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## Courville Castle [supplemental material]

Sarah Thompson  
*Marquette University*

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# Courville Castle, by an unknown author.

## Contents

MLA Citation.....	2
MLA Citation from the Gothic Archive.....	2
Full Title.....	2
Summary .....	2
Constellation of Knowledge/Historical Context .....	3
Key Words .....	3
Abstraction .....	3
Beauty .....	4
Boundaries .....	5
Death.....	6
Decay.....	6
Doubling .....	6
Entrapment .....	7
Family (The Economic) .....	8
Female Sexuality .....	9
Haunted Castles .....	9
Hero/Villain.....	9
Home.....	10
Intertextuality .....	11
Letters.....	12
Madness.....	12
Memory of Past Sins .....	12
Missing Mother .....	13
Paranoia/Hysteria .....	13
Purity .....	14
Secrets.....	14
Secret Passage .....	15
Sin .....	15
Transgression.....	16
Violence .....	16
Bibliography of Related Information.....	17

## MLA Citation

*The Gothic Story of Courville Castle; or the Illegitimate Son, a Victim of Prejudice and Passion: Owing to the Early Impressions Inculcated with Unremitting Assiduity by an Implacable Mother Whose Resentment to Her Husband Excited Her Son to Envy, Usurpation, and Murder; but Retributive Justice at Length Restores the Right Heir to His Lawful Possessions. To Which is Added the English Earl: or the History of Robert Fitzwalter.* 1801. Print.

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## Full Title

*The Gothic Story of Courville Castle; or the Illegitimate Son, a Victim of Prejudice and Passion: Owing to the Early Impressions Inculcated with Unremitting Assiduity by an Implacable Mother Whose Resentment to Her Husband Excited Her Son to Envy, Usurpation, and Murder; but Retributive Justice at Length Restores the Right Heir to His Lawful Possessions. To Which is Added the English Earl: or the History of Robert Fitzwalter.*

## Summary

*The Gothic Story of Courville Castle* begins with Alphonso de Courville returning to his ancestral castle after traveling through foreign lands. During Alphonso's German travels, he had been attacked by banditti and fallen in love with Julia, a baron's daughter. However, when Alphonso returns home to gain his uncle's consent for his marriage, Alphonso is shocked to find Courville Castle entirely abandoned. Alphonso finds a note from his uncle explaining that Alphonso is the true owner of Courville Castle and that the uncle can no longer bear to reside there. Alphonso explores the castle and finds a decaying female corpse hidden in a chest, as well as a number of hidden rooms and passages.

Alphonso leaves the castle to return to Julia to explain the situation. While at an inn, however, Alphonso discovers Julia tending to his dying uncle, who had just saved her from an attempted kidnapping. The uncle leaves Alphonso a letter detailing his crimes against Alphonso's parents – the murder of his father and imprisonment of his mother. Alphonso interments his uncle's remains at Courville Castle, and is attacked during the night by a man who was his uncle's partner in the attempted murder of Alphonso's father. This man reveals

that Alphonso's father escaped the fate intended for him. Soon thereafter, both of Alphonso's parents are located and are reunited with Alphonso and Julia at Courville Castle.

"The English Earl; or the History of Robert Fitzwalter" describes Robert Fitzwalter's conflicts with his evil brother Edwin and repeated rescues of the fair Elfrida.

## Constellation of Knowledge/Historical Context

Published in 1801 by the London publisher S. Fisher, The Gothic Archive's edition of the *The Gothic Story of Courville Castle; or the Illegitimate Son* is perhaps the earliest publication of this chapbook, though certainly not the only one. As Angela Koch notes, S. Fisher published *Courville Castle* again in 1804, and once more at an unspecified date (Koch 70). Indeed, *Courville Castle* seems to have had surprising staying power, as Franz J. Potter records a chapbook entitled *The Gothic Story of de Courville Castle, or The Illegitimate Son* being printed by W. Mason in London in 1820.

Although the direct source of this chapbook is unknown at this time, the plot of *Courville Castle* certainly partakes of a number of common Gothic elements: the ruined castle, the attack by banditti, the moldering body, hidden passages, secret rooms in which to imprison beautiful women and threaten them with rape or death, a murderous uncle; the comically garrulous servant figure, etc. However, the shorter narrative appended to this text, "The English Earl: or the History of Robert Fitzwalter," may draw more directly from a single source. In *The First Gothics: A Critical Guide To The English Gothic Novel*, Frederick S. Frank suggests that Clara Reeves' novel *The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story* (1778) was the source for this narrative (119). If indeed this anonymous chapbook writer drew from Reeves' work for the "The English Earl: or the History of Robert Fitzwalter," it is perhaps worth noting that he or she may have found the name of *Courville Castle's* protagonist in another Reeves novel. In Clara Reeves' epistolary novel *The Exiles, or Memoirs of the Count de Cronstadt* (1788), there is a male character named de Courville who – like the hero of *Courville Castle* – is well-traveled and suffers, temporarily, due to inheritance disputes that arose in his father's generation.

