

From Ghost to Monster: The Emergence of a Shrouded Figure

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The tradition of the gothic novel begins with Horace Walpole's novella, *The Castle of Otranto*. It's the story of a castle under siege by a drifting, indefinite menace, who on occasion floats objects in midair and on occasion appears as a massive, humanistic entity. The reason, albeit a specifically dissatisfying one, for the terror reigned down on the castle's unlucky inhabitants, is a ghostly project to return the rightful and missing heir of Otranto to power. This power is only won by that heir at the cost of his own tragedy. It is a story in which fate operates as a physical or nearly physical thing, and in which fate is very much the antagonist.

The trope of the ghost in the 18th and 19th century gothic novel is in many respects the precursor to the gothic monster, whose appearance is usually traced to Mary Shelley's nameless monster, of 1818, erroneously remembered as Frankenstein. This monster will not be the direct subject of this paper, and indeed neither will be any of the other gothic monsters so readily associated with the gothic novel (e.g. vampires, Mr. Hyde and his elaborations). Rather, this paper will focus on the logical steps preceding the powerful symbol expressed in *The Monster*, to better understand its origins.

To this end, the first half of this paper will concern itself with the classic ghost tropes of the gothic, as expressed in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and, for further edification on their meaning, the satire they inspired in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*.

The second half of the paper will concern itself with the nature of these ghostly tropes upon interaction with Faustian narratives, or narratives which brought to the fore the monstrous, or demonic, humans who embody in themselves the uncanny effects of the gothic narrative.

The ghost, since it situates so well in the category of rumor and hallucination is a doom toll, or an apprehension, a mark overwhelmingly placed on the vulnerable and the already-stigmatized. Freud's famous essay on the phenomenon of the uncanny is a good place to start, as it

will be particularly edifying on the psychological forces at work within some of the more nebulous and inscrutable fears at play in the early gothic.

The uncanny, Freud begins by telling us, is a dual notion. This is clear in its etymology. This starts with heimlich, the German word which means approximately 'homely' but also 'hidden' or 'secret'. It is a rare word that, continuing down the list of definitions, comes to mean, on occasion, its exact opposite, 'unheimlich' or 'uncanny,' 'unhomely' is a sense. But as Freud describes it, 'unheimlich' is only the antonym of 'heimlich' within the definition of, approximately, 'coziness' - it is something uncozy, uncomfortable, yet secret or hidden. It is not a hidden-away home, a sense of peace known only to those initiated into knowing it, as with a family's sense of coziness upon returning home. The 'uncanny' refers to a hidden-away discomfort, one which Freud says "applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open." (Freud 132)

An uncanny experience arises from a suggestion or event reminding us of something that has been repressed. The repressed fear of castration, arising from sexual concerns revolving around the father, is one common culprit, he says. Castration, of course, to Freud, is connected to many things, and he sees a mimicry of the castration fear in other fears of bodily loss (of the eyes in particular) (140-1). Also a childhood wish or belief becomes an uncanny fear in adulthood as one contemplates inanimate/animates like dolls, where we question their sentience (140-141)

According to Freud, the main factors which yield the uncanny effect are "animism, magic, sorcery, the omnipotence of thoughts, unintended repetition and the castration complex," (149) He also adds, further along, the womb fantasy, and it can be said that primarily the interactions at work boil down to repressed "childhood complexes" (which seem, to him, logically linked with "primitive" or animistic belief structures). He does, however, strike a division within

uncanny effects, based on the repressed material. Certain repression (which, upon its return, yields an uncanny effect) is the repression of a belief structure, the beliefs of a child, which the adult represses (yet not entirely, if a return to that belief structure, and thus an uncanny experience, is possible). Another type of repression deal in the repression of something whose actuality is not contested in itself, but rather its experience has been repressed. Under this category would fall the castration complex, womb fantasy, fear of the dark, and other childhood complexes about actual and logically undeniable physical realities. (155)

He's quick to warn, however, that this definitional split should not be misunderstood as a hard and fast separation of concepts, as they are often intermixed and it is not always clear which plays the bigger role in the uncanny effect. He even goes so far as to state that "primitive" beliefs are rooted in childhood complexes, which is of at least dubious credibility given his certainly dubious definition of "primitive".

There was, at the time of the gothic novel's rise to prominence, a degree of retrospective/cynical fascination in the ghostly. Commensurate with the gothic novel, around the turn of the 18th century a machine called the phantasmagoria was fascinating the masses. A precursor to film technology, the phantasmagoria featured lenses, slides, and a "magic lantern"; it projected moving pictures in shadowy, smoky, atmospheric chambers. It was set up to spook and entertain audiences, the projected images intentionally evocative of ghosts swarming and dispersing. On occasion, the projections depicted historical figures, on other occasions they were painted in advance to summon the audience members' deceased loved ones.

While it was claimed by many of the phantasmagorists that the spectacle of their displays was intended to educate the masses by displaying the impossible, to eradicate superstition by showing how one might mislead with light affects, this was clearly not entirely the case. For one thing, the phantasmagorists were extremely secretive about their operations. The mentality, placing artistry and a desire to astound before any professed desire to elucidate the machinery of reason, mirrors the inner-working of the ghostly gothic novel; however explicitly “unreal” the ghosts are, still the secretive apparatus by which they’re produced, the imperfect information provided to those dealing with the seemingly inexplicable, as well as the intentional stylistic framing of ominous surroundings, mimicked the ghostly to such an extent as to essentially make it real. At least, among audiences of the phantasmagorists, no one came away more knowledgeable or less superstitious, and in reading a gothic novel, an uncanny, romantic dread is felt, consciously produced by the text, regardless of how real or unreal the ghosts within are stated to be. (Mannoni)

It shouldn’t be surprising, then, that many of the same apparatuses are at work in creating the gothic novel’s ghostly atmosphere. Surely the coincidence of imperfect knowledge is present – the protagonist as well as the reader is, as with the audiences at the phantasmagoria, put at the mercy of forces they can neither wield nor understand. This imperfect knowledge presents and incites fear in protagonist and reader alike in two major ways: 1) by utilizing music, light and shadow to signify the ghostly while keeping anything concrete literally in the shadows, 2) by making the ghostly synonymous with rumor and panic, the psychological effects of uncertainty and spreading fear.

There is a pervading sense of the ghostly throughout *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, but the emanation point of this *sense* is somewhat more difficult to pin down. Collapsing it into

what might better be called the literal, a few “ghost” stories rise to the point of narrative. Firstly, our protagonist Emily St Aubert has lost her mother. Secondly, after an extended trip through the Pyrenees, during which her father’s health is forever failing, that paternal figure dies as well. During this second incident, at the convent where Monsieur St Aubert’s illness has forced them to seek refuge, the protagonist is made aware of a ghost story pervading the region. This mystery is returned to again, near the end of the novel, when Emily is forced, again, to take refuge nearby. By this point, Emily’s wake is peopled by two further deaths – that of her Aunt, as much as killed by her own husband – and that of the former mistress of the castle of Udolpho, whose mysterious death, at this point, is still unsolved, but the tragedy of whom served to haunt Emily’s stay in the ancient castle.

Emily is “haunted” by these deaths, however, by a more subtle mechanism than visible apparitions. Despite the “ghostly” being a near-constant topic of conversation, and the fear of them driving an enormous percentage of Emily’s psychological predicament, there are no ghosts as such within the pages of this novel.

The closest we come to actually *seeing* a ghost happens early on, following the death of Emily’s father. The visions of him, as they appear to her, can easily be taken as a symptom of her distraught state of mind. “To this infirm state of her nerves may be attributed what she imagined, when, her eyes glancing a second time on the arm-chair, which stood in an obscure part of the closet, the countenance of her dead father appeared there. Emily stood fixed for a moment to the floor, after which she left the closet” (99).

This appearance occurs as guilt plays on Emily’s mind. Surrounding this apparition are various destabilizing mental factors. Emily has been reminded of her father’s final wish: that she burn certain secret documents without reading them. Her dedication to this task

temporarily wavers, her temptation to know the secret nearly makes her look, but ultimately she is successful (save a glimpse, which of course, “haunts” her).

When compared to a previous “appearance” of the deceased father, the cause of this apparition seems self-evident: it is deeply connected to Emily’s period of mourning, as well as her heated imagination and the merging of her dreams with seeming reality:

Retired to her lonely cabin, her melancholy thoughts still hovered round the body of her deceased parent; and, when she sunk into a kind of slumber, the images of her waking mind still haunted her fancy. She thought she saw her father approaching her with a benign countenance; then, smiling mournfully and pointing upwards, his lips moved, but, instead of words, she heard sweet music borne on the distant air, and presently saw his features glow with the mild rapture of a superior being. The strain seemed to swell louder, and she awoke. The vision was gone, but music yet came to her ear in strains such as angels might breathe. She doubted, listened, raised herself in the bed, and again listened. It was music, and not an illusion of her imagination. After a solemn steady harmony, it paused; then rose again, in mournful sweetness, and then died, in a cadence, that seemed to bear away the listening soul to heaven. (81)

This passage not only connects “actual” ghostly apparition to a dream-state, it also connects the ghostly to the musical. Frequently within the novel, ambient music is said to ascend to heaven, and the sound of music drifting on the air often coincides with or presages a moment of superstitious reasoning on Emily’s part.

It is extremely likely that Emily’s loss, in the form of her father’s death, contributed to her tendency to be swept up in superstitious fancies based in her own mind more than reality. This tendency is foreshadowed by St Aubert himself, before his passing. Upon stopping in Languedoc and hearing the tale of haunting – there is a superstition in the area that the woods are haunted, a haunting evidenced supposedly by the drifting music heard

around midnight, whose source has been deemed impossible to locate – Monsieur St Aubert, soon to be absent, dismisses the haunting as mere superstition overwriting human deeds:

“It is an echo, monsieur, I fancy. That guitar is often heard at night, when all is still, but nobody knows who touches it, and it is sometimes accompanied by a voice so sweet, and so sad, one would almost think the woods were haunted.’ ‘They certainly are haunted,’ said St Aubert with a smile, ‘but I believe it is by mortals.’ ‘I have sometimes heard it at midnight, *which* I could not sleep,’ rejoined La Voisin, not seeming to notice this remark, ‘almost under my window, and I never heard any music like it. It has often made me think of my poor wife till I cried. I have sometimes got up to the window to look if I could see any body, but as soon as I opened the casement all was hushed, and nobody to be seen; and I have listened, and listened till I have been so timorous, that even the trembling of leaves in the breeze has made me start. They say it often comes to warn people of their death, but I have heard it these many years, and out-lived the warning.’

Emily, though she smiled at the mention of this ridiculous superstition, could not, in the present tone of her spirits, wholly resist its contagion.” (67)

Emily’s father passes shortly thereafter, leaving her with, if anything, an even stronger tendency towards superstition. Her father’s cynicism has evidently not had time enough to rub off on her, and the location of his death only enhances her tendency toward emotional embellishment. She is also left without a reliable guardian, and in many matters must fend for herself.

Emily is, for a considerable period of time, a prisoner of her uncle’s within the Castle of Udolpho. Here, and elsewhere, the remnants of her superstitious tendencies are shown:

While she raised her streaming eyes to heaven, she observed the same planet, which she had seen in Languedoc, on the night, preceding her father’s death, rise

above the eastern towers of the castle, while she remembered the conversation, which had passed, concerning the probable state of departed souls; remembered, also, the solemn music she had heard, and to which the tenderness of her spirits had, in spite of her reason, given a superstitious meaning. At these recollections she wept again, and continued musing, when suddenly the notes of sweet music passed on the air. A superstitious dread stole over her; she stood listening, for some moments, in trembling expectation, and then endeavored to recollect her thoughts, and to reason herself into composure; but human reason cannot establish her laws on subjects, lost in the obscurity of imagination, any more than the eye can ascertain the form of objects, that only glimmer through the dimness of night." (310)

This music seems supernatural, is interpreted as supernatural by Emily, but also by Montoni's guards, surveying the boundaries of Udolpho and keeping watch beneath Emily's window. Therein it becomes clear that the sound of drifting music, though evocative of higher states of mind, introspection, emotion and mental activity, can also, in floating adrift on the winds bring with it a species of uncanny terror. The question is posed to the mind: "Who is playing?" and a repressed childhood belief in spirits of nature, or ghosts, is the uncanny answer received.

Emily correctly attributes this music to a person whom she can barely see, neither guard nor known inhabitant of the castle. She learns from this incident, several nights in a row, that the guards too are fearful of the music, as of the mysterious figure who plays it. They call this figure "the devil." While Emily's skepticism remains slightly stronger than theirs, her relative dismissal of supernatural explanation, however, comes with an eventual, unlikely hope that the figure might be her lost love, Valancourt. This belief proves as

false as the others, and when Emily finally manages to escape Udolpho, she does so disappointed, albeit liberated, by a weight of hard truth. The drifting fantasy of her time at Udolpho is gone.

Returning to Languedoc, where her father died, a coincidentally similar tale greets her. Again, there is the drifting sound of music played at night, removed from visibility even more now, as it emanates from the woods. It is, of course, thought to be supernatural. It is the same music her father was skeptical of years before.

