never have existed without the successful culmination of the adventure that her words had facilitated. Her life as author-priest-mother becomes the embodiment of the ontic potential of language.

I do not want to belabor the point. It is sufficient to recognize that the two key roles of the novel—author and religious authority—are joined in the character of Mina. Mina as author-priest can be understood as a concretization of Stoker's conception of the ideal author, one who recognizes and responsibly expresses the diverse demands of reticence and revelation. The novel as a whole can thus be read as an exploration of the appropriate function of authorship and the author as moral forces in the world and a concurrent construction of the righteous author as the Victorian exemplar of *homo logos.* Is this a definitive reading of the novel that invalidates all other interpretations? Certainly not. To Nina Auerbach's claim in Our

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[27] Victor Sage suggests that, despite Stoker's own Protestant heritage, Dracula does reflect a certain sympathy for and affinity with Catholicism, at least in its openness to faith as opposed to empirical skepticism. The use of Stigmata would certainly be in keeping with certain other Catholic elements in the novel.

Vampires, Ourselves that "the alacrity with which vampires shape themselves to personal and national moods is an adaptive trait their apparent uniformity masks" (5), I would add that the alacrity with which Dracula shapes itself to scholarly interests and trends is evidence of the richly textured complexity with which Bram Stoker portrayed *fin-de-siecle* England. In the ambiguity and ambivalence that pervades the text, Stoker recreates the tension of an era of turbulent change and provides ample scope for divergent interpretations. At once reinforcing and transgressing boundaries—of gender, of class, of nation, of divine order—Dracula is in no danger of being reduced to dogmatic pronouncement.

This interpretation does recognize Stoker's high valuation of authorship and literature in society, his conviction that this value is inextricably entwined with the moral demands of the Christian faith, and his desire to sanctify the role of author. It also attempts to approach Stoker's Christian worldview with a degree of sympathy, rather than pathologizing Stoker personally or Victorian Christianity more generally. Such sympathy does not require one to whitewash the shortcomings of institutional or individual Christianity or to applaud or defend its uglier manifestations. Nor does it require one to naively accept certain evangelical assumptions about readers and their susceptibility to the evil influences of literature. However, it does require us to recognize in the Victorian (and Romantic) crisis of language a genuine concern with the effect of language on the world. Altick's claim that "the watch-and-ward mentality which quarantined adults and children alike against the supposed infections of print is one of the heaviest charges to be alleged against the Evangelicals" and his description of the "parochialism, the strait-laced morality, the neglect of the mind and of the sense of beauty which characterized the Evangelical temperament in its more rigorous, and unfortunately most influential manifestations" (197, 201) overlooks the

perspective of these evangelicals that beauty is not simply a characteristic of the intellect, but of the spirit. They do not wish to neglect the mind or crush an awareness of beauty, but to realign it as not purely an aesthetic category, but as an aspect of spiritual and moral wellbeing.

In place of the word morality, contemporary Christian author and scholar Jerram Barrs uses the term "moral beauty" (17), and it is this alternative conception of the tie between morality and beauty that Altick and compatriot scholars fail to recognize in much Victorian religious literature. The deep appreciation authors such as Stoker had for language's world shaping capacity and the corresponding necessity for using language in ways that enhance rather than destroy moral health and beauty is central to the censorship program, as well as to Stoker's construction of the *homo logos.* Language rightly used—used as an emanation of the *logos*—produces moral beauty, even if the cost may, at times, be aesthetic elegance.

Closing Words

That said, the risks of the program undertaken by both Arnim and Stoker must not be overlooked. With an intent of sacralizing language and with it the human species that is, for linguistic idealists at least, is its sole possessor, authors such as Arnim and Stoker run the risk of authorizing an ideology that would de-humanize classes or ethnicities that fail to possess the linguistic competencies they value so highly. J. W. Burrow reminds us that German national awakenings—with the concomitant rise of national bigotry and racism—was often linked to the development of philology, a linking he describes as "ominous" (204). If gypsy language can be romanticized by Arnim, it is no less possible for it to be used as a sign that they are linguistically unfit for modern German society. Likewise, we can see this danger

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manifesting in Stoker's devaluation of the "masses" of readers who, in possessing less complete mastery of the written word, may by extension be less fully human than their more literate peers or in his attribution of non-language and thus non-humanness to the foreign figure of Dracula.