Also in terms of the naming of characters, the choice of "Robert Fitzwalter" may possibly have more connotations than simply conveying the aristocratic character of the hero of this second tale. The name Robert Fitzwalter has been held by quite a few notable figures throughout history, including one of the leading barons responsible for the signing of the Magna Carta. Robert Fitzwalter is also the name of a historical figure who has been associated with the Robin Hood folklore.

## Key Words

### Abstraction

The Oxford English Dictionary records early 19th Century usage of "abstraction" as secret or dishonest removal of wealth; "abstraction" as the consideration of qualities independently of material substance, especially concerning wealth and property, came into

use in the later part of the Century. Gothic narratives often explore notions of fractured identities and a sense of dislocation that is either or both spatial and psychological, but rising capitalism and the abstraction of wealth from physical property was among the biggest anxieties of the time, turning tangible security into an ephemeral, easily transferable insecurity. Narratives like *Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *Uncle Silas* demonstrate the temptation such wealth has for criminal activity. *The Bottle Imp* gives a chilling account of how abstraction leads to a simultaneous conflation of the ideas of wealth and happiness, and the abstraction of self from society: one no longer feels any sense of responsibility about the fate of others. Financial abstraction also blurs the boundaries between social classes and even between races, since wealth, in all its dangerous fluidity, levels the playing field and contributing to late Victorian anxieties about the self and the potential for displacement or even erasure. The Gothic authors' use of fragmentary, epistolary and therefore inherently unreliable narratives (eg. *Frankenstein*; *Dracula*) can therefore be said to reflect a desire to record the subjective and personal in an effort to prevent the complete abstraction of the self.

Source: Annabelle Bok. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Beauty

Beauty is often juxtaposed to what is man-made or corrupted. Victor in *Frankenstein*, in his scientific transgression, fails to enjoy the 'charms of nature.' (53) Hence it can be an indication of the state of one's inner mind. The beauty of nature is pervasive in *Frankenstein* and it contributes greatly to the sublime. There is a sense of the overwhelming in its grandeur and infiniteness as compared to man who is small. It acts as a refuge by diminishing man's problems, but it can accentuate them also because it is threatening and uncontrollable. Victor's escapade to Montanvert filled him with 'sublime ecstasy that gave wings to the soul, and allowed it to soar...' (94) The mountains are 'terrifically desolate' yet possessing a 'solitary grandeur.' (94) Such a beautiful landscape becomes almost paradoxical as it would witness Walton's and Victor's suffering travels across the frozen seas, and its attractive-repulsion parallels the nature of the construction of the monster as well-attractive, dangerous and uncontrollable.

Beauty is brought to perfection in women, who are likened to angels and the Virgin Mary. They usually fit within moral and domestic conventions, like Frankenstein's Elizabeth and Dracula's Mina. However, sensation and shock tactics are created by defiling such women, and bringing to light the ideological suppression of women in society. Beauty without morals or chastity becomes unnatural and bestial, evoking attraction and repulsion. Beauty here is seen as something to be feared due to its power to seduce and bring out the irrational in man. Lucy possesses two faces of beauty within herself, the seductive and cold beauty when she is a blood sucking vampire and the earthly and peaceful one when she is truly dead as a virtuous woman. Similarly, Ollala's beauty is that of degeneration, like the house, and is an indication of illness, insanity or bestiality.

Source: Candida Ho. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Boundaries

Anne Williams in her book *The Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* suggests that Gothic literature is "pervasively organized around anxieties about boundaries (and boundary transgressions)" (Williams 16). Gothic literature, however, deals not only with boundaries (and transgressions) of "self and other"; it attempts also to show the problematic nature of boundaries in the first place. Social boundaries, for example, define what is correct, but at the same time repress the individual. Boundaries in Gothic fiction are often blurred, and things are never as clearly defined as they seem.

The establishment of the boundary between the self and other is important in Gothic fiction for everything that the Self is not is projected onto the Other. In Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Frankenstein's monster is clearly the Other for he, at least physically, has come to represent everything that the other normal looking characters are not. The idea of "self and other" extends also to geographical boundaries, where everything within the boundary of civilized world is good and everything beyond it is either seen as exotic or dangerous. In Stoker's *Dracula*, London is seen as civilized and safe (at least prior the arrival of Dracula) and everything in Romania is considered to be dark, ominous and dangerous. Boundaries create distinction, but they are also repressive in nature. Society lays down certain norms (boundaries) that individuals cannot transgress or risk being termed the 'Other'. People in attempting to stay within these boundaries naturally have to repress any desires that may transgress these socially placed boundaries. It can be argued that Dr. Jekyll's creation Mr. Hyde is an attempt to remain respectable at all times, as defined by the societal boundaries.