A servant, Dorothee, relates her personal experience of the music, explaining why she believes it heralds the ghost of her former employer:

“I was saying, ma’amselle, that I well remember when first I heard that music. It was one night, soon after my lady’s death, that I had sat up later than usual, and I don’t know how it was, but I had been thinking a great deal about my poor mistress, and of the sad scene I had lately witnessed. The chateau was quite still, and I was in a chamber at a good distance from the rest of the servants, and this, with the mournful things I had been thinking of, I suppose, made me low spirited, for I felt very lonely and forlorn, as it were, and listened often, wishing to hear a sound in the chateau, for you know, ma’amselle, when one can hear people moving, one does not so much mind, about one’s fears. But all the servants were gone to bed, and I sat, thinking and thinking, till I was almost afraid to look round the room, and my poor lady’s countenance often came to my mind, such as I had seen her when she was dying, and, once or twice, I almost thought I saw her before me, —when suddenly I heard such sweet music! It seemed just at my window, and I shall never forget what I felt. I had not power to move from my chair, but then, when I thought it was my dear lady’s voice, the tears came to my eyes. I had often heard her sing, in her life-time, and to be sure she had a very fine voice; it had made me cry to hear her, many a time, when she has sat in her oriel, of an evening, playing upon her lute such sad songs, and singing so. O! it went to one’s heart! I have listened in the anti-chambers, for the hour together, and she would

sometimes sit playing, with the window open, when it was summer time, till it was quite dark, and when I have gone in, to shut it, she has hardly seemed to know what hour it was. But, as I said, madam," continued Dorothee, "when first I heard the music, that came just now, I thought it was my late lady's, and I have often thought so again, when I have heard it, as I have done at intervals, ever since. Sometimes, many months have gone by, but still it has returned."

"It is extraordinary," observed Emily, "that no person has yet discovered the musician."

"Aye, ma'amselle, if it had been anything earthly it would have been discovered long ago, but who, could have courage to follow a spirit, and if they had, what good could it do? – for spirits, you know, ma'am, can take any shape, or no shape, and they will be here, one minute, and, the next perhaps, in a quite different place!" (495-6)

This fallacious bit of reasoning lends insight into the psychological inner-workings of a musical haunting. That which cannot be traced to an author (and everyone is too frightened to seek the author) appears somehow to contain its own life, producing an uncanny effect, filling the environs of Languedoc with the sensation of haunting, despite a complete lack of hard evidence. This, after all, is how hauntings work in real life.

Piling on top of this, the precision by which the music is played seems to increase the uncanny effect, to contain or communicate, via the effects of art, some aspect of the supernatural:

"'What a swell was that!' exclaimed the Count, as he still listened, 'And now, what a dying cadence! This is surely something more than mortal!'

'That is what they say, my Lord,' said the valet; 'they say it is nothing mortal, that utters it;[']" (519).

This effect of music, music which is connected with the supernatural, evokes a sense that art itself is in some way insidious in the manner of a haunting. Throughout, music

evokes emotion in Emily, as do lighting effects and the sublime beauties of nature. This effect on the psychology of the listener also seems to come without permission or explanation. It's placeless in the same way a ghost is placeless; its drifting formlessness, of uncertain author, and what it evokes in the heroine— are shrouded in mystery. Though Emily fancies at various times that she understands the source — she has a romantic notion that the music emanates from something ghostly or else something specific — an absent loved one usually, in the end, these fancies of Emily's prove largely to be misapprehensions, though not for that reason as less effective in “haunting” her on a psychological level.

In this manner, music is to Emily as the gothic novel is to Catherine Morland, the heroine of Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. It has the ambient, mystifying effect of art. The ideas contained in the gothic, for Catherine, genuinely alter the way she perceives the world, what she expects to see and what she fears to encounter. It is nearly an hallucinatory effect.

Shadow and light take on a similar role in the novel, again playing to the coincidence of imperfect knowledge. Without knowing the source of music, or without being able to find it, a ghostly agency is placed on the emotional influence of melody. This same logic works to great effect with darkness, when the reader and protagonist alike are displaced from knowledge, it hits something primordial. That fear of the unknown, fear disallowed from cresting into explanation, creates an atmosphere of near-perpetual haunting. A light appears in the distance, the surrounding area is shrouded in darkness, and we're disconnected from certainty of any kind. Freud, it should be mentioned, connects fear of the dark with the womb fantasy, or the repressed experience of the womb, felt as uncanny when remembered. If this is to be accepted, it is certainly a state in which the individual is at the mercy of others; entirely dependent and without knowledge.

Of course, attached indelibly to this sense of lostness, for Emily, is a sense of persecution. She is almost always being pursued by someone. The darkness, therefore, always holds for her a semi-specific threat of real danger.

This reverberates with Austen's Catherine Morland, disturbed by a similar fear of eerie lighting effects, albeit one far less founded in reality, and ultimately satirical. Before getting into Emily's predicaments with lighting, I'll explain the satire. For context: Catherine has just come to stay with her friends the Tilneys, who live in a somewhat gothic estate, called Northanger Abbey:

The night was stormy; the wind had been rising at intervals the whole afternoon; and by the time the party broke up, it blew and rained violently. Catherine, as she crossed the hall, listened to the tempest with sensations of awe [. . .] "How much better is this," she said, as she walked to the fender—"how much better to find a fire ready lit, than to have to wait shivering in the cold till all the family are in bed, as so many poor girls have been obliged to do, and then to have a faithful old servant frightening one by coming in with a faggot![" . . .] (158-9)

"She should take her time; she should not hurry herself; she did not care if she were the last person up in the house. But she would not make up her fire; that would seem cowardly, as if she wished for the protection of light after she were in bed." The fire therefore died away. (159)

The dimness of the light her candle emitted made her turn to it with alarm; but there was no danger of its sudden extinction, it had yet some hours to burn; and that she might not have any greater difficulty in distinguishing the writing than what its ancient date might occasion, she hastily snuffed it. Alas! It was snuffed and extinguished in one! A lamp could not have expired with more awful effect. Catherine, for a few moments, was motionless with horror. It was done completely; not a remnant of light in the wick could give hope to the rekindling breath. Darkness impenetrable and immoveable filled the room. (161)

Clearly, and for comedic effect, Catherine has inflicted this darkness on herself. She has also entirely imagined the importance of those papers she so desperately perused (they turn out to be a list concerning the linen count).

What's being specifically satirized is the seemingly endless stream of incidences in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, wherein Emily St Aubert finds herself sneaking across darkened grounds, through darkened woods, through darkened chambers and corridors. While staying with her aunt, Madame Montoni, and also at her parental home, La Vallee, she sneaks repeatedly to secluded spots, at which she conveniently or accidentally meets her love Valancourt. The darkness is both a veil for the clandestine meetings, and also the lurking threat of those who might be hidden, those who might discover the lovers in seeming iniquity.

Not dissimilarly, and to particularly traumatic effect during Emily's imprisonment at the castle of Udolpho, Emily perpetually suffers from fear that she might be raped, and it is not an unreasonable fear in the least. She is removed from reliable parental protection, her "guardian" becomes host to a rowdy gang of criminals, and she forced to stay in a very precarious room, which locks only from one door, the second leading to a long dark hallway and only locking from the outside. The darkness, for Emily, is quite reasonably terrifying.

At a point of piqued intensity, light-play is a major feature in her harassment:

the moment she heard the bound of their steps, [. . . she] ran along the gallery, dark as it was with the fleetness of a fawn. But, long before she reached its extremity, the light, which Verezzi carried, flashed upon the walls; both appeared, and, instantly perceiving Emily, pursued her. At this moment, Bertolini, whose steps, though swift, were not steady, and whose impatience overcame what little caution he had hitherto used, stumbled, and fell at his length. The lamp fell with him, and was presently expiring on the floor; but Verezzi, regardless of

saving it, seized the advantage this accident gave him over his rival, and followed Emily, to whom, however, the light had shown one of the passages that branched from the gallery, and she instantly turned into it. Verrezzi could just discern the way she had taken, and this he pursued; but the sound of her steps soon sunk in distance, while he, less acquainted with the passage, was obliged to proceed through the dark, with caution, lest he should fall down a flight of steps. (406)

Light, within the darkness, also seems to hold a special significance. This has already been seen to an extent in Emily's star-gazing and her attachment of a particularly bright planet's ascendance to the circumstances of her father's death. But it's not this star alone that holds meaning for her; she falls into melancholy and rapture over the stars themselves and the sublime light effects cast by them.

Light, to an extent, is also mingled with the superstition of fairy-lights, a similar fantastical element, but one less specifically harrowing than that of a ghostly apparition. Emily, for one, in her musing on fairies, appears optimistic in her reveries rather than afraid:

a chorus of voices and instruments now swelled on the air – so sweet, so solemn! it seemed like the hymn of angels descending through the silence of night! Now it died away, and fancy almost beheld the whole choir reascending towards heaven; then again it swelled with the breeze, trembled awhile, and again died into silence. It brought to Emily's recollection some lines of her late father[. . .] The rising moon, which threw a shadowy light upon the terraces, and illuminated the porticoes and magnificent arcades that crowned them, discovered the various company, whose light steps, soft guitars, and softer voices, echoed through the colonnades. [. . .] Emily gazed, and listened, and thought herself in a fairy scene[.] (168)

The topic comes up again, this time in reference to the atmosphere of Udolpho. "Fairies" are considered whimsically by Emily, in jest rather than fear, in a discussion with her servant, Annette, whom she considers far below her intellectually:

“This way, ma’amselle, down this turning. I can almost believe in giants again, and such like, for this is just like one of their castles; and, some night or other, I suppose I shall see fairies too, hopping about in that great old hall, that looks more like a church, with its huge pillars, than any thing else.”

“Yes,” said Emily, smiling, and glad to escape from more serious thought, “if we come to the corridor, about midnight, and look down into the hall, we shall certainly see it illuminated with a thousand lamps, and the fairies tripping in gay circles to the sound of delicious music; for it is in such places as this, you know, that they come to hold their revels. But I am afraid, Annette, you will not be able to pay the necessary penance for such a sight: and, if once they hear your voice, the whole scene will vanish in an instant.”

[. . .]

“Well, ma’amselle, that is saying more than I expected of you: but I am not so much afraid of fairies, as of ghosts, and they say there are plentiful many of them about the castle: now I should be frightened to death, if I should chance to see any of them.” (220)

In contrast to the “fairy” connection, which is obviously taken by Emily as an imaginary concern, within the confines of Udolpho, a wholly different (or at least differently-perceived) light effect captures the imagination of those inside. It is interpreted by Emily and many others as an “omen.” Its effects, far from being whimsical or easy to dismiss, rather contribute to the superstitious lore and fearful atmosphere run rampant in Udolpho. It is a scientific lighting effect, albeit one not harnessed by intention. Electricity in the air is seen, before a lighting storm, clinging to the metal implements of a guard. It is exactly the sort of thing a phantasmagorist might use to their advantage, to incite awe. And indeed, the superstition surround it is harnessed by one seeking to cover his tracks as he moves within the castle grounds (a prisoner, seeking to draw Emily’s attention).

Emily, hearing the mysterious music beneath her window once again, looks down to see a scene playing out with the guards. When the scene (of which she actually witnesses little) is over, she's able to shout down to the guards for explanation.

"It was no man, lady," said Launcelot, who stood by, "but the devil himself, as my comrade says. What man, who does not live in the castle, could get within the walls at midnight? Why, I might just as well pretend to march to Venice, and get among all the Senators, when they are counseling; and I warrant I should have more chance of getting out again alive, than any fellow, that we should catch within the gates after dark. So I think I have proved plainly enough, that this can be nobody that lives out of the castle; and now I will prove, that it can be no nobody that lives in the castle – for, if he did – why should he be afraid to be seen? So after this, I hope nobody will pretend to tell me it was anybody. No, I say again, by holy Pope! it was the devil, and Sebastian, there, knows this is not the first time we have seen him." (349)

The humorous incompleteness of this logic aside, Emily takes the story to heart and awaits the return of this strange visitation. At this point, the light effect appears:

she took her station at the casement, leaving her lamp in a remote part of the chamber, that she might escape notice from without. The moon gave a faint and uncertain light, for heavy vapours surrounded it, and, often rolling over the disk, left the scene below in total darkness. It was in one of these moments of obscurity, that she observed a small and lambent flame, moving at some distance on the terrace. While she gazed, it disappeared, and, the moon again emerging from the lurid and heavy thunder clouds, she turned her attention to the heavens, where the vivid lightnings darted from cloud to cloud, and flashed silently on the woods below. [. . .] The light appeared and disappeared frequently, while, as she watched, it glided under her casements, and, at the same instant, she was certain, that a footstep passed, but the darkness did not permit her to distinguish any object except the flame. It moved, and then, by a gleam of lightning, she perceived some person on her

terrace. All the anxieties of the preceding night returned. This person advanced, and the playing flame alternately appeared and vanished. (352)

Emily is uncertain whether the figure is human or supernatural, and is for some moments incapable of speech. Finally she solves the mystery, ascertaining that the figure bearing the light is just one of the guards, carrying a lance, and she is able to converse with him from her casement.

“This light, lady,” said the soldier, “has appeared to-night as you see it, on the point of my lance, ever since I have been on watch; but what it means I cannot tell.”

“This is very strange!” said Emily.

“My fellow-guard,” continued the man, “has the same flame on his arms; he says he has sometimes seen it before. I never did; I am but lately come to the castle, for I have not been long a soldier.”

“How does your comrade account for it?” said Emily.