Any effort at creating a taxonomy depends as much on who/what is excluded as who/what is included. A linguistic taxonomy is no less susceptible to this truism than is a biological taxonomy. Max Müller warns that language is inevitably an issue of power: "those who possess it are entitled to consideration as rational humans; those who lack it are not" (ctd in Ferguson 30). The "brute," for example could all too easily become "imaginatively synonymous with different kinds of linguistic deviants—domestic dialect speakers, non-Caucasion indigenous peoples, and newly-literate members of the working class" (Ferguson 3)—(the mandrakes, Bearskinners and golems of contemporary culture?)

Müller criticizes abuses of philology such as the American attempt "to justify, by scientific arguments, the unhallowed theory of slavery" ("Science" 22). As I mentioned above, Müller's scholarship is known for "battles between the forces of the articulate and the silent" (29). In studying Arnim's or Stoker's treatment of language, we should take heed of Müller's warnings and not ignore the potential for these battles to become battles between the linguistically enfranchised and the marginalized. From Catholics to Jews to Irishmen to Africans, culture has a history of dehumanizing those who can somehow be disqualified from belonging to the human race. In their zeal to define humanity in terms of language, linguistic idealists must be careful not to allow language to become another tool for such dehumanization.

Despite such considerations, the idealist program of language must be not be simplistically dismissed as reactionary and ominous, but seen in light of the overall desire to maintain space for the numinous, the morally beautiful, and the human in a world that seemed to be under siege from the forces of materialism.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: VIEWING THE TAPESTRY

> "There she weaves by night and day
> A magic web with colours gay. . . .
> And moving through a mirror clear
> That hangs before her all the year,
> Shadows of the world appear."
> --Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 1842[1]

At the end of my introduction, I claimed that the various approaches to amortality used by authors wove "a richly textured and intricately patterned tapestry" (25). My individual chapters are intended to highlight certain of those threads, but I would like to conclude this study by taking a step back and viewing the tapestry as a whole. Weavers traditionally worked tapestries from the back and were unable to see the picture until completion, except as reflected in a mirror. To an extent, I feel like one of those weavers who even now has only caught a few refracted glimpses of the whole that my study reveals.

Revisiting my initial research questions may help bring the tapestry into focus. The first question I asked was "How and why does amortality become available as a conceptual category for nineteenth-century romance writers?" While the answer is complex, my research has suggested two particularly significant components of an answer. First, as my chapters dealing with prolongevity research and medicalization of the body suggest, shifting understandings of the body foregrounded embodiedness as a site for critical examination and imaginative conjecture. Romance fiction displays a compelling fascination with the marvelous

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[1] "The Lady of Shalott" part II, lines 37-38 and 46-48.

and the uncertain, and as the body became at once more and less certain—

anatomical knowledge seemingly pinning it down, while simultaneously unmooring it

from conventional understandings—romance writers could draw it into their realm. It

could be made fantastic and frightening. Amortality developed critical pliability in the

fissures created by redefinitions of embodiment.

But this romantic appropriation and transformation of embodiment was

predicated on a second factor: romance writers' awareness of these shifting

conceptions. In chapter three, I referred to the permeability of barriers between

different forms of discourse. "Literature" was not distinct from other forms of

discourse during the nineteenth century. Writers of fiction participated in a literary

culture that included scientific writings, including writings on medicine, evolution,

archaeology, and geology. Whether it was Edward Bulwer-Lytton applying images

and metaphors of "animalcules" based on knowledge gained from the microscope,

Jane Loudon and Bram Stoker appropriating recent discoveries from Egyptology, H.

Rider Haggard addressing ideas of evolution and geological deep time, or Ludwig

Achim von Arnim responding to concerns over automatism, their work relied on their

participation in an interdiscursive community that made such knowledge available.