Lastly, boundaries can be blurred as we see in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, for is it really possible to create a boundary within oneself? The fact the Jekyll goes to bed as himself and wakes up as Hyde suggests that not only are boundaries problematic, it can also be easily blurred. Dracula too, represents a blurring of the boundaries between the living and the dead, He is not dead, but he is not alive as well, hence he is called the "Un-Dead", which is really an oxymoron.

Boundaries are endless in Gothic fiction; they constantly attempt to define what is correct, known and approved, but at the same time create more problems by their very act of categorization.

Source: Ivan Ang. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Death

Gothic literature is obsessed with death. We find portents of death, unnatural deaths, and series of deaths (e.g. *Frankenstein*), all of which contribute to an atmosphere of horror. Death in Gothic literature is associated with the supernatural. If Gothic literature reflects a wish to overcome one's mortality, there is also a fear of those who somehow manage to transcend it e.g. She, vampires, Frankenstein's monster.

In Gothic literature, death is horrific because it is often not quite the end. This thwarts the human wish for certainty. The vampires who are Undead occupy a liminal space; they are at once both alive and dead. The vampire hunters in *Dracula* have to drive a stake into them, to make sure they are really dead. There is also the trope of the dead who return e.g. Poe's "Ligeia". These kinds of spectres can also be seen as manifestations of the return of the repressed.

Likewise, the subject of death itself has often been ignored or repressed. It is what is unknown, and poses a threat to the Victorian mind which desires order. The Gothic is interested in what has been glossed over. We don't really get sentimental scenes like the death of little William in *East Lynne*; rather, the more gruesome, inexplicable aspects of death are explored. The corporeality of the body is emphasised with gory descriptions of blood and grave worms. Reading about death serves as a reminder of one's mortality. There is also a Gothic obsession with the bodies of dead women. Poe said that the death of a beautiful woman is "the most poetical topic in the world". For a discussion on death, femininity and the aesthetic, see Elizabeth Bronfen's book *Over her Dead Body*. She suggests that Gothic writing itself may be an act of killing off the female as it transmits the animate body into inanimate text. Necrophiliac desire for the dead woman e.g. Heathcliff's digging of Catherine's grave, also points to other kinds of transgressions e.g. incest.

Source: Khoo Lilin, "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Decay

Description forthcoming.

## Doubling

Doubling refers to a multiplication by two, such as when two or more characters parallel each other in action or personality, for example. It can also mean internal doubling, or division within the self to exhibit a duality of character.

Often, seemingly disparate characters are shown through doubling to be fundamentally similar, hence collapsing the self-other dichotomy and imparting a worrying sense of indistinguishableness between the supposed opposites. This implies that boundaries between deliberately demarcated groups of people are actually slippery and unstable. External identity markers such as dressing and mannerisms are hence undependable, allowing social categories to become permeable and vulnerable to transgression by virtue of their easy imitation.

Doubling hence illustrates deep anxieties that Victorian elites had regarding the weakening of the distinctions drawn along lines of class, gender, race and nationality, posing threats to the interests of the self. It also raises a cautionary point that a thin line separates good and evil, and while it is easy for evil to infiltrate one's protected sanctum, it is equally easy for one to fall into the latter's trappings. As such, everything that seems good must also be held in suspicion of harboring a negative underside.

Doubling also foregrounds the motif of mirroring, in particular the projection of one's fears, desires and anxieties onto the other, which becomes an uncomfortable reflection of ugly traits that the self refuses to acknowledge. The other thus reveals the social ills and moral decay that high Victorian society tries to ignore. It also broaches the notion that there are always two sides to a coin, such as that crime and poverty would necessarily accompany wealth accumulation in a capitalistic society. Progress for some comes at the cost of hardship for many others.

At the individual level, doubling plays out an internal splitting of the self between the public face of high Victorian respectability and professionalism, versus the carefully hidden face of despicability and immorality. It makes an oblique reference to Victorian hypocrisy, duplicity of standards and multiplicity of facades, as well as the fear of being discovered as such. It also dramatizes the inner struggle and vacillation between choices of good and evil in the individual. It is also interesting to note that for particular groups, doubling shows the essential sameness of perception by society of their status. Gothic representations of female characters for example, almost always seem to double each other in their stereotypical portrayal of feminine passivity when confronted with masculine power.

Lastly, at the narrative level, the form and structure of gothic writings sometimes act as a double to the content of the novel, underscoring the importance of themes that are doubled (reiterated through form and content), and the narrative strategy of doubling itself.