“He says it is an omen, lady, and bodes no good.” (353)

That the light effect can be attributed to the effects of electricity in the air is not revealed to or by the characters until the close of the novel. Until then, and appropriate to the overarching theme, we are left in darkness.

The “omen” appears again, when Emily is in the paroxysms of fears. Montoni has become a criminal, the castle his stronghold, and it is under siege. Emily is being taken by a few guards from the castle, to be kept “safe.” The reason for Emily’s transport, however, is not known to her, and she fears for her physical safety:

As they moved slowly along, her attention was surprised by a thin tapering flame, that appeared, by fits, at the point of the pike, which Bertrand carried, resembling what she had observed on the lance of the sentinel the night Madame Montoni died, and which he had said was an omen. The event immediately following it appeared to justify the assertion, and a superstitious impression had remained on Emily’s mind, which the present appearance confirmed. She thought it was an omen

of her own fate, and watched it successively vanish, and return, in gloomy silence, which was at length interrupted by Bertrand.

“Let us light the torch,” said he, “and get under shelter of the wood;— a storm is coming on—look at my lance.”
(385)

To these men, the light is an “omen” of a thunderstorm. While this is a closer guess than the previous, they have yet to disconnect the phenomenon from the supernatural. Indeed, they have yet to disconnect the phenomenon from an instinctive reaction towards fear, and the drifting menace, so frequently attached to instances of haunting: the rumor.

Rumors will be the next topic, and this topic holds a strong connection to the satiric events in *Northanger Abbey*. There is a species of the ridiculous present when misinformation leads to the belief or sense of a spiritual haunting, and yet it does. Rumors, once heard, have a way of sticking with one, like a melody stuck in one’s head.

The Mysteries of Udolpho shows painstakingly how hauntings are spread by rumor, and insomuch as the belief in ghosts ignites an emotional, fearful reaction, embodying spaces with an element of the uncanny, it can be said that ghosts, such as they exist at all, *are* rumors. There is more to a rumor than the extended, false message that appears on the surface: there is also the truth now occluded by the rumor and hidden away from the subject. In this way, the rumor strips one of awareness as surely as does an ambient melody and a chamber cast in darkness.

A line in the novel sums up this feeling of metaphysical lostness, as it affects Emily when she can’t help but listen to her aunt’s destabilizing chatter: “she found, that few conditions are more painful than that of uncertainty, which she would not have suffered, had her confidence in her own opinions been greater.” (118)

Rumor harasses Emily throughout the novel in various forms. There are the rumors which literally spread speculations of a haunting: concerning the lands of Languedoc, that they are haunted; and concerning Udolpho, that Montoni murdered the mistress of Udolpho.

False and harmful stories are spread about Emily as well. Montoni promises Emily's hand in marriage to a rich man, while himself continuing to lie about his own fortunes. He incorrectly tells the man, Count Morano, that Emily will have him, and he arranges to blackmail her into obeying his orders. There are also the rumors Emily is so shocked to hear about herself from Annette; her aunt, Madame Montoni, spread gossip about Emily's supposedly inappropriate and lewd interactions with Valancourt. Also, near the end of the novel, a lascivious rumor is spread maligning her love's good name and fidelity. As Emily believes this rumor temporarily, and as she rejects Valancourt's courtship on the basis of it, it can be concluded that false perceptions created by rumor, are, at least towards the end of the novel, the greatest impediment to Emily's desired aims.

The loss of her parents is an inescapable element here, since her position without either a trusted advisor or protector is extremely precarious. Emily's knowledge is so imperfect, and at times the world's knowledge of her so imperfect, that moving forward in a rational manner becomes, for her, like stalking through a darkened, unfamiliar castle. Things lurk in the dark about which she is not aware, and the fear comes from an awareness of this uncertainty.

Still, as the story goes forward, she comes more and more to dismiss supernatural explanations for shadows on the wall. Some of this is due to the influence of another father/daughter duo which appears following the escape from Udolpho: Blanche and Count

de Villefort. The Count begins to serve as Emily's surrogate father, and his opinion of superstition mirrors the skepticism of the late St Aubert:

The Count rallied his guests on their precipitate retreat, and on the superstitious inclination which had occasioned it, and this led to the question, Whether the spirit, after it has quitted the body, is ever permitted to revisit the earth; and if it is, whether it was possible for spirits to become visible in the sense. The Baron was of opinion, that the first was probable, and the last was possible, and he endeavoured to justify this opinion by respectable authorities, both ancient and modern, which he quoted. The Count, however, was decidedly against him, and a long conversation ensued, in which the usual arguments on these subjects were on both sides brought forward with skill, and discussed with candour, but without converting either party to the opinion of his opponent. The effect of their conversation on their auditors was various. Though the Count had much the superiority of the Baron in point of argument, he had considerably fewer adherents; for that love, so natural to the human mind, of whatever is able to distend its faculties with wonder and astonishment, attached the majority of the company to the side of the Baron; and though many of the Count's propositions were unanswerable, his opponents were inclined to believe this the consequence of their own want of knowledge, on so abstracted a subject, rather than that arguments did not exist, which were forcible enough to conquer his.

Blanche was pale with attention, till the ridicule in her father's glance called a blush upon her countenance, and she then endeavored to forget the superstitious tales she had been told in her convent. (518)

Emily tries to greet the rumors which surround the "haunting" at Chateau-le-Blanc as well as an "apparition" which appears to her personally, with the stoicism of her father:

Emily was very solemnly affected. Of whatever nature might be the appearance she had witnessed, whether human or supernatural, the fate of the deceased Marchioness was a truth not to be doubted; and this unaccountable circumstance, occurring in the very scene of

her sufferings, affected Emily's imagination with a superstitious awe, to which, after having detected the fallacies at Udolpho, she might not have yielded, had she been ignorant of the unhappy story, related by the housekeeper. Her she now solemnly conjured to conceal the occurrence of this night, and to make light of the terror she had already betrayed, that the Count might not be distressed by reports, which would certainly spread alarm and confusion among his family. "Time," she added, "may explain this mysterious affair; meanwhile let us watch the event in silence." (505-6)

This stoic determination comes even after Emily herself sees a figure appear in a seemingly closed-off compartment. As the passage indicates, she is frightened and uncertain, but also keenly aware, from her many misadventures, that spreading the story will only cause more terror, and yield less truth.

At this point, in the back of Emily's head, she's aware her nightly "ghost," or "devil," the man who played music beneath her window at Udolpho, turned out to be a human being, who had merely capitalized on the superstitions of others. Du Pont, the man behind these nighttime disturbances at Udolpho, was actually a secretly-held prisoner there, whose nightly release from bondage was made possible through the bribery of a guard. By this same avenue, he was able to help engineer their escape from the castle. Crucially, it was only in realizing the truth of this "ghost story" that Emily was able to escape.

Also crucially, Du Pont utilized the superstition of others to hide from the guards, within the shade of rumor.

Du Pont explains his ability to repeatedly escape the guards: "I had heard of the superstition of many of these men, and I uttered a strange noise, with a hope, that my pursuer would mistake it for something supernatural, and desist from pursuit," (431). And the terror of this act, in fact, induces a fit in his pursuer.

What we as an audience can draw from this is, simply: fear cast by false information creates an area in which truth can be hidden. To this extent, there is a strong link to the uncanny, at least the sort of uncanny which dredges up falsehoods and belief in supernatural powers. The sense of uncanniness can be induced merely by confusion, the uncertainty brought on by rumor, or any sequence of events capable of throwing one out of balance with what's real.

The incident with the closed compartment eventually bears out Emily's skepticism. One of the side protagonists, Ludovico, disappears while spending the night locked in a supposedly "haunted" chamber. He is thought dead, and for an interval, his unexplained disappearance is considered yet another "proof" of the haunting. This is the standing rumor until his miraculous discovery with a band of banditti. His return is to an extent the return of truth. He brings with him an explanation for the mysterious music in the woods surrounding Chateau-le-Blanc: a group of banditti were capitalizing on the tale of the Marchioness de Villeroi's death, and using secret passages to her "haunted" chamber, as a means to facilitate their large-scale robberies. Ludovico, at the point of his return, is also able to rescue Blanche and her father from these banditti.

He recounts his experience, in the "haunted" chamber:

I began to read again, and, when I had finished the story I was upon, I felt drowsy, and dropped asleep. But presently I was awakened by the noise I had heard before, and it seemed to come from that part of the chamber, where the bed stood; and then, whether it was the story I had been reading that affected my spirits, or the strange reports, that had been spread of these apartments, I don't know, but, when I looked towards the bed again, I fancied I saw a man's face within the dusky curtains. (593)

Ludovico here makes explicit mention of the destructive effect of rumor (in the form of ghost stories), even corrupting his own retrospective perception of events. Though the man who appeared to him, and indeed appeared to Emily in the same spot, was flesh and bone, still both characters come away from the incident with an uncanny sense that their vision does not quite match up with reality, and this disconnect between perception and reality is heavily connected to the stories they've heard.

At times, this is taken to an extreme of which perhaps Freud would approve, and misperception, taken as ghostly and thereby causing an uncanny sensation becomes actual hallucinatory misperception of reality. A dying nun, Sister Agnes, discovered to be the missing Signora Laurentini di Udolpho, has her guilt and fraught mental state exteriorized in ghostly apparitions dancing along the walls of her room. She sees the spirits surrounding her and behaves accordingly. She even calls out to them, yet Emily, also present, sees nothing. Again, the spirits and ghosts are internal, only perceived due to the seer's state of mind. This scene, more than any other in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, suggests the possibility that ghosts are hallucinations, in this case the hallucinations of a guilt-ridden mind. The theme of hallucinations and imbalanced mental states, however, becomes a heavier theme in later novels.

The fear of rumors, the fear of personal letters and novels, which come to signify these rumors, is also key to an understanding of *Northanger Abbey*. The protagonist, Catherine Morland, becomes obsessed with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* when she goes to Bath with her neighbors the Allens. The precise contact point with this gothic novel comes by way of a very fickle, dubiously reliable companion to Catherine: Miss Isabella Thorpe. Isabella,

though she can't be counted on for much in the way of Catherine's interest, is rather expert on recommending gothic novels.

Catherine's happy conclusion is only met after a series of harrowing encounters, nearly all of which are harrowing due to the very real, threatening power of rumor. Rumors, or even out-and-out lies, are pervasive in the novel, and together they create an atmosphere of deep uncertainty, underlined by the heroine's already-simple, honest, and somewhat gullible disposition.

In Bath, John Thorpe, Isabella's brother, lies multiple times to secure Catherine's company. When Mr. Thorpe doesn't show at a dance, Catherine's lonely situation, to her mind, is both fodder for gossip and (because of the imperfect information others have) almost a mark of indignity:

she not only longed to be dancing, but was likewise aware that, as the real dignity of her situation could not be known, she was sharing with the scores of other young ladies still sitting down all the discredit of wanting a partner. To be disgraced in the eye of the world, to wear the appearance of infamy while her heart is all purity, her actions all innocence, and the misconduct of another the true source of her debasement, is one of those circumstances which peculiarly belong to the heroine's life, and her fortitude under it what particularly dignifies her character. Catherine had fortitude too; she suffered, but no murmur passed her lips. (52)

Further along in this scene, a previous acquaintance, Mr. Tilney, reappears, and Catherine expresses similar distress at not knowing his marital status. Really, the crux of her difficulties in Bath can be summed up as utter lack of helpful acquaintance. The Allens, it seems, know next to no one, and are reserved in giving Catherine advice.

One of the more harrowing incidents which transpires due to subterfuge and lack of knowledge pertains to an intended outing with the siblings Henry and Eleanor Tilney. Catherine has agreed to go into the country with them at a marked time, provided the roads are not impassable due to rain. In fact it does rain that day, but it's stopped raining somewhere around the time they've agreed to drive off. Catherine is ready to wait and see whether the two come for her anyway, when John and Isabella Thorpe convince her that this waiting is fruitless. They tell her they saw the duo leave town without her, and through this lie they are able to secure her company for the day. When Catherine discovers the lie, they nonetheless continue the carriage ride against her will:

Catherine looked round and saw Miss Tilney leaning on her brother's arm, walking slowly down the street. She saw them both looking back at her. "Stop, stop, Mr. Thorpe," she impatiently cried, "it is Miss Tilney; it is indeed. – How could you tell me they were gone? – Stop, stop, I will get out this moment and go to them." But to what purpose did she speak?—Thorpe only lashed his horse into a brisker trot; the Tilneys, who had soon ceased to look after her, were in a moment out of sight round the corner of Laura-place, and in another moment she was herself whisked into the Market-place. Still, however, and during the length of another street, she intreated him to stop. (83-4)

John Thorpe's lies, at frequent points throughout the novel, are the direct cause of Catherine's distress, and in this case in particular, Catherine is arguably physically violated by the lie told to her. Her words are ignored and she's moved specifically against her wishes in the continuation of an already-somewhat-improper errand, (though she is ignorant of this impropriety at the time).

It soon comes out (to the reader sooner than to Catherine) that Isabella's manipulations of her are largely focused on securing her brother James as a marriage prospect. After

she realizes her monetary increase in this alliance would be less than she's hoped for, she becomes far less committed to the engagement. Indeed, she begins flirting scandalously with a wealthier man, Henry and Eleanor's older brother, Frederick. This results in the broken engagement and broken heart of Catherine's brother.