That interdiscursive community also increasingly included traditional tales as

folklorists began collecting folk tales, bringing figures such as vampires, golem, and

the Wandering Jew into the literary community. Arnim, of course, specifically

engaged in the collection of folktales, but other writers were also increasingly familiar

with such tales that, when merged with new understandings of the body, provided a

vital source for amortality.

This interdiscursive permeability extended to audiences as well, as my brief

discussion of scientific popularization in chapter four suggests. Thus, amortality

could function because writers and readers alike shared a common storehouse of ideas and images informed by the popular sciences and the folklore of the day. Amortality as a critical approach built on and played off those new, provocative, but readily available ideas.

My second question involved the function of amortality. If emerging knowledge and an interdiscursive tradition made amortality conceptually possible, how does it work? "How does/can amortality function as a social and political metaphor, mirroring contemporary concerns?" as I phrased it in my introduction. The idea of "mirroring" provides one answer. As we see in She, amortals can provide an exaggerated reflection of existing persons/ideas. Ayesha is in many respects a doppelganger of Queen Victoria—a powerful queen with imperial ambitions. Her/their devotion to a lost love and extended mourning only reinforce this identification. Amortality amplifies these characteristics, so that the image may be distorted like that in a funhouse mirror, but the mirroring allows Ayesha to provide an oblique critique of existing imperial ideas. Arnim's mirror-based golem Bella reveals a similar strategy. In her extreme materialism, golem Bella reflects existing attitudes that Arnim finds distressing, magnified by the inherent contrast with the "human" Bella. (Distorted) mirroring, then, allows amortality to amplify, defamiliarize, and thus problematize social conditions and problems.

Margaret Homans'a concept of literalization is also illuminating in this regard. Amortality allows authors to give embodied form to a variety of concerns. Frankenstein's creatures and Queen Tera, for example, literalize ideas of posthumous life and civil death. Cheops' history of incest and patricide literalize Loudon's concern with the failure of relationships, reinforcing her argument in favor of an ethic of care. Arnim's amortals, called into life through the power of language,

literalize his concern with the role of language and its right use. These embodied

revelations of social concerns foreground those concerns in uniquely provocative

and compelling ways.

In addition to mirroring and literalization, authors may use amortals to provide

an outsider's point of view. This is true of Zanoni, whose age has given him the

wisdom to recognize the dangers of revolution, and Cheops, whose reanimation into

an alien culture allows him to see it in ways that are invisible to its native inhabitants.

Just as journey tales have often been used to valorize and/or problematize

customary values and to offer an alternative perspective on the world, amortality can

offer new ideas that may validate and/or interrogate social norms and values.

I next asked "How, when, and why may the amortal body prove recalcitrant to

interpretation?" And I find it particularly intriguing to note that some amortality writers

seem to have been deliberately invested in making their amortals interpretively

resistant. As I pointed out in chapter three, interpretation of Queen Tera's body is a

central concern of Stoker's Jewel of Seven Stars. Likewise, Haggard makes

uncertainty over Ayesha's body and spirit an integral part of his narrative. Answers

and explanations are repeatedly given, only to be revised or rejected and discarded.

Ayesha is an epistemological puzzle. While it is tempting to read this specifically as

a gender issue—male writers expressing male confusion over females and the

female body—, the interpretive complexity of Cheops (scourge? minister? hero?

villain?); the presentation of Zanoni through multiple perspectives, including those of

a trance vision; the emphasis on St. Leon's and Winzy's "mask" of youth complicate

this simplistic assumption.

In fact, an emphasis on the difficulty of reading amortal bodies is arguably the

most universal theme I encountered in this study. In part, I believe it reflects

uncertainties about bodies in general in light of advances in knowledge, but I also believe it shows that amortality is useful for highlighting the difficulties in reading bodies—and human nature—in general. Amortality literalizes and exaggerates traits that commonly interfere with our ability to "read" others: their inconsistent behaviors, their different appearances under different circumstances, their persistent donning of masks that disguise elements of their characters; their transformation over time. Amortal bodies are difficult to read both because society has not yet found an appropriate hermeneutical approach to understanding bodies under changing circumstances, but also because people are resistant to simple interpretation.