Source: Diana Chan Tsui Li. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Entrapment

Entrapment, a favourite horror device of the Gothic, means to be confined or to be trapped in such a way that there is no way out. It is this sense of there being no escape that contributes to the claustrophobic psychology of Gothic space. The notion of claustrophobia is closely tied up with that of entrapment. Although it is most often regarded as a consequence of physical entrapment, it can also be more generally attributed to a character's sense of helplessness, or a feeling that one is caught up in some sinister plan or destiny over which one has no control.

There are essentially three types of entrapment: physical, mental, and existential. Physical entrapment would mean being physically trapped in some place. A recurring gothic device of physical entrapment is that of the protagonist trapped in a maze of some kind and trying to escape, but inevitably returning to the same spot again and again. An example of physical entrapment can be found in Stoker's *Dracula*. When Harker is being driven to the castle of Dracula, he experiences a moment of being physically trapped in the nightmare landscape of the Transylvania, as is evident in his remark that "[it] seemed to me that we were simply



going over and over the same ground again; and so I took note of some salient point, and found that this was so" (Stoker). Another example of such entrapment is found in Smith's "A Rendezvous in Averigone." In this short story, the protagonist Gerard is trying in vain to escape from a forest; he returns, inevitably, to the same spot every time. Eventually, "[his] very will was benumbed, was crushed down as by the incumbence of a superior volition" (Smith).

Mental entrapment, on the other hand, is about being confined to a certain state of mind. The gothic trope of madness, for example, is a form of mental entrapment. In a way, the insane are trapped in their own mental universe, into which no one else can penetrate. Renfield, in *Dracula*, is doubly entrapped; physically locked up in an asylum, he is also limited to the confines of his mental universe, doomed to be continually misunderstood by Seward, or simply dismissed as insane.

Lastly, there is also existential entrapment, which takes the form of social entropy and ontological or epistemological entrapment. An example of existential entrapment can be found in Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*; Dr Jekyll feels trapped by societal notions of respectability, by a constant pressure of having to uphold his reputation as a gentleman in the eyes of the Victorian public. As a way of breaking out of this 'prison', Dr Jekyll invents the figure of Hyde. Hyde is therefore Jekyll's liberator, for it is as Hyde that Dr Jekyll can truly express himself, unbound by considerations of maintaining his respectability.

Source: Esther Leong, "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

### Family (The Economic)

Industrial development in the Nineteenth century encouraged urbanization and by 1850 more than half of England lived in cities and worked in industries. This changing economic condition inevitably challenged conventional ideology of the family which became redefined to include members "whether actually living together or not" and "connected by (either) blood or affinity" (OED).

By this definition, the patriarchal figure became freed from monogamy. Dracula, as symbol of the new money-obsessed class, had three vampire wives. Similarly, with ready money, many figures of authority were in command of the imp-child. Instead of a genealogical right, the new capitalist society allows wealth to gain patriarchal authority over many. While the new factory communities introduced new figures of authority, with respect to cloth and steel, production becomes increasingly specifically gendered. Through personifying industrial production, Gothic tropes seem to suggest via Frankenstein and Dracula that while possible, the resultant single-parent offspring are unnatural and terrifying.

At the same time, economically active working class women and the 'masculine' New Woman threatened conventional notions of feminine dependency. Writers like Stevenson

reacted by only presenting negative working women (in both sense of the word) while Stoker singles intellectual Mina out for Dracula's sanction.

Proliferation of child labor positioned children as 'property generating property' as exemplified in *The Bottle Imp*. Dracula's brute beast children also aid his creation of vampire children. The horror of the four female vampires' feeding off children is an implicit gothic comment on the inhumane nature of this exploitation.

Source: Yao Lingyun, "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Female Sexuality

Aspects of female sexuality figure prominently in gothic literature insofar as there is a strong preoccupation with what may happen if female sexuality is not contained within the structures of patriarchal authority across many Gothic texts. The highly disturbing image of Lucy the "Un-Dead" throwing the child whom she was cradling in her arms earlier on onto the hard ground without so much as a blink in the eye in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) encapsulates one example of such a preoccupation—that of motherhood gone wrong. The mother-child relationship—one that is usually regarded as nurturing and loving—is violently destabilized at this instance where Lucy—as the symbolic mother—harms the child whom she was supposed to be protecting. Relating to motherhood, the theme of birth signals the preoccupation with the unknowable dimensions of female sexuality that many Gothic texts exhibit. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831), the birth of Victor Frankenstein's creation is depicted as one that is monstrous insofar as it is "unnatural"; Frankenstein is, symbolically, both father and mother to the creation that he abhors from the moment of its birth. Given that it was a woman who authored *Frankenstein*, this then signals how female sexuality—in all its different aspects—was very much on the minds of both men and women in Victorian Britain. When seen alongside the socio-cultural-historical developments in Victorian Britain, it becomes possible then to view the depictions of female sexuality in gothic literature as responses to women's increasing freedom and mobility during this period; Mina Harker in *Dracula*, for instance, is very much a response to the New Woman phenomenon.