Her shifting desires are described as both sexually flirtatious and gold-digging. The aspect of this which becomes most damaging to Catherine and her family is the disingenuous nature by which she conducts herself. Catherine as a heroine is set up perfectly to be damaged by this sort of behavior – she is gullible, and takes things at face value. She is also increasingly disconnected from her family, whose judgment of the situation would likely have been sounder than the Allens'.

In another respect, and perhaps this respect exists purely for purposes of satire, Catherine's aggressive naivete actually insulates her from understanding some of Isabella's worst manipulations.

Regardless of satire, Catherine's obliviousness puts her in the realm of gothic heroine. Merely by virtue of knowing nothing, she's always as if wandering through darkened corridors, and when the corridors *are literally* darkened, it's by her own action.

Of Captain Tilney: "why he should say one thing so positively, and mean another all the while, was most unaccountable! How were people, at that rate, to be understood? Who but Henry could have been aware of what his father was at?" (198) She frequently expresses total confusion when it comes to interpreting behavior the readers are assumed to have little trouble with, which consequently rises (or perhaps sinks) at times to the point of dramatic irony. The reader is certainly aware of one or two pitfalls before they happen. It is

clear enough, for instance, that Catherine has entirely missed John Thorpe's extremely obvious interest in her. The audience, therefore, is on occasion put in the position of Isabella, who is incredulously perplexed by Catherine's lack of appreciation for subtlety.

"My sweet love, do not be so abominably affected. What can he write about, but yourself? You know he is over head and ears in love with you."

"With me, dear Isabella!"

"Nay, my sweetest Catherine, this is being quite absurd! Modesty, and all that, is very well in its way, but really a little common honesty is sometimes quite as becoming. I have no idea of being so overstrained! It is fishing for compliments. His attentions were such as a child must have noticed. And it was but half an hour before he left Bath, that you gave him the most positive encouragement. He says so in this letter, says that he as good as made you an offer, and that you received his advances in the kindest way; and now he wants me to urge his suit, and say all manner of pretty things to you. So it is in vain to affect ignorance." (136)

Another component of the intrigues at Bath pertains to Catherine's connection to General Tilney, father of the subject of her affections, Henry. At this point in the novel, near the end, Catherine has been staying with the Tilneys in their estate named Northanger Abbey. In the early stages of their acquaintance, General Tilney, a sometimes charming, deceitful and overall selfish man, was misinformed by John Thorpe that Catherine is extremely wealthy and the only heir to her fortune. The General's resultant treatment of her, a kindness shown with the intention of securing her wealth through a match with his son, was therefore extremely fickle. Based on a falsehood, the General's obsequious attitude eventually gives way to tyrannical abuse the moment that falsehood is stripped away. John Thorpe, having been discouraged in his courtship of Catherine, when he meets General Tilney again, replaces his former lie with a new one, this time exaggerating Catherine's lack of funds to make her appear impoverished.

When the General “learns” of this caprice, he orders his daughter Eleanor to send Catherine away as cheaply as possible, with shocking lack of concern for Eleanor’s comfort and safety. This sharp shift from friendly to cruel treatment comes as a shock, as does Eleanor’s consequent breakdown and suddenly-evident, total lack of power in her household.

Catherine sat down, breathless and speechless. [Eleanor said,] “I could hardly believe my sense, when I heard it; - and no displeasure, no resentment that you can feel at this moment, however justly great, can be more than I myself—but I must not talk of what I felt. Oh! that I could suggest anything in extenuation! Good God! What will your father and mother say! After courting you from the protection of real friends to this—almost double distance from your home, to have you driven out of the house, without the considerations even of decent civility! Dear, dear Catherine, in being the bearer of such a message, I seem guilty myself of all its insult; yet, I trust you will acquit me, for you must have been long enough in this house to see that I am but a nominal mistress of it, that my real power is nothing.” (210)

This is a revelatory moment, and as such, serves as the unearthing of a true “ghost” (i.e. secret) in *Northanger Abbey*. Indeed, *Northanger Abbey* is not alone in locating some “ghosts” in the person of secretly villainous men, or relating the ghostly to the undisclosed and malicious intentions of men. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Emily is placed at the mercy of a self-interested uncle, who comes to hold his position over Madame Montoni as well as Emily via lies and pretenses; utilizing the gothic castle to house his criminal hordes primarily due to the setting’s air of the hidden and the old, and the difficulty to be found in approaching it. Likewise the ghosts of Languedoc are entirely a cover story to hide the criminal acts of the banditti.

What it comes down to, this “ghost” as a hidden entity, symbolized and explored variously through different metaphors for the same essential thing, is a power tied up with the hidden and the mechanisms exercised through hiding and deceit. Yet it is not enough to summarize the ghosts of imperfect knowledge with the phrase “knowledge is power,” because it’s far more than knowing or seeing that grants power to the characters (both villainous and heroic). It’s the interplay of disproportionate knowledge, the keeping others in the dark (sometimes literally) and utilizing that imbalance for personal gain. It’s also the specific locations of knowledge or lack thereof, since all knowledge is not equal, and indeed all knowers do not behave the same. The heroines of both *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Northanger Abbey* are in an already-precarious position as pursued, unmarried young women. Their reputations, being so crucial to perceptions of their worth, are particularly threatened by their imperfect information, lack of guidance and lack of protection, and indeed, the imperfect information of others. Perhaps despite appearances, the threat of rumor to the reputation of a young woman in this position is no small thing. Therefore it can be said that the ghost in the gothic is, among other things, revelatory of hidden societal powers and very real and virulent power structures.

In the next section, we will focus on two gothic novels written a bit later, *The Monk*, written by Matthew Lewis and published in 1796, and *Melmoth the Wanderer*, written by Charles Maturin and published in 1820, contemporaneous by two years with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. (*Northanger Abbey*, it should be noted, was published in 1817, but was directly referential of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and its thematic elements.)

These books are still heavily steeped in the same ghostly elements seen before, but they interact with the ghostly in a different way, and contain elements totally absent from *Udolpho*.

As the monster comes into being, with ghostly elements still surrounding it, the question of reality is thrown into harsh relief. What is real? To a degree, reality must be defined when crafting a monster, because it must be more than a hallucination and more than an incorporeal fatalistic threat, but at the same time it must be frightening, perhaps uncanny, and reminiscent of the gothic traits that birthed it. Largely, the discussion in the next part will focus on what is required to make a monster.

The Monk, written by Matthew Gregory Lewis and published in 1796, explores many of the same themes as the Faust legend, though Goethe's version of this myth was not published until 1808. Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, published in 1820, expands the conversation about the character Mephistopheles through its antagonist/protagonist Melmoth, who, simultaneously Mephistopheles and Faust, having made an unearthly bargain and cursed to offer it, must wander the earth until the end of his extended time, trying to convince the most wretched and destitute to make the same bargain and take his place. He is both seducer and seduced, but his heart, when it comes to Isidora, is most exposed, and his pity for those he tries to convert might well be the reason he is never successful.

By contrast, the titular character in *The Monk*, the monk Ambrosio, is far from sympathetic, and far from driven by what one might call real necessities (as we can infer Melmoth was) or impaired by his mercy. He is also not quite in the same position as Melmoth, since he himself doesn't propose an unearthly bargain within the story (he commits rape against Antonia, but as she is first removed from the possibility of consent and then says no to his 'corruption', this clearly doesn't count); instead, he accepts the unearthly bargain of his ex-lover (seducer, in his

estimation) Matilda. It is she who possesses supernatural knowledge and power (the Mephistoph-
eles to Ambrosio's Faust) and she who summons the forces which allow Ambrosio to place his
victim in a supernaturally unconscious state (the supernatural version of a date rape drug, it
would seem) and predict circumstances to his advantage.

To deconstruct the gothic tales *The Monk* and *Melmoth the Wanderer* is to deconstruct a
slightly different elemental theme than that which featured in those before. Dealing with the
ghost is to deal with something indefinite and nebulous, and while many of these themes remain
when moving forward, a new element enters the gothic when Faustian characters begin to steer
the plot. It is revelatory to deconstruct the telling of this myth in the gothic, at a time and themat-
ically so closely tied-in with the ghostly gothic, to understand why recourse to this myth felt nec-
essary to bring the ghostly uncanny to "life", since it informs about precisely what is at stake in
the gothic; namely: meaning.

The Word is abject, Julia Kristeva tells us - because in its raw form it is the human voice,
the nakedness of language as it's used and as it aches beneath elimination - its flaws and wrin-
kles being the impossible truth. There is a horror to the inadequacy of language (Kristeva 59).

Similarly, the beginning is *not* the word, Faust tells us, rewriting the vicissitudes of trans-
lation which have rendered the Bible. Reading aloud to himself, he reads: "In the beginning was
the *Word*.' Already I am stopped. It seems absurd. The Word does not deserve the highest prize,
I must translate it otherwise. [. . .] The spirit helps me. Now it is exact. I write: In the beginning
was the *Act*." (Goethe 153)

Jacques Lacan recognizes the same holes in the Word (the signifier), as Kristeva and
Goethe via Faust. The complex and painful process of the definition of an intangible real, unat-
tached to helpful signifiers, or even attached to misleading signifiers, is very much at play when

dealing with ghostly phenomena, and so the processes at work therein come to be crucial as the ghostly appears to solidify into the monstrous, as the fearful in the gothic becomes increasingly an embodied thing.

The *object a*, one of Lacan's most famous philosophical terms, refers to that first, hazily-remembered thing/being/sensation from infancy, in relation to which the subject feels metaphysically *other*, giving it its meaning while also filling it with a sense of loss. Despite everything it comes to embody in hope and desire, it is always away and marked by its distance from the subject. It has its roots in the unquantifiable, its meaning unnamed, and it satisfies nothing directly though it sits at the endpoint of the subject's fantasy. The subject itself is made relative almost to itself, present within its own fantasy, while the *object a* takes the place of that which the subject is deprived of, in a symbolic sense: the phallus. (Lacan 15)

The experience of another's death, according to Lacan, is the one unbearable dimension of human experience. The loss is, as Lacan calls it, a hole in the real - a feeling of disturbing lack, but also an opportunity to reach the real meaning beneath all signifiers, what signifiers always attempt unsuccessfully to describe. What results from the hole - this unavoidable awareness that signification is insufficient - is a cacophony of signifiers battling to fill the hole, and what results from this, paradoxical though it may seem, is an opportunity to embrace the hole in the real which already exists: the previously-mentioned, lost *object a*, "the veiled phallus". (Lacan 37-38)

Mourning puts one into intimate connection with the lost Other, by raising the hole at the center of the subject to a level at which it can be accessed, by projecting an object into that place of lack. On the level of psychosis, mourning is capable of raising images as

phantasms, from this interior place of the inexplicable and (usually) ungraspable personal fantasy.

We reinterpret and find new names for the ghost. So the movement from ghost to monster marks at once a movement away from the real, further into concrete and false communication, but, as Jacques Lacan would perhaps interpret it, a movement towards greater potential for breakthroughs in understanding. He would describe it as one of the fundamentals of analysis, this naming of unnamable things, this tapping into *something* buried and therefore something given monstrous form to compensate for the lack.

The Monk is primarily two stories together, which only meaningfully intersect at the beginning and end. One is the tale of Ambrosio the monk, the chaste and pure, whose path from righteousness to degradation and corruption litters horrors in its wake, ultimately shaking the city of his convent with violence.

He is introduced to us as an almost ethereal being, preaching in Madrid, inspiring those in attendance with his eloquence on religious doctrine. He is also very severe in his adherence to religious rules; that is, *at first*, and only ever so far as they seem to benefit him.

The second story more or less follows the unsuccessful (yet required) courtship of Antonia by Lorenzo. His is an heroic journey, though ultimately tragic, and it is heavily populated by the heroic and tragic stories of others, whom he encounters along the way. This hero falls in love with the chaste and naive Antonia, on whom Ambrosio eventually sexually fixates. Their 'courtships' of her, however, could not be more different, and they form a stark contrast in the story. Lorenzo, if anything, pursues her too shyly, as, being extremely naive, she frequently misunderstands his romantic gestures and comes to despair that he does not love her. The true reason his courtship strikes a bit dull, however, is the uncertain position of inheritance of Antonia, as the

daughter of a poor union, potentially unrecognized. While this doesn't bother Lorenzo, Antonia's mother Elvira objects on the grounds that Lorenzo is too well-placed, as heir of the duke of Medini Celi, and predicts his uncle will object as well. At her wishes, he ceases making forays to a direct proposal, but only (so he thinks) temporarily. (191)

This is of course in contrast to Ambrosio, who makes a pact with the devil (via his ex-lover) to find a situation in which he can rape Antonia without discovery or consequence. He fails, however, killing Antonia's aunt in the process, and eventually kidnaps and rapes Antonia in the sepulcher beneath his convent.

The ghostly, within *The Monk*, has some very clear points of appearance, and more than in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, these points pertain to "actual" ghosts, and visions of ghostly apparition.

Antonio, one of a few gothic heroines in the novel, and not dissimilar from her precursors, is chaste, naive, and a fish out of water, transplanted in Madrid from Murcia, and cut off from the requisite knowledge which might serve to protect her from the malicious designs of those around her. In her aunt's estimation, she is "totally ignorant of the world. She has been brought up in an old castle in Murcia, with no other society than her mother's, who, God help her! has no more good sense, good soul, than is necessary to carry her soup to her mouth" (43).