The question of amortality's relationship to gender and other demographic classifications is perhaps best answered in chapter three, where I focus on gender in particular. In arguing that amortality, especially as "posthumous life," has a particular resonance with the lives of women, I note briefly that the idea of civil death has also been applied to other marginalized groups from the Irish to lepers. I believe that it is an area deserving of further examination, and I hope to follow up on it in the future. However, as I have noted repeatedly, amortality is a malleable concept and can work in a variety of ways. For Bulwer, it is used to buttress a form of aristocratic paternalism and maintain a class hierarchy; for Godwin, to advocate an egalitarian value system; for Arnim, to enact a complicated valorization of gypsy culture intermingled with anti-Semitism. Unlike the shared emphasis on the difficulty of interpreting amortal bodies, there seems to be no "characteristic" class or gender standard for amortality; instead its malleability allows it to function in whatever role a given author wishes.

An emphasis on the destructiveness of amortality to interpersonal relations, however, does seem to be another shared theme. Gruman's idea of an apologetic

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tradition is perhaps most applicable here. Truly, its pernicious effects on human relationships reveals the "undesirability" of amortality, although the reasons may vary. Godwin, Shelley, and Bulwer all emphasize the inability of amortals to have relationships with "insects of an hour," as their physiological inequality inevitably separates them. Godwin, in particular, emphasizes the social ramifications of such a difference, noting in Wollstonecraftian terms, that any form of inequality is damaging to social as well as familial relationships. Likewise, Ayesha's fatal embrace and Cheops' debilitating presence indicate the devastating costs of amortality to human relations, but for Haggard, it suggests the incompatibility of materialist theory with a higher spiritual awareness, while for Loudon, it reflects the destructive effects of a failure to practice a caring, relational ethic. For Shelley, it reflects the effects of alienation and cruelty towards those who are different, for Stoker, the damage of sustaining one's own well-being at the expense of others.

In each case, a distinction is made between the normative human and the unnatural, inhuman amortal; and the author's understanding of what it means to be human—whether it is to be part of a community of equals, to express a responsible ethic of care, to maintain a connection to the numinous—is expressed in the amortals' success or failure in human relationships.

Finally, I asked about the role of memory and history in discourses of amortality. The simplest answer is to revisit my discussion in the introduction about our ideas of the body being historically embedded. The ways that amortality is depicted are directly related to historical concepts and conditions—whether these are medical or geological advances or historical events, as in Godwin's and Bulwer's responses to the French Revolution or Loudon's engagement with the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and the state of the monarchy.

There are also more complex considerations, however. I have mentioned the idea that Zanoni's age and Cheops' reanimation allow them to adopt an outsider's point of view. They offer at once a historical perspective and a perspective enacted through living memory. History and memory, for Bulwer and Loudon, become sources of corrective vision and revitalizing potential. Or history may be something to be outgrown and made obsolete, as Loudon suggests in the case of war. Like war for Loudon, Dracula's history and memory are atavistic, an irruption into the present of something that does not belong. Haggard's depiction of the Amahaggar reveals the relegation to "history" of cultures that are unwilling or unable to meet the demands of modernity and hints at the chronopolitics involved in our engagements with other cultures. Such uses complicate ideas of history and historiography, destabilizing their "given" status and revealing their constructed natures and their potential for ideological use.

These brief reflections are not exhaustive. Each text offers potential insight to each question, and a different arrangement of texts might well have provided additional or different insights. What I hope my discussion proves is that amortality does have viable conceptual value; that I have not simply pulled together a random array of texts, involving characters ranging from drinkers of the *elixir vitae* to vampires to golems, and claimed that they share a common heritage. Instead, I hope I have demonstrated that understanding these texts as a discursive body provides insights that taking them individually cannot. I hope, in other words, that I have helped to reveal their tapestry. This tapestry, though, encompasses many other threads, offering potential for further discovery. My study leaves many questions unasked and unanswered. It is an invitation to further discussion that I hope other scholars of the body and nineteenth-century romance will accept.

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VITA

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