Source: Ashley Lin, "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Haunted Castles

Description forthcoming.

## Hero/Villain

At once seductive and repulsive, the hero/villain is a classic figure in gothic fiction; certainly one of the most easily recognizable pieces of machinery in the grab bag of devices that make up the gothic convention. So intrinsic is he to gothic fiction that Leslie Fiedler has been led to claim, somewhat mistakenly, "that the hero-villain is indeed an invention of the

gothic form." With his roots in Milton's Satan, the sentimental hero of the eighteenth century and the Byronic hero, the hero/villain can be seen in the likes of Beckford's *Vathek*, Walpole's *Manfred*, Lewis' *Ambrosio*, Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Stevenson's *Jekyll*. What makes the hero/villain so thoroughly attractive is precisely his duality of nature. A morally ambiguous, contradictory personality, the hero/villain is a figure torn by the conflict of good and evil within him. An exploration of the nature of man and his psychology, the hero/villain can perhaps be thought of as an internalized doppelgänger. The duality of self that in the gothic represents the alter ego or antithesis of the character; the hero/villain has within him his evil twin. Thus in Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* we have Jekyll, in an misguided attempt to eradicate the evil in man's soul, splitting himself and creating Hyde; an act which ultimately ends in the destruction of both.

Yet this is that which fascinates the reader and lends him to sympathise and identify with the hero/villain. The hero/villain is never intrinsically wicked, he is promethean, he is rebellious. Constantly trying the boundaries of societal and ethical constraints, the hero/villain is the archetypal overreacher, a figure unable to accept human limitations. His conception is noble, just as Frankenstein's creation of the monster arose from a desire to emancipate humanity from the throes of death.

The danger of the hero/villain lies not merely in his evil deeds, his malevolence or even his defiance of conventional moral and legal restraints but in his function as a vehicle through which the reader may indulge in the same transgressions. It is significant that Stevenson never details Hyde's crimes. By leaving them deliberately unspoken, Stevenson invites the reader to fantasy and imagine what Hyde could possibly have done and by doing so, effectively become Hyde. Ultimately however, the otherness of the hero/villain results only in alienation and distancing. A figure whose villainy gains him nothing, doomed to a tragic death, the hero/villain is by far more pitiable than his insipid victims.

Source: Yin Mei Lenden-Hitchcock. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Home

The home became a means of exploring and uncovering social transgressions in fin-de-siecle gothic literature because of its apparent domesticity, respectability, association with family history and its role as being the most intimate shelter of privacy. Here, Freud's principle of the uncanny, derived from the word *unheimlich*, which interestingly means *unhomely*, usefully explains this. *Unheimlich* gains its meaning from its apparent opposite, *heimlich*, which means *homely* but it also means something that is concealed, secret and made obscure. Therefore, the uncanny means something that ought to have remained secret has now come to light. As such, homes became the sites of concealed secrets that the fin-de-siecle gothic literature attempts to uncover, since the genre is characterized by ideas of encountering the internal decay of established societal structures.

The fin-de-siecle gothic writers' conception of the home as a site where their characters engaged and explored transgressions reflected the Victorians' frustration with a rigid social code demarcating boundaries and markers around economic status and gender roles. In Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Jekyll moves to the innermost sanctuary of his home, the laboratory, to concoct mixtures that will set free his repressed,

violent and libidinal nature. This part of Jekyll's nature was distilled in the swarthy, working-class featured figure of Hyde, who visibly transgresses accepted social conventions of Victorian middle class life and respectability. Here, the home conceals these secret activities.

Yet, the home's nature to "home" emphasizes its vulnerability to becoming un-homed. When Hyde ventures out of the home at night and engages in activities that attract the attention of Jekyll's contemporaries, Jekyll's secret transformation to Hyde within his home runs the risk of being un-homed. Indeed, this risk becomes a reality when Jekyll's secret transformation into Hyde suddenly takes place away from the home in Regent Park. Compellingly, the notions of being homed and un-homed describes Jekyll and Hyde's situation in Regent Park as Hyde becomes unhomed, while Jekyll is homed (and trapped) in a body he does not want to be in during the day as he moves through a public space. Jekyll describes this fear in his final letter to Dr Utterson:

"A moment before I had been safe of all man's respect, wealthy, beloved – the cloth laying for me in the dining room at home; and now I was the common quarry of mankind, hunted, houseless, a known murderer, thrall to the gallows" (Dr Jekyll, 72).