She meets with Ambrosio and is fully taken in by his seeming righteousness. She trusts him as an advocate for her needs, even when he is in fact planning to rape her, and even when her mother Elvira suspects he is planning to rape her, even indeed, after Elvira catches Ambrosio in the act of trying to rape her. This last event does not have time to change Antonia's mind, since Ambrosio murders Elvira at the scene, effectively (more or less) silencing her. (Lewis 263)

A paradox is underlined in *The Monk*, which was no doubt extant but more understated in the previous works: that Antonia's chastity and "innocence," are perceived by those around her (in this case, her mother) to be at stake *even in the knowledge* she is allowed, even when that knowledge would protect her from enemies. Elvira consciously fails to forewarn her daughter of the treachery she suspects in the monk, citing worry that this knowledge would stain her "innocence", and thereby dooms her to fall prey to that treachery. "She now endeavoured to make her daughter aware of the risk which she had run: but she was obliged to treat the subject with caution, lest, in removing the bandage of ignorance, the veil of innocence should be rent away." (Lewis 234)

What follows Elvira's death is a period of supernatural belief surrounding her corpse and her presumed-to-be-immortal spirit. Specifically, Dame Jacintha, hers and her daughter's landlady for their time in Madrid, becomes extremely shaken at the thought of Elvira's ghost returning to the house to torment her: "She shuddered at the idea of passing the night in the same house with a dead body. She was persuaded that Elvira's ghost would appear to her, and no less certain that such a visit would kill her with fright." (267) This theme of death, or madness, at the point of seeing a ghost, is one which permeates the story, and one to which we will return. But for now, Jacintha's fear, and specifically its consequences for her, are interesting to note.

Antonia, following her mother's death, is even more isolated in Madrid, without any family to effectually protect her. She is anxiously awaiting the return of her aunt Leonella from Cordova, affected by a lack of musical serenade through her window (because her suitor Lorenzo has departed), when she goes into her mother's library for the first time since her passing. It's the middle of the night, and she seeks to read to pass the time. The scene is a familiar one, for its lighting and haunting atmosphere:

As she looked around her, the sight of this room brought to her recollection a thousand painful ideas. It was the first time of her entering it since her mother's death. The total silence prevailing through the chamber, the bed despoiled of its furniture, the cheerless hearth where stood an extinguished lamp, and a few dying plants in the window, which since Elvira's loss had been neglected, inspired Antonia with a melancholy awe. The gloom of night gave strength to this sensation. She placed her light upon the table, and sank into a large chair, in which she had seen her mother seated a thousand and a thousand times. She was never to see her seated there again! (Lewis 270-1).

When she takes up a book, it so happens to be the tale of Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogene, which is essentially a rhyme about a ghost coming back to make sure his betrothed remains faithful. Its major events are summed up in this refrain:

“If e'er I, by lust or by wealth led aside,
Forget my Alonzo the Brave,
God grant, that to punish my falsehood and pride
Your ghost at the marriage may sit by my side,
May tax me with perjury, claim me as bride,
And bear me away to the grave!” (Lewis 271)

The ghost in this tale is representative of some manner of “justice”, or the preservation of fidelity and a woman's “purity”. The negative traits being shamed by the ghost are “lust”, the desire for wealth, “falsehood” and “pride”. In the end Alonzo the Brave returns as foretold on Imogene's wedding day (to another man) and “reclaims” her, taking her with him to the grave. The pair, as it ends, continue to haunt an old castle.

Following the reading of this text, notably agitated and prone to “superstitious” imagination, Antonia begins to panic about the appearance of a ghost in the chamber that was once her mother's. The scene mirrors any number of scenes in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and even specifically mentions that a “sound” Antonia hears, or thinks she hears, is mere imagination. When a specter appears soon afterwards at the chamber door, it is a bit of a shock to the reader, who has been prepared to think this was all an illusion of her overactive worry and thoughts of her

mother. It is unclear if the ghost she sees is indeed a hallucination. However, for a hallucination, it has some very specific things to say:

Slowly and gradually the door turned upon its hinges, and standing upon the threshold she beheld a tall thin figure, wrapped in a white shroud which covered it from head to foot. [. . .] The figure stopped opposite to the clock: it raised its right arm and pointed to the hour, at the same time looking earnestly upon Antonia, who waited for the conclusion of this scene, motionless and silent. [. . .]

“Yet three days,” said a voice faint, hollow, and sepulchral; “yet three days, and we meet again!”

Antonia shuddered at the words.

“We meet again?” she pronounced at length with difficulty: “Where shall we meet? Whom shall I meet?”

The figure pointed to the ground with one hand, and with the other raised the linen which covered its face.

“Almighty God! My mother?”

Antonia shrieked, and fell lifeless upon the floor. (275)

Following Antonia’s resuscitation, after she recounts the story, Dame Jacintha’s reaction is to rail in outrage against the incivility of the spirit, who it seems to her is not appreciative enough of the work she’s done for it, the expense of paying for and arranging the funeral. (Lewis 278) Jacintha’s reaction to the presumed ghost is somewhat comical, it’s worth noting, but more than that it drives her to normative behavior; this ghost turns out to be a similar figure as that in the story: it drives women to behave “well” by society’s standards. She specifically worries it will take her to the devil, and in order to combat this, to gain a protector, she says she will marry a man named Simon Gonzalez: “[He] will have me any day of the week; and if I live till day-break, I will marry him out of hand: an husband I will have, that is determined; for, now this ghost is once in my house, I shall be frightened out of my wits to sleep alone.” (Lewis 281).

A ghost driving a woman to conformity via marriage is, moreover, not out of step with what we saw in *Northanger Abbey* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. All is shown to be harrowing

until the point where a marriage accord is reached or nearly reached, and this constitutes the riddance of terror. A male protector having been procured, “purity” having been reassured, and the “ghosts” disappear. Part of the reason for this is that, as we’ve seen in *Udolpho* and to a lesser extent in *Northanger Abbey*, many of the avenues by which female heroines are harassed by “ghosts,” real, imagined, or some manner of both, pertain to protecting what is already an unreal concept: their “purity”. Protecting something insubstantial and unreal brings them in contact with the ghostly, another unreal, and the fear of that unreal menace to their purity (the threat of rape and its associated traumas might be real, but the threat of lost “purity” is only real because society deems it real) evaporates once they’ve secured “proof” of their “purity” in the form of marriage.

The story with Jacintha and Elvira’s ghost goes on to have another interesting affect on those present: there are worries, even stated by a doctor, that Antonio will be killed by the shock of encountering the ghost of her mother.

Jacintha says: “But, for God’s sake, reverent father! come with me now. I shall have no rest till the house is purified, or the poor young lady either. The dear girl! She is in a piteous taking: I left her in strong convulsions, and I doubt she will not easily recover her fright.” (Lewis 281) At first, the physician declares her life is in danger. The contact with the ghost itself is the assumed and accepted culprit of her unstable physical state.

There’s something to this seeming link between “ridiculous” ghost stories/ fears and the preservation of purity. There’s yet another duality in that belief in/ fear of ghosts can drive the believers to remain or become in some manner “good” or pious, but at the same time gaining in knowledge of a ghost, by seeing or interacting with it, is deeply connected with going

mad/knowing too much. Too much knowledge of the ghost, as with too much knowledge of the enemy's intentions, is seen as corrupting. One is meant to run from a ghost, not encounter it.

Ambrosio tries to convince her the ghost was her imagination, brought on by the frightfulness of the scene and her heightened emotions (282). But even Ambrosio is destabilized by the threat of seeing this specter:

What if she broke the bonds of the tomb, and glided angrily before my blasted eyes? Oh! I never could support the sight! Again to see her form distorted by dying agonies, her blood-swollen veins, her livid countenance, her eyes bursting from their sockets with pain! – to hear her speak of future punishment, menace me with Heaven's vengeance, tax me with the crimes I have committed, with those I am going to commit... Great God! what is that? (Lewis 289)

To be clear, so that this fear of reprisal is not taken for a guilty conscience: Ambrosia is in no way dissuaded from his plan to rape Antonia in the future. Even murdering Elvira only succeeded in making him more set on committing the rape of her daughter. The threat posed by a ghost is to him more harrowing than the thought of committing murder and rape. He fears reprisal, or some manner of justice, here signified by the ghost.

Jumping ahead, several elements of the ghostly return within the tragic events of Antonia's remaining life. She and another woman, neither knowing about the other, are simultaneously trapped in a place between life and death in the sepulcher of the church. Agnes, the other, a nun forced into the convent, now pregnant and caught trying to escape for elopement, is made to drink "poison," made to believe she was dying, in a dark, dirty, reptile-infested chamber. Pregnant with Alphonso's baby at the time, she ends up giving birth entombed, only to watch her child die. She clings to the child's corpse as if it lives, even when it begins to crawl with maggots, and like Antonia, she herself is considered dead by those searching for her. In both cases, the women are exploited, Agnes as the domina's sadistic "purity" project - purity will be forced

onto her through suffering, or so the domino says, and Antonia as the victim of rape by Ambrosio. Their false deaths and literal entombments give the Superior and Ambrosio even more power over their victims, and they attempt to break them down psychologically.

They are trapped in this place that lacks definition, is somehow between death and life, and certainly away from whatever protections society might offer. They are no longer a part of society.

Ambrosio rails at Antonia, using her presumed death to break her resistance: “Resistance is unavailing, and I need disavow my passion for you no longer. You are imagined dead; society is for ever lost to you. I possess you here alone” (320). After the rape occurs, he at least remorsees for his own soul, and wishes he could restore “that innocence of which his unbridled lust had deprived her.” (323) His “remorse” expressed here should definitely be taken with a grain of salt, however; he refuses her pleas for release, planning to keep her alive as a prisoner in the sepulcher, and eventually, he stabs and kills her. The sepulcher, in which she was “surrounded by mouldering corpses, breathing the pestilential air of corruption” was effectively a death sentence for her (324).

Agnes, too, was ultimately brought to the sepulcher to die, though hers was intended to be a slow death. The domina describes her plan for Agnes:

I will purify you with wholesome chastisement, and furnish you with full leisure for contrition and remorse. [. . .] All Madrid believes you to be no more; your relations are thoroughly persuaded of your death, and the nuns your partisans have assisted at your funeral. [. . .] Then abandon all thoughts of a world from which you are eternally separated, and employ the few hours which are allowed to you in preparing for the next. (Lewis 338)

When Don Alphonso is recounting to Don Lorenzo the story of his disappearance, and the apparent abandonment of his beloved Agnes (Lorenzo’s sister), now in the convent, later

trapped in the sepulcher with Antonia, a chapter of his extended adventure features ghostly intervention.

Alphonso has, at the time, been wooing Agnes under a false name to hide his wealth, and despite having succeeded in gaining the affection of her aunt, and benefactor, Donna Rodolpha, he has run into an enormous impediment. The impediment arose from two locations. Firstly, Agnes, unknown to her brother Lorenzo, had been promised to a convent life since her birth, when her mother vowed she would give her son or daughter to a convent life if the child survived. It was her parents' superstition which kept her locked into this plan, according to Agnes, who comments "I have too much reason to lament superstition's influence to be its victim myself." (142)

The second source of difficulty arises for the couple in trying to gain the favor of those who might convince Agnes's parents to release her from the compact. In gaining Donna Rodolpha's favor, and by a miscommunication, Alphonso accidentally woos Rodolpha herself and wins her love rather than her favor. From this point on, learning of his plan to marry her niece, Rodolpha is their enemy rather than aid. Alphonso therefore determines to escape and elope with Agnes using the guise of a ghost. Agnes describes her plan simply, "Whoever meets me will be too much terrified to oppose my escape" (Lewis 147). Going back to the uses of the ghostly, to the ability of characters to utilize and capitalize on the superstition of others and harness the power of unequal knowledge, this knowing usage and ownership of the ghostly is strongly reminiscent of Du Pont's decision to frighten the guards away from him at Udolpho. The symbols, however, have become notably stronger and more concrete, and the familiar plot more heavily stated.

The ghost story they're seizing upon, as it turns out, is very real, and the ghost does indeed appear at midnight on a specific day. Although they don't find out until later, the woman,

Beatrice de la Cisternas in life, was a runaway nun, notably loose with her sexuality and ultimately criminal. She took up residence and relations with baron Lindenberg, though he refused to marry her. She agreed to murder this man for his younger brother Otto, who, despite agreeing to marry her, ultimately murdered her once she completed the deed. Following this, at intervals of five years, she appeared with the lantern and bloody knife she'd used on that night, making a processional to the spot she met her lover. (165-6)

Agnes and Alphonso's plan, in execution and ultimate failure, should be considered a bit more closely, since within its misadventures the reality of the ghost not only throws a woman into the bondage of conventual "purity", but seems to cast a spell or curse on Alphonso, bringing a Faustian character into the mix, and raising questions about the nature of the ghostly in relation to the Faustian, witch/magician figure.

First, the scene is set in classic ghostly style. Lighting effects render uncertainty and fear, and music as well lends a character of the uncanny. As he's waiting, Alphonso hear a faint chorus on the air, and Theodore explains it's the arrival of Agnes' father. The castle bell strikes midnight.

Soon after I perceived lights in the castle, moving backwards and forwards in different directions. I conjectured the company to be separating. I could hear the heavy doors grate as they opened with difficulty; and as they closed again, the rotten casements rattled in their frames. The chamber of Agnes was on the other side of the castle. I trembled lest she should have failed in obtaining the key of the haunted room. Through this it was necessary for her to pass, in order to reach the narrows stair-case by which the ghost was supposed to descend into the great hall. Agitated by this apprehension, I kept my eyes constantly fixed upon the windows, where I hoped to perceive the friendly glare of a lamp borne by Agnes. I now heard the massy gates unbarred. By the candle in his hand, I distinguished old Conrad, the porter. He set the portal doors wide open, and retired. The lights in the castle gradually disappeared, and at length the whole building was wrapt in darkness. (151)

Following this, a major problem occurs. Alphonso makes a mistake by passionately greeting and carrying the *actual* ghost into his carriage rather than Agnes. The actuality of the ghost in this case leads to trouble. From the moment the carriage departs, the ride is supernaturally fast, unstoppable, and surrounded by a growing storm. Eventually, they crash, much farther away from the castle than they should've been able to travel in that period of time. The ghost disappears from the carriage and from this point on, finding it too late to return for Agnes, Alphonso is followed by the ghost.

She is ever at his side, though not always visible; her nature is partially explained to Alphonso by a Faustian character who appears shortly thereafter on the scene. He was able to actually see, or maybe sense, the ghost standing next to Alphonso, and from the way he spoke, it seemed he'd been living for centuries and possessed nearly omniscient knowledge.

He named people who had ceased to exist for many centuries, and yet with whom he appeared to have been personally acquainted. I could not mention a country, however distant, which he had not visited, nor could I sufficiently admire the extent and variety of his information. I remarked to him, that having travelled, seen and known so much, must have given him infinite pleasure. He shook his head mournfully. (162)

Alphonso finds his aspect mysteriously frightening and his demeanor is certainly melancholy. Moreover he says this is his curse, to inspire others with awe and horror.

In contrast with the events in *The Monk*, and the semi-appearance of ghosts within the action, the ghostly in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, is far more tied-in with the monstrous elements of the story, to the point where disambiguating between the two becomes difficult.

The story begins with John Melmoth visiting the home of his uncle, another Melmoth (it is their surname), on whom he was financially dependent but with whom he was also largely estranged. And so in classic gothic style, he returns to a rather ancient and somewhat mysterious

family estate. There is an air of mystery and eeriness to the place for several reasons. It is the senior Melmoth's final days, John is ultimately made to investigate a locked-up and long neglected chamber of the estate, where he finds a haunting portrait of his ancestor. His uncle tells him this ancestor, despite being alive in 1646, is still living, and shortly after seeing someone who looks very familiar to this man, he dies. Before these plot points unravel, however, the estate takes on an air of the ghostly by virtue of John's return to a family house filled with the poverty-stricken house workers who have gathered for Melmoth's final days, who overburden John Melmoth with their superstition and rumors.

One such local's description is of interest, since it pertains to witchcraft and the occult, a sort of knowledge "above" what is proper, and for that reason dubious and uncanny. It is both reminiscent of the Faust legend (and Faust's compact with the demon Mephistopheles) and the reverse of the "innocent" gothic heroine's predicament of incomplete information:

when the stubborn and persevering convalescence of the whole country threatened her starvation, - she still had a resource: -- if there were no lives to be shortened, there were fortunes to be told; - she worked "by spells, and by such daubry as is beyond our element". No one twined so well as she the mystic yarn to be dropt into the lime-kilm pit, on the edge of which stood the shivering inquirer into futurity, doubtful whether the answer to her question of "who holds?" was to be uttered by the voice of demon or lover.
(Maturin 13)

There is undoubtedly an element of humor to her description, but the power she has is at least potentially real. What she tells John Melmoth about his uncle isn't precisely wrong, just vague. When one of those gathered tells John that his uncle is dying from a fright, the "Sybil" expounds, that this affliction is not in his head but in his heart. This rumor, of a "fright" being the cause of Melmoth's illness is later confirmed. The senior Melmoth's character being selfish and grasping by all accounts, he gravely sends John, with a key pressed into his hand, to procure one

bottle of wine from a storage compartment. There he finds great distraction in the eerie, unfrequented shadows (another consequence of Melmoth's miserliness, as he harangues his servants for the overuse of candles), and his eye catches on the uncanny painting of an ancestor. When he returns, the dying Melmoth answers John's inquiries on the painting with confirmation that he was dying of fright, stating that this relative, so captured, is still alive. (Maturin 21)

When the senior Melmoth dies, his will is read aloud, and its direction further compounds the mystery:

I enjoin my nephew and heir, John Melmoth, to remove, destroy, or cause to be destroyed, the portrait inscribed J. Melmoth, 1646, hanging in my closet. I also enjoin him to search for a manuscript, which I think he will find in the third and lowest left-hand drawer of the mahogany chest standing under that portrait, - it is among some paper of no value [. . .]; he will distinguish it by its being tied round with a black tape, and the paper being very mould and discoloured. He may read it if he will; - I think he had better not. At all events, I adjure him, if there be any power in the adjuration of a dying man, to burn it. (Maturin 24)

And so the gossip, pertaining to Melmoth's family history, leads John Melmoth to enquire into knowledge so frightful that it seemingly killed his elder relative. He learns that his uncle was not a superstitious man by nature, and would frequently shoo away the old Sybil who would come from time to time with wild tales. This circumstance makes him even more curious about the particulars which led his uncle to be so struck by a family history. He eventually calls upon the Sybil to relate the rumored-of tale, and is entranced by what she tells, though it is initially left a mystery to the reader.

Melmoth remained in astonishment at the state of mind to which the singular circumstances had reduced him, — at finding himself listening with varying and increasing emotions of interest, curiosity, and terror, to a tale so wild, so improbable, nay, so actually incredible, that he at least blushed for the folly he could not conquer. The result of these impressions was, a resolution to visit the closet, and examine the manuscript that very night. (Maturin 28)

This is the first of an enormous number of times silence or the unspoken is used to surround Melmoth with an air of the uncanny and supernatural. What he is, we're left with the impression, is unspeakable. Silence also communicates, by insinuation, that the reader is being shielded, perhaps by chance; certainly the story itself comes to feel dangerous as we associate knowledge with death, mental instability and ruin. Although we feel that knowing will hurt us, still the fear of not knowing, associated with the ghostly, puts us at an uncertain imbalance. This seems to be the "masculine" equivalent of the female heroine's plight: instead of fears about loss of purity, and all the uncertainties about what that even means, Melmoth is in a position where knowledge threatens death or, though the examples come later, mental instability. The ideal balance of knowledge, or how much is too much and how much too little, is sought with a feeling of intense anxiety.

Slightly later we learn the Sybil told him about a mysterious ancestor, older brother to the first Melmoth to reside in Ireland, who for much of the latter's life was considered a "traveller" on the continent. "He was said to be (like the 'damned magician, great Glendower,') 'a gentleman profited in strange concealments.'" (Maturin 29) During his younger brother's life, this Melmoth visited in Ireland, a visit marked by awe, since his appearances hadn't altered or aged in the years of his absence. This Melmoth left behind the portrait of himself on his departure, and some years following this, an Englishman arrived searching for him. Upon being disappointed in this pursuit, he left as well, leaving behind the manuscript.

At first the young Melmoth, mulling over these details, tries not to fall victim to his curiosity, yet as the sun begins to go down and he realizes there are no candles in the house to read by, he sends a barefooted boy to the neighboring village for candles and candlesticks, "charged to run for life and death" (28).

It is then Melmoth who fills the same position of his preceding gothic heroines, alone in a mysterious old house, at the mercy of lighting irregularities and imperfect, haunting knowledge which all produces a sense of the uncanny and superstitious. Indeed, the state of mind satirized by Jane Austen, of a young person caught up in uncanny and romantic notions, diving into a gothic tale and having her state of mind affected by such romantic notions, is further paralleled as Melmoth prepares to take up the reading of his family's manuscripts:

The weather was cold and gloomy; heavy clouds betoken a long and dreary countenance of autumnal rains; cloud after cloud came sweeping on like like the dark banners and an approaching host[. . . H]is eye encountered nothing but that most cheerless of all prospects, a miser's garden[. . .] It was the verdure of the churchyard, the garden of death. He turned for relief to the room, but no relief was there, - the wainscoting dark with dirt, and in many places cracked and starting from the walls, - the rusty grate, so long unconscious of a fire, that nothing but a sullen smoke could be coaxed to issue from beneath its dingy bars[.] (Maturin 28-9)

As if the ghostly imagery conjured merely by the surrounding whispers and gossip, the generally decaying old estate, the family history and mystery, when John procures the candles from the young boy and takes up the manuscript in the hidden compartment, he looks about wistfully at the candles and "snuffed them, and still thought they looked dim, (perchance he thought they burned blue, but such thought he kept to himself.)" (Maturin 31). Blue flames are usually associated with ghosts.

This is how the gothic tale starts, and we are thus in the same position as the young Melmoth, reading, it would seem, the very same words and responding with the same heightened curiosity and dread. *Melmoth the Wanderer* proceeds in this fashion, in the reading of notes and manuscripts, of being removed from the actual story being told by several layers of storytellers, and therefore we and he are in a place of uncertainty about truth, uncertain about the degree of interference or personal perspective.

These particular manuscripts focus on Stanton. He is an Englishman, alive in 1676 in Spain, and very quickly we encounter a familiar element of the haunting atmosphere in *Udolpho*: a floating musical accompaniment to the seemingly supernatural. As before, the music sounds and emanates from a specifically uncertain point. At one convent, where he is lodged during a storm, Stanton's hosts recount to him a story in order to explain, among other things, their fear of the English. It's the story of a bridegroom and bride who met a disastrous end just after their wedding:

“On their return to the hall, both of them asked, Had the company heard the exquisite sounds that floated through the garden just before they quitted it? No one had heard them. They expressed their surprise. The Englishman had never quitted the hall; it was said he smiled with a most particular and extraordinary expression as the remark was made.” (Maturin 37)

This Englishman, of course, is Melmoth, “a traveller”, and this foreboding music is slightly altered from its form in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. It is now not only unclear from whence it emanates, but it is uncanny in a more serious way because it can only be heard by certain listeners, those who, as it turns out, are in some manner doomed. Indeed, by the end of the night the bride is dead; the groom meanwhile “never recovered his reason” (Lewis 40). He stayed on in the mansion and his behavior, frequented by nightly shouts and shrieks, is itself resemblant of a ghost. Every midnight he is said to shout “They are coming! they are coming!” (Lewis 40)

The manuscript, it is worth noting, is incomplete and John Melmoth struggles occasionally to understand it. Some sections cut off mid-sentence and one must extrapolate from what remains. The story eventually cuts off and picks up again in England in 1677. Here, Stanton comes to see the mysterious Melmoth in person, and the narrative becomes briefly unreadable. Shortly afterwards, he even hears the mysterious music himself:

“[A] strain of music, soft, solemn and delicious, breathed round him, audibly ascending from the ground, and increasing in sweetness and power till it seemed to fill the whole building. Under the sudden impulse of amazement and pleasure, he inquired of some around him from whence those exquisite sounds arose. But, by the manner in which he was answered, it was plain that those he addressed considered him insane; and, in deed, the remarkable change in his expression might well justify the suspicion. [. . .] ‘And am I then to be the next victim?’ thought Stanton; ‘and are those celestial sounds, that seem to prepare us for heaven, only intended to announce the presence of an incarnate fiend, who mocks the devoted with ‘airs from heaven,’ while he prepares to surround them with ‘blasts from hell?’” (Maturin 49)

This theme of encountering ghostly elements, which seem to surround the monstrous Faust figure at the center, and consequently losing one’s hold on mental stability, continues. Stanton actually speaks with Melmoth, who predicts they will see each other again in “the bare walls of a mad-house” (Maturin 50).

Following another jump in time, Stanton’s fixation on and talk of the man have indeed contributed to others’ perception that he has gone mad. He is tricked by a relative into a mental institution (though it is closer to a decrepit prison), and it is indeed here that he encounters Melmoth again.

Melmoth, when he appears in Stanton’s cell, obscures the light in the grate, and this is what wakes and calls his attention. We now join lighting to the play of ghostly imagery surrounding the appearance of Melmoth, as well as subversion of the meaning of symbols linked to madness.

Melmoth explains to Stanton that his “madness,” the “madness” being left to rot in the madhouse will bring him, will eventually doom his immortal soul, and lead him to blaspheme horribly. He then offers a bargain, saying he has the key to Stanton’s escape if he will agree to

his terms. Echoing what occurred in earlier pages of Stanton's manuscript, when various characters were cut off by imperfections in the writing, just at the point of describing Melmoth more fully, this bargain of Melmoth's is illegible:

The explanation occupied several pages, which, to the torture of young Melmoth, were wholly illegible. It seemed, however, to have been rejected by Stanton with the utmost rage and horror, for Melmoth at last made out, - "Begone, monster, demon! - begone to your native place. Even this mansion of horror trembles to contain you; its walls sweat, and its floors quiver, while you tread them."
(Maturin 65)

From there the manuscript remains mostly illegible until the end, but the younger Melmoth is able to ascertain that Stanton was eventually released from imprisonment, only to take up an all-consuming search for Melmoth. At enquiries about the "bargain" he would fall into "fits of rage and gloom, equally singular and alarming" (Maturin 66) and eventually he deposited the manuscript with the Melmoth family in Ireland. The manuscript ends, breaking off mid-sentence again "Perhaps our final meeting will be in " (Maturin 66). "Hell," it would seem, is the word left unsaid here, just as Melmoth's demonic bargain is left unsaid, just as the shadows cover what frightens but cannot be sufficiently worded. The figure of Melmoth is an unnamable already inheriting this space of the ghostly.