Here, Jekyll reverses his desires to transgress social boundaries, emphasizing Victorian middle class anxieties of being associated with and overwhelmed by the working class that were taking up a large part of rapidly urbanized cities in the nineteenth century. As such, Jekyll's anxious desire for his home with all its trappings of comfort, love and respectability emphasizes another conception of home by the fin-de-siecle gothic writer, where secret social transgressions within the home will potentially lead to the destruction or loss of the home.

Source: Niluksi Koswanage. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Intertextuality

Gothic intertextuality can be seen as a vampiric form of drawing elements from other texts, of sucking key ideas and characteristics into its own narrative body to nourish and enrich itself. Intertextuality exists everywhere in all literary genres, but Gothic intertextuality stands apart from the usual usage as it both subverts and perverts the original meanings and intentions of the original text, in a bid to overturn, question and invert its significance. Examples of this can be seen in both Frankenstein and Jekyll and Hyde, where Biblical references are made for the sole purpose of challenging and undermining its religious import, thus constituting a form of blasphemous truncation. In the latter novel, Ephesians 2:14 is used to refer to how Jekyll has used science to split himself into two beings, thus deviating from and upending the original Biblical meaning. The multiplicity of jarring intertextual sources used in Gothic texts also works to create deliberate dissonance and deep destabilisation within its narratives, being in line with how the Gothic as a genre seeks to critically interrogate, topple and displace existing social norms and beliefs, of revealing the darker nature of the self and society that lies hidden within. A key example would be the use of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" in Frankenstein, where the Romantic journey motif is subverted by how there is no proper end or closure to

Walton and Victor's physical and scientific journeys undertaken, thus refuting the possible positive ending to Coleridge's poem.

Source: Magdalene Poh. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Letters

Letters to a phantom sister, wills, transcript, journal entries, newspaper entries; Gothic narratives are punctuated with embedded writings in the form of letters and entries that are both a pastiche and fragmented, the sum total of which makes up the complete text. Letters while seemingly presenting objectivity on one level through the assumed tone of factuality, are also simultaneously open and subject to interpretation. It is linked to a reading of words as well as a misreading. There are letters that are not replied in *Frankenstein*, letters that may not have reached their destination, letters of secrecy in *Jekyll and Hyde*, letters that chronicle events—these letters attempt to present to us an understanding of what happened, reiterated with the supposed advantage of retrospect and an over-arching perspective that is allowed by the passing of time. However, as the paths of these letters are always dubious, it calls to attention its own in-authenticity and hence the potential for a misreading since we are never always sure if what we are reading is accurately represented. In other words, what has happened is always fragmented and there can be no complete reading of events.

These fragments also call to attention the reliability of information in an age where information is becoming increasingly available, as seen from the inclusion of newspaper reports in *Dracula* and the fact that distance is no longer a barrier to words. Some letters and entries, instead of being handwritten, are now type-written which displaces the personal touch of the writer from the reader and handwriting can no longer be a measure of authenticity. Anything, including words, can be reproduced. This links the idea of letters to modern communication and technology. The use of problematic embedded narratives illustrates an anxiety about the increasing ease of communication and whether more information really means knowing more. Narratives within narratives draw to attention its own artificiality and the question of whether there can be an original sequence of events behind what is narrated. At the same time, letters are also clearly letters of the alphabet which cues the reader in to the notion that all that is being read is a construct of "letters". Perhaps over-determined, but letters open the doors to the multitude of readings and misreadings in the Gothic world.

Source: Felicia Chan. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Madness

Description forthcoming.

## Memory of Past Sins

Description forthcoming.

## Missing Mother

The typical gothic mother is absent or dead. If the mother is alive and well, such as Lucy's mother in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, she is associated with the incapacity to carry out her maternal duties. The typical gothic mother has to be killed in order for the domestic instability that underpins the gothic text to flourish. Only the occasional evil or deviant mother (Olalla's mother in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Olalla" for example), is allowed to survive in the gothic text. Even then, the evil and deviant mother figure (such as H.R. Haggard's titular character in *She*) has to be removed eventually for there to be some sort of closure to the gothic text.

The repression of the mother allows the progression of the narrative in the gothic mode. The missing mother also serves as a social commentary where her absence and silence highlight the repression of women within an overwhelming patriarchal regime. The missing mother points to the absence of regulation and the absence of stability in the family, hence the desire for the male characters to usurp the maternal role and circumvent the female's role in procreation (Victor Frankenstein and Dr Jekyll do that in their respective fictional worlds). At the same time, the missing mother is a signifier for the stranglehold of men over the legal and physical self-agency of the women in gothic texts.