This portion of the story ends, and a new one begins soon afterwards. John Melmoth first witnesses a shipwreck, sees his ancestor laughing on the cliffs looking down into the water and chaos, and he almost dies himself, falling into the water when chasing after Melmoth. He falls into darkness, but awakens having been saved but a stranger from Spain. This stranger, as it would happen, is bound up as well in the history of Melmoth the Wanderer and soon begins telling his own story.

As a young man, the stranger, Alonzo, of the wealthy Moncada family in Spain, was given from birth to the Catholic church and enlisted in painful schooling to be a Catholic priest. This was so done so he could “pay” for the sins of his parents, who had conceived him out of wedlock.

Alonzo’s isolation and misery in the convent make him yet another tragic figure in the manner of a gothic heroine. In his attempts to escape, he must even communicate secretly with his brother Juan via letters. So, once again, we have a figure hunched over a low light reading a clandestine story.

I well understood the risk he must have run in delivering this paper, for it was the regulation of the convent, that all letters, whether addressed to or written by boarders, novices, or monks, were first to be read by the Superior, and I never knew an instance of its infringement. The moon gave me sufficient light. I began to read, while a vague hope, that had neither object or basis, trembled at the bottom of my heart. (Maturin 131)

Juan related a story to his brother, via an the extended letter, and within it we see him suffering the guilt of his brother’s predicament and for that reason spiraling into a kind of illness and delirium. As his attendants try to bring him out of it, he sees a “visionary companion” or “phantom” at his bedside. What’s more, Juan sees this specter refusing food and therefore refuses it also. “It is very singular that the food at this house happened to be poisoned, and that two of my attendants died of partaking of it before they could reach Madrid.” (Maturin 137)

Back at the convent, Alonzo is caught with unauthorized paper for writing (he had been taking down notes on the abuses and injustices he suffered there).

“Wretch!” said the Superior, losing all patience, “disclose instantly for what purpose you have employed the paper granted you. Acknowledge instantly that it was for some purpose contrary to the interests of this house.” - At these words I was roused. I saw again the cloven foot of interest peeping from beneath the monastic garb. I answered, “Why am I suspected if you are not guilty? What could

I accuse you of? What could I complain of if there were no cause? Your own consciences must answer this question for me.” (Maturin 150)

Letters, then, are yet again given an enormous amount of power, for their ability to shift power balances by conveyance of knowledge. The story emphasizes again the weight of being able to communicate something via the medium of letters, or manuscripts, or books, and the fear this can spread.

Through his extended struggles in the convent, Alonzo is in a position somehow between life and death, and this is visualized in several ways. For one thing, he bemoans the loss of his life due to his imprisonment. For another, he is harassed by a sadistic mob of often unseen clergymen, who seek to torment him into betterment, in a sort of mimicry of purgatory. At times the story is highly reminiscent of Agnes and Antonia’s fates in the sepulcher of the church in *The Monk*. Down there with skeletons, among presumed ghostly and the certainly frightening creatures (reptiles) of the dark, both are assumed dead and at least one is brought there to seek perdition through agony. The point is soundly belabored that these women are in a position between life and death, and when the nuns, at that story’s climax, take refuge in this same sepulcher, they too are frightened of ghosts so near the points of burial. Alonzo, too, is taken to this place of ambiguity between life and death.

First, he is locked in his room and cut off from light and contact. “I would rather never sleep again, than awake so horribly. I awoke in *the darkness of day*. I was to behold the light no more; nor to watch those divisions of time, which by measuring our portions of suffering, appear to diminish them.” (Maturin 160). Again, lighting effects are used in relation to awareness, but here the first species of madness and disconnection appear. This is a situation concocted specifically to break down the sufferer’s mental state.

Going further, Alonzo is described by his torturers as a “demon” and shunned as one, his mob-bullying at the hands of the monks is compared to an exorcism. “Imagine, Sir, a community of upwards of sixty persons, all sworn to each other to make the life of one individual insupportable; joined in a common resolution to insult, harass, torment and persecute him; and then imagine how that individual can support such a life.” (Maturin 167)

Ghosts, or demons, but certainly light effects are used with the intention to terrify Alonzo, and during the night he is subjected to further horrors and harassments. He tells the Superior there are phosphorus fiends painted on his walls at night to terrify him, and the Superior says they are the phantoms of his conscience. (Maturin 169)

His sense of reality begins to break down. He describes one night as follows:

“I was no sooner laid down than the voice began to whisper. I began to pray, but my head swam round, my eyes flashed fire, - fire almost tangible, my cell appeared in flames. Recollect my frame worn out with famine, my mind worn out with persecution. I struggled with what I was conscious was delirium, - but this consciousness aggravated its horror.” (Maturin 176) At this point in the telling, Alonzo’s narrative is briefly broken as he whispers Melmoth and shudders.

The light and dark imagery continues on, even beginning to call into question Alonzo’s grasp on reality. The same night he is plagued by imagery of flames in his room, he flies into what he describes as mania and attempts, wildly and without a plan, to flee. He runs from his room and into the church, where he is immediately pursued by the other monks of the convent: “It was a singular contrast between me, hurrying round the church almost in the dark, (for there were but a few lamps burning dimly), and the groupe at the door, whose expression of horror was strongly marked by the light, which appeared to have deserted me to concentrate itself

among them.” (Maturin 176) - Aware of his own appearance, and how the light and his manners seem to vilify him, he says an impartial person would consider him deranged or possessed.

Alonzo recovers, but still seeks escape. He seizes an opportunity presented to him by construction going on at the convent to communicate with his brother through notes left in a wall. Still, as he planned his escape, they ran short on time, and to delay the construction project Alonzo took up the role of a demon or ghost. “I used to rise at an hour before matins, displace the stones, trample on the mortar, which I mingled with the clay, so as to render it totally useless; and finally, re-act Penelope’s web with such success, that the workmen believed the devil himself was obstructing their operations,” (197).

Their plans finally come to together, and Alonzo is forced to team up with an unrepentant parricide in a desperate bid to escape. The pair attempts to escape in the dead of night by sneaking through the labyrinthine chambers beneath the convent. Again, the scene conjures images of *The Monk*, and the final denouement in the recesses beneath the convent.

- the chance, the fear that we may never emerge to light! Think of wandering amid sepulchral ruins, of stumbling over the bones of the dead, of encountering what I cannot describe, - the horror of being among those who are neither the living or the dead; - those dark and shadowless things that sport themselves with the relics of the dead, and feast and love amid corruption, - ghastly, mocking, and terrific. (Maturin 205)

The two procure a key and venture into the vaults beneath the convent. Of course, their light is poor, they have a single lamp and it seems always on the point of extinguishing.

I trembled at my situation, - at myself, and that is a terror we can never overcome. I stumbled over the stones, - I was chilled with horror at every step. A blue mist gathered before my eyes, - it furred the edges of the lamp with a dim and hazy light. My imagination began to operate, and when I heard the curses with which my companion reproached my involuntary delay, I began almost to fear that I was following the steps of a demon, (Maturin 212)

At one point, as they search desperately for a trap door, the lamp does indeed extinguish and they are swallowed by darkness. Only when the morning light rises and filters through minute cracks of the door do they realize they were near enough, miraculously, to begin working on their escape. While trapped within this pitch black cavern (they only have so much time with so much light each day to work on the door) the parricide decides to tell Alonzo a story about the chamber they're hiding in. Once again it's a story of death, even a story of entombment in the very chamber where they feel themselves near death. Within the story, this parricide worked with the Superior of the convent to capture a monk and his lover (a woman disguised as a novice monk). The two, having been discovered together, were interred alive in the chamber, and left to die slowly. Their desperate situation, which the parricide listened to avidly, is somehow reminiscent of Schrodinger's famous experiment with the cat. Trapped in a chamber with no food or water, the pair are certain to eventually die, the when is the only unclear thing, and for that the parricide stayed nearby, attentive so as to know the precise moments of their demise. Echoing the demonic laugh of Melmoth, this criminal broke into a laugh when relating how eventually the man attempted to cannibalize the female. (236)

This chapter of Alonzo's drama culminates in his ultimate betrayal by the supposed, albeit shaky confidant. His brother Juan, on the point of huddling the pair into a waiting carriage, is killed by the parricide; Alonzo, subsequently, is thrown to the Inquisition for judgment. All of this is done so that the parricide can secure, by shady bargain with the church, his "salvation". (245)

Eventually, Alonzo is tempted in his cell by Melmoth, who offers him escape in exchange for the unspeakable bargain. He refuses the bargain and then manages to escape anyway due to a fire. He houses with a Jewish man named Don Fernan, who conceals him so that Alonzo

will conceal his family's (illegal) religion. When Fernan is on the point of giving Alonzo up under threat from the Inquisition, Alonzo escapes into yet another series of underground tunnels, at the terminus of which he finds an elderly Jewish man named Adonijah, with a specific task in mind for Alonzo: he has written down the results of his own personal inquiry into Melmoth the Wanderer, yet he has done so in Greek letters and Spanish words, for secrecy, and before his death hopes to get them transcribed into English. There are skeletons in the room where Alonzo makes this transcription, and Adonijah notes two of them in particular, saying that the story secreted within the coded document is *their* story. (300)

The narrative then shifts to the story Alonzo transcribed for Adonijah, and we fall further down the hole; we become far less certain whether what we read is accurate or even how we're receiving the words. Presumably, the story has been rewritten from the original and what we and John Melmoth receive is just the best of Alonzo's recollection. It is apparently only on this level that we can begin to approach Melmoth the Wanderer as a character himself. (302)

Clearly these two gothic novels are still marked by the ghostly, which might seem random remainders from their predecessors, mere thematic elements to create suspense or a sense of the incorporeality of certain dangers. What is interesting and should be noted are the way these elements interact with the demonic, and what is suggested by this interaction on a psychological level.

Melmoth, the demonic, Faustian character in Melmoth the Wanderer, is a creature whose curse is to wander the world, visiting those at their most unfortunate, in their most desperate hours. It remains his curse because none has ever accepted the deal he's offered, which is to take his place as the wanderer. Presumably, there is some loss of one's immortal soul which goes into the bargain.

Melmoth's traits are inextricably linked to the ghostly. His presence, it is shown over and over again, is always preceded by a strain of mysterious music. We have seen this already, with Stanton, but further examples abound. Within the encoded tale Alonzo recounts, a beautiful Englishwoman, shipwrecked on an Indian island as a child and somehow raised alone by the wilderness in which she found herself, upon being discovered and returned to her family, is still haunted by memories of a man who came to her several times in her beautiful, solitary island home.

She presents a sort of counterpoint to Melmoth, "causing" many of the same effects as he does, agreeing with several of his scandalous statements about Catholicism, yet from a place of "purity" rather than "corruption".

In England, when a crowd of men discuss Melmoth they say:

"I have heard [. . .] that a delicious music precedes the approach of this person when his destined victim, - the being whom he is permitted to tempt or to torture, - is about to appear or to approach him." (Maturin 363)

But moments later, they attribute the music in the air to another:

"no wonder that such sounds harbingers the approach of a being so heavenly. She deals with the good spirits; and the blessed saints alone could send such music from above to welcome her" (Maturin 363)

This figure is Isidora, or Immalee, as she called herself on the island. Isidora's character is perpetually linked to music, and her Christian attributes are questioned by the Catholics who surround her. Her version of Christianity, we are to understand, is more based in the beauty of nature than in the false symbols of that beauty harnessed for power by the Catholic church. At one point she is told, as a criticism: "You regard nothing but watching a few flowers, or hanging over your lute, or gazing at the moon," (Maturin 372).

Isidora, thoroughly unhappy upon her return home, missing the pristine nature in which she grew up (somehow without issue or illness), falls in love with Melmoth and determines (against his better judgment, it would seem) to escape with him and elope. This elopement is scheduled by Melmoth to take place in an abandoned church surrounded by an equally decrepit cemetery. The effects of this eerie surrounding, compounded by a storm, causes Melmoth to ask Isidora a question, presumably trying to determine whether or not she will be his next victim: “he demanded, in a choaked and indistinct voice, if she had ever heard any music precede his visits to her.” (Maturin 437) She says she has not.

It is particularly interesting, and certainly a repeated theme, how frequently decrepit areas associated with death and ghostly happenings are utilized by the protagonists for refuge. Although they are just as often prisons and torments, they are also means of escape. The church near a graveyard is a close connection drawn between death and refuge, as indeed are the subterranean tunnels beneath Alonzo’s convent and then those tunnels leading to Adonijah and his task.

When Melmoth describes the cemetery and abandoned church, his choice of location for the ceremony is obviously important, since there appears to be some curse on the church:

“There is,” said he, “a ruined monastery near - you may have observed it from you window. [. . .T]here were wild stories told. It was said the Superior, or Prior, or - I know now what - had looked into certain books, the perusal of which was not altogether sanctioned by the rules of the order — books of magic they called them [. . .] and the building became deserted. There were some offers made for it by the communities of other religious houses, but the evil, though vague and wild reports, that had gone forth about it, deterred them, on inquiry, from inhabiting it, - and gradually the building fell to ruin.” (Maturin 431)

He ultimately leaves Isidora to wait for him on a gravestone, where she sees a man at some distance and he waves his arms but she cannot distinguish what is intended by this sign - repulsion or entreaty to come forward. (Maturin 436)

The narrative shifts again, just at the point of these two being united in marriage in the holy and yet unholy setting. We skip back in time, presumably because so did the manuscript Alonzo copied over, which he is recounting to John Melmoth.