Source: Choo Li Lin, "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web

## Paranoia/Hysteria

Symptoms of psychiatric illnesses, but also terms to describe the modes of narrative that are operative in Gothic literature. Eve Sedgwick aligns the paranoid / hysteric modes with another common characterisation of Gothic literature, that of 'male' Gothic ('horror') in the case of the former and 'female' Gothic ('terror') for the latter.

In this light, one paranoid Gothic text may be that of Bram's Stoker's *Dracula*, with the male protagonists (Jonathan, van Helsing et al) hunting down and eliminating the senex iratus of the *Dracula*-figure (who disrupts coitus and threatens to take over progenitive function) which has already been established in the text as a foreign Other as well as a bloodsucking Satanic figure. A text that displays Gothic hysteric narrative traits may be Arthur Conan Doyle's *Hound of the Baskervilles*: the reader together with Watson is plunged into an environment of uncertainty and danger at Dartmoor, with a mythic diabolical hound roaming the moors, haunting the imagination of Watson and his protectee. The use of Gothic traits in this text, however, may be described as a qualified one: human reason in the figure of Holmes finally still beats the day, with any supernatural phenomena attributed to clever scientific villainy.

The Freudian take on both illnesses, with both paranoia and hysteria arising from the ego's need to protect itself through the mechanism of repression, may be useful here. Both modes of narrative in their medical equivalent in being departures from normality in

mental states also depart radically from any 'classic' depiction of the everyday, with heightened sensibilities also serving to destabilise what is 'normal' and 'usual' in Victorian England, with latent meaning needing to be investigated behind the repressive respectability of manifest meaning of everyday culture and moral values, as in the case of domesticity and sexuality.

Source: Tan Simin, "Gothic Keywords."  
<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web

## Purity

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines purity as the quality or condition of being pure in various aspects. In general, it signifies "faultlessness, correctness", and especially "freedom from matter that contaminates, defiles, corrupts, or debases; physical cleanness". The idea of purity is also specifically relevant to the individual, denoting an unblemished character, innocence, and the condition of "chastity, ceremonial cleanness" in one of the earliest uses of the word.

In gothic literature, the issue of purity is commonly a source of anxiety, having religious, social, and even political significance. The anxiety begins very probably as a result of a Judeo-Christian religious heritage; because God is pure and cannot abide impurity, sinful man has to continually struggle between holy and earthly desires. This physically unbridgeable distance between God and man is further strained by the threat of rejection "...Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." in 2 Corinthians 6:17, The Holy Bible (New International Version).

In all other associations, one may see the great concern with purity through the extent to which the idea of mixture, invasion and corruption play a part in gothic narratives such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, R.L. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. For instance, each of these narratives purposes to tell a tale or report a strange case, but the integrity of each narrative is compromised by the epistolary form that is inevitably subjective and incomplete in knowledge. In addition, the heterogeneity of voices—especially in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Dracula*—suggests the difficulty of sustaining a single correct perspective. The threat of impurity is consequently played out in the struggle between human and monstrous protagonists, the overarching human anxiety being aptly voice by Frankenstein when he expressed the fear that "a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror." In short, purity means such a lot in gothic literature because the alternative is an uncontainable, and therefore unsafe, sublimity.

Source: Tan Su Linn, "Gothic Keywords."  
<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web

## Secrets

Secrets, namely that which is 'unspeakable' is a distinctive gothic trope. In literary novels, secrets are knowledge deliberately concealed from the readers and/or from the characters

involved. In gothic literature, secrets aid in creating a sense of suspense, hinging on a scandal or mystery and subsequently lead to a shocking revelation at the end. Often, a foreboding shadow is cast upon those who withhold secrets, be it a dark family history or a Faustian pact as exemplified by Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll* who are both possessors of an 'unspeakable' knowledge which allows them to transcend the limits and abilities of man but eventually at the expense of their sanity, friends and lives.

The secrecy of identity and sexuality is also prevalent in Gothic literature where the ambiguity and anonymity of informers and correspondents add to the overarching mystery. There are also suggestions that the seemingly upright life led by Victorian men in the day is coupled with a lurid 'secret' life at night where at times even their heterosexual preferences are called into question. Although not overtly articulated, novels such as *Dr Jekyll* and *Mr Hyde* reveal a generally homosocial society whereby the fast bonding of the men hints at something more than platonic friendship.

Secrets as a form of concealment also connote darkness and acts as a means of subversion against the façade of the hypocritical Victorian society which boasts a well-policed state with brightly-lit streets at night, claiming the honourability of well-clothed individuals and the safety of the private self, all which the gothic trope seeks to challenge.

Source: Kong Yuqi, "Gothic Keywords."  
<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web

## Secret Passage

Description forthcoming.

## Sin

One of the more subtle monstrosities produced by the Gothic interrogation of the wealth and science obsessed Victorian era is the new forms Sin which indicate a pervasive estrangement of Victorian society and its values with God.

The Victorians, with their new-found optimism in the Enlightenment and science created in its shadow countless possibilities in which tenets of religious beliefs have been forgotten and betrayed. Sin as explored in the Gothic is this very shadow. When *Frankenstein* creates his monster, he manages to use the scientific advances of his age to displace the creation role of God. Hence, Science as a possible road to hell is exposed and explored in the Gothic. But religion as cast aside also manifests itself in gestures like Harker's skepticism of the gift of the Crucifix which later brings him comfort. These sentiments are also most obvious when *Dr. Jekyll* tries to rid himself from Sin; he no longer turns to religion but to science and produces a monster who is the embodiment of his sin. As for redemption, the church as an institution is usually absent, a mark of Victorian skepticism, and characters like *Mina Harker* have to rely on their own faith and belief for redemption. More often, the new forms of Gothic sin that arise out of Victorian obsessions for knowledge and wealth leave their



pursuers in a self created hell on earth, tormented by their monsters. The monsters of Sin no longer come from hell but from the hands of man.

Source: Stephanie Chu, "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Transgression

Transgression is central to the Gothic because it serves as a means for writers to interrogate existing categories, limits and anxieties within nineteenth century English society. By transgressing social limits the Gothic "reinforces the values and necessity of restoring or defining limits" through the presentment of the horrific outcomes of transgression. Most often, these transgressions reflect and refract current anxieties of the age as a way to deal and contain them. Anxieties regarding the dissolution of gender differences, due to the emergence of the New Woman and the aesthete; regarding the possibility of devolution and degeneration in man; and regarding fears of the working class - a repercussion of the French Revolution- are dealt with singly or in overlapping ways. Consider how in *Dracula* sexual differences are "ef(face)ed" by the trope of the vampiric mouth which is both "penetrator" and "orifice"; which is further complicated by the essentially male act of penetration to the neck by male and female vampires alike. The New woman (who is gender ambiguous in being biologically female, yet desiring masculinity) seems to be parodied horrifically here. The New Woman is further parodied in the vampiric Lucy whose maternal instincts are reversed (with her feeding on children, instead), promiscuous (with multiple husband's whose bloods are coursing through her) and blatant sexuality (in seducing Arthur). The threatening figure of the New Woman as Lucy, and the sexual ambiguity represented by all the vampires, are subdued and destroyed, vicariously for the reader. However such overt aims are problematised by the numerous Gothic works that lack reassuring closures, presenting their own narrators as unreliable and questionable, and revealing the covert monstrosity in mainstream society and the aristocrats (- that leaves the reader more insecure than not. The Gothic writers themselves seem to be unlikely proponents to restore societal limits and boundaries - since they, very often, were transgressors of those very boundaries (e.g. Shelley, Wilde, etc.). Thus, although Gothic transgression did interrogate current issues, its aims and intended effects were ambivalent.

Source: Grace Dong Enping. "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

## Violence

Violence, like over-determined symbols in Gothic literature, functions as much as an act of social interrogation as it is an act of affirmation. In both *Frankenstein* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, strict social mores and policing that prompt the disastrous, transgressive reactions of repressed selves are manifested in the physical violence wrought by *Frankenstein's* and *Dr Jekyll's* doubles, the monster and Mr Hyde. Here, violence also highlights class anxieties where the repressed working class, like *Frankenstein's* self-educated monster, rebels

violently against social masters like Frankenstein. Human superficiality that incites Frankenstein's monster's violence also operates to reflect the monstrosity in society itself. Apart from interrogating social norms, scientific advancement and its monstrous power, building on the Promethean over-reacher theme, are also examined in its production of violent figures and emotional violence, like that experienced by Frankenstein and Dr Lanyon after witnessing what science can achieve. Here, gothic atavism of regression alongside material and scientific progress is manifested in the figures of Jekyll and Hyde, where the latter's regression is demonstrated in his ape-like appearance and, more significantly, in his disregard of human moral codes—his violence. Yet, while violence undermines and questions the adequacies of law, it also serves to affirm social codes. The violence of staking in *Dracula*, for instance, acts as a social cleansing ritual of removing figures that threaten social instability and miscegenation. Here, the violence of staking Lucy, as is the mutilation of Elizabeth in *Frankenstein*, also takes on phallic terms to affirm masculinity in an age of increasing sexual anxieties.

Source: Sophia Koh, "Gothic Keywords."

<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellgohbh/gothickeywords.html>. Last Updated 2006. Last Accessed 9/16/2013. Web.

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