Melmoth the Wanderer, as it turns out, visited Isidora's father several days in advance of the ceremony, killed a man who dared tell a story about him, and ultimately came to recount a different story about himself, this one taking place in England, centering around Elinor Mortimer. The Mortimer family had a fraught religious and political history in England, and was overall fractured and separated by religious wars. Elinor's father had broken away from the family's loyalist traditions to be a Puritan, and so as an Apostate, he died during the wars; conversely, Elinor's uncle, father to her cousin Margaret, had fought and died for the royalist cause. They grew up together with their cousin John Sandal, whose mother was impoverished and disowned by the family, in the Mortimer estate. (499-50)

The story of Elinor becomes important for Melmoth to tell Isidora's father because it is ultimately the story of a woman at her weakest point in romantic disappointment. She is abandoned at the altar by her cousin John, for monetary reasons, and a year later, also for monetary reasons, he begins to pursue the courtship of their cousin Margaret. (526) Like Isidora, Elinor was known to enjoy playing the lute, but upon after being left at the altar, she ordered the instrument to be broken. (528)

At a point of supreme heartbreak, when Elinor realizes her hopes are entirely in vain, she hears floating music played on a lute by a passing-by young boy, and "to the unfortunate, every thing seems prophetic; and amid the shades of evening, and accompanied by the sound of his [John's] departing footsteps, the breaking heart of Elinor accepted the augury of these melancholy notes." (Maturin 545) It seems to her almost as a prediction of worse to come, and not long

afterwards, at least narratively, her cousin Margaret and John Sandal are married, Margaret gives birth to deceased twins, she dies herself, John Sandal's mother, out of guilt, discloses a shocking secret, John loses his hold on sanity, and, due to a clause in the will, his family fortune, and John Sandal's mother dies. (550-552)

Still, despite the despondency and quasi-atheism this all throws Elinor her into, she finds the strength to refuse the bargain Melmoth offers. When she refuses the first time, she seeks out a clergyman near her cottage in Yorkshire, who as it so happens knew Melmoth in his younger years, when Melmoth was still a mortal man. Another narrative follows this, which is, however, fairly brief. This clergyman knew Melmoth when he was an intellectual and proud man, ever seeking 'too much' knowledge. He attended Melmoth on his deathbed and was bade "let no man know that I died, or when, or where." (557) He even felt his pulse stop and his skin go cold. He observed him die, and yet, the man who spoke with Elinor and offered her a bargain, he attested, was the same man.

Melmoth tells this story to Isidora's father in advance of their marriage as a warning, however it's a warning her father completely ignores in favor of going on to secure a financially-sound marriage prospect for her.

In contrast to her father's oblivious inattention to her predicament, Isidora seems to grow in precognition. It's another trait she shares with Melmoth, though her power seems to come from a more heavenly source. Pregnant with Melmoth's child, she predicts that she won't live to to that child, and she's at least close to correct. In reality, the baby is born dead, or dies shortly after birth, in Isidora's prison cell after she's been arrested by the Inquisition on suspicion of heresy. She dies not long after.

Before this event, she explains to Melmoth her certainty about not seeing the baby in her life:

I have always believed, that as we approach the invisible world, its voice becomes more audible to us, and grief and pain are very eloquent interpreters between us and eternity - quite distinct from all corporeal suffering, even from all mental terror, is that deep unutterable impression which is alike incommunicable and ineffaceable - it is as if heaven spoke to us alone, and told us to keep its secret, or divulge it on the condition of never being believed. (Maturin 572)

In the title of this paper, I mention a shrouded figure emerging within all this, and I've called this figure such because they are formed through lack and obscurity, but still they come into being at the center of certain ghost gothic elements. This shrouded figure is not always there, but even in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, where all ghosts were illusory, still the shrouded figure is hinted at. They're what's feared in the darkness, what might be coming around the corner. Melmoth is the thing at the center of the various ghostly elements and uncertainties but in contrast to every other figure who comes close to the center, even included the reader, who starts to feel harassed and frightened by the broken text, the shifting narrative and distance from certainty, he is not horrified in the same way. The mysterious music announces itself to his victims, it surrounds and precedes him, it does not harass him, it is almost a product of him.

Their seeming lack of horror, despite being closer to the ghostly elements than all others, may be because they know so much - these figures, rather than being set at a disadvantage are rather the reverse, they are weighted down by knowledge to the point of misery. He's similar to the mysterious, Faust-like figure in *The Monk*, who helps Alphonso rid himself of the ghost. His curse, when he explains it, is almost identical to Melmoth's:

"No one," he replied, "is adequate to comprehending the misery of my lot! Fate obliges me to be constantly in movement; I am not permitted to pass more than a fortnight in the same place. I have no

friend in the world, and, from the restlessness of my destiny, I never can acquire one. Fain would I lay down my miserable life, for I envy those who enjoy the quiet of the grave: but death eludes me, and flies from my embrace. In vain do I throw myself in the way of danger. I plunge into the ocean; the waves throw me back with abhorrence upon the shore: I rush into fire; the flames recoil at my approach: I oppose myself to the fury of banditti; their swords become blunted, and break against my breast. The hungry tiger shudders at my approach, and the alligator flies from a monster more horrible than itself. God has set his seal upon me, and all his creatures respect this fatal mark." [. . .] And involuntary convulsion made me shudder. The stranger perceived it. (Lewis 162-3)

Alphonso ultimately must learn from this miserable, wandering figure, that he must rebury Beatrice's ashes with a specific ritual in order to appease her spirit. This man is a version of the shrouded figure since his knowledge of the ghost is supreme, and indeed he appears connected to the ghostly, appearing just when he's needed and disappearing as quickly, but the ghost itself does not harass or bother him. He can *see it* with no trouble, it is a clear image to him, but not a horrifying one. His knowledge, it seems, has brought him beyond these concerns.

These are two men who appear already to be seated at the center of some power and knowledge that curses them, but removes them from the fearful position of those nearby.

I believe this curse almost precisely echoes their position. They are the inexpressible, they should not exist, and yet they do. They're the symbol, the signifier, given too much meaning. Since no word can actually, fully express an idea, the idea of this "too much" knowledge that sits front and center in Faust and filters through the gothic, is perhaps suggestive that the holes between words, the things we accept as unsayable, have been solidified to concrete facts for these figures. Their power is given to them on the agreement of losing their souls, and they have a strong belief that the torments of hell chase them, despite sometimes (as Melmoth does) professing all religion is simple mythology. Nothing for Dr. Faustus, moreover, is metaphor, despite his early distinction about language in and the writing of the bible, his rejection of the word

as a secondary element. Still he *knows* hell is a concrete fact, given the nature of his bargain with Mephistopheles.

There is certainly a horror in this position, since the idea of all meaning being shrunk down into abject, unsatisfying words is nearly to admit a meaningless world. Certainly it is to admit a profound loss of meaning.

It is interesting, perhaps, to look slightly ahead, at where this shrouded figure is heading in the gothic novel. One of the closer parallel figures in the later gothic is Dorian Gray, who makes a Faustian bargain and struggles deeply with concretized meaning, and the lack of meaning this suggests to him.

The eponymous protagonist in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is marked by a profound *lack* – a recognizable lack, but one exacerbated by his obsession with unreliable signifiers.

Though Dorian in a sense makes a Faustian bargain, his soul for his youth, he does so without consciousness of having done so (and indeed consciousness is generally considered a crucial component of the Faustian bargain, so this removal is important). What he does, observing the portrait after its completion, is say “How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrid, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June.... If it was only the other way! If it was I who were to be always young, and the picture that were to grow old! For this—for this—I would give everything! Yes: there is nothing in the world I would not give!” (Wilde 82)

That is all, and seemingly that is enough. There is also no demon with whom Dorian Gray bargains: the otherworldly thing, imbued with phallic power, as Lacan sees the ghost imbued, only exists as an inexpressible force. In all likelihood this inexpressibility is part of what begins to eat at Dorian.

The Dorian we first meet as readers, who comes in to pose for the fateful portrait, is largely innocent of the passionate world surrounding him and imbuing his image with meaning. His portrait is being painted, but he treats it with boredom, as a lark. He has no understanding of why he is suited as its subject. He is at first nothing but shallowly, which is to say unaffectedly, flattered by his friend's interest in his appearance.

Lord Henry, another friend of Basil Hallward's, with his sardonic, removed, paradoxical way of speaking to Dorian, brings, through his flattery, a hue of horror to the simple routine. By commenting on the slip of youth, on Dorian's beauty and the perfection which youth and beauty both achieve, he brings to Dorian a horrified sense of his own slipping mortality. (Wilde 78-79)

Lord Henry, in a sense, bewitches Dorian Gray by describing for him his own beauty in terms of his own death – by making the signifiers of the world concrete and exactly correlative with the Real. In describing Dorian's beauty thusly he implies two things at once: that he is (and presumably others are as well) exactly that which is signified by his form (that he is a literal art object) and that he is the *object a* of phallic jouissance for others – describing Dorian as an avenue by which another's sexual gratification can be realized.

It is an exalted status, from the outside, but the horror it strikes in Dorian, for its phantasmic qualities, its ephemerality, even its exaltedness, is evident in his reaction. He's suddenly petrified of losing something which he had been previously unaware he possessed, and his now-faulty association of image with Reality makes him actively jealous of a painting of himself. In wanting more life, he doesn't know to want beyond the signifier of life. (Wilde 81-2)

Dorian's confusion about the signifier – confusing it with the Real of the object, exacerbates his profound sense of lack as the story continues.

Reflecting on Lord Henry's powerful influence, Dorian finds himself further confusing the signifier (now in the form of words) with the Real they attempt to evoke. "Words! Mere words! How terrible they were! How clear, and vivid, and cruel! One could not escape from them. And yet what a subtle magic there was in them! They seemed to be able to give a plastic form to formless things, and to have a music of their own as sweet as that of viol or of lute. Mere words! *Was there anything so real as words?*" (Wilde 75)

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, it is the ability of Lord Henry to tie Dorian in mental knots that affects the protagonist's neurotic trajectory and confuses him about the location of the Real within this miasma of signifiers.

As he falls to a life of hedonism, he's less known as a person and yet more known in gossip. People begin to fear him as they would a secret. This, according to Lacan's calculations referring to the ghost, in *Hamlet* and elsewhere, makes him, for others, the "phallus" in the sense of being an active imaginary which mirrors the subject. Despite the activity and power this seems to imply however, he is also quite castrated himself in terms of actual ability to apply independent will. His incessant and always unsatisfactory searches betray this, as does his literal immobility and mounting on a wall. His love of art and collection of the signifiers of beauty are expressive of an aware, nagging lack which must be filled with the physical, concrete objects of beauty Lord Henry assures him are the only Reality. He mourns frantically and uses ritual to help locate the inexpressible loss.

But what has Dorian lost? He claims at one point to love the actress Sybil Vane, but it's clear enough that his love for her was imaginary. When he sees her as a person, and realizes that there is no escaping the person beneath the beauty and façade, or making the imaginary character a concrete thing, he turns away from her in disgust. What he's lost, however, is the belief in Sybil Vane's possibility, and the belief in a self who could be satisfied, who could love a Sybil Vane figure (an actress merely representative of love, close actually to the ghost figure who represents the phallus but is imaginary).

“The very structure at the basis of desire always lends a note of impossibility to the object of human desire. What characterizes the obsessional neurotic in particular is that he emphasizes the confrontation with this impossibility. In other words, he sets everything up so that the object of his desire becomes the signifier of this impossibility,” (Lacan 36). Applying this logic to the logic of the shrouded figure in the gothic novel, the magician/heretic/Faustian figure - in this case, unwittingly, Dorian Gray - situates himself at the crux of this dilemma, and continues to reaffirm the dilemma in which ever-growing knowledge, or more specifically a species of voracious knowledge-seeking which refuses any area set aside for the intangible Real, that which does not correspond with an absolute signifier, with endemic, increasing emphasis on these signifiers as direct, reliable translators of the Real, never answers the primary and disheartening questions posed by the subject to the imaginary Other. Therefore knowledge, as wisdom or ability to navigate the self, never grows, and so the dilemma only worsens because the shrouded figure never manages to address what eats at him. He increasingly, likewise, can't bear to exist without the dilemma foregrounded and made central in his desires. What is a losing game already only intensi-

fies as the loser tries to solve his own loss by diving deeper – the more Dorian, as Faust figure, sees and knows and experiences, the more he catalogues beauty like truth, the more doomed he is. He cannot know himself out of knowing the dilemma, and the flawed but perpetual focus on this dilemma only presents a worsening proposition.

This figure, to expand, is stuck at the center of the ghostly, dragging around it like a shroud the markings of inexpressibility it no longer seems capable of touching, seeing instead concrete images and no gray areas. These figures have gained too much knowledge, the knowledge which turns others “mad” or “impure,” and they have gotten somehow stuck at the center of it.

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