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# Stigmatizing the Supernatural: Social and Intellectual Acts of Othering Paranormal Events in British and American Literature of the Long Nineteenth-Century

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STIGMATIZING THE SUPERNATURAL: SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL ACTS  
OF OTHERING PARANORMAL EVENTS IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN  
LITERATURE OF THE LONG NINETEENTH-CENTURY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: Stigmatizing the Supernatural: Social and Intellectual Acts of Othering Paranormal Events in British and American Literature of the Long Nineteenth-Century

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This study examines tendencies by structuring agencies like religion and society to other supernatural phenomena that do not conform to accepted systems during the long nineteenth-century and into the New Millennial period. Specifically, I investigate how and why society others supernatural phenomena perceived as subversive or inauthentic since they cannot be quantified or qualified through accepted means, especially scientific a priori and empirical means.

My method incorporates Marxist, cultural, psychoanalytic, and linguistic theory to consider how human relationships with supernaturalism mutate as we proceed to a pseudo-modernist world condition. These efforts of resistance to othering are a significant part of Romanticism, Victorianism, and Transcendentalism throughout the long nineteenth-century and influence New Millennial literature and the associated popularity that surrounds what is a new spirituality. This secularist method provides alternative means for enlightenment external to traditional religious structures that are currently engaged in an ideological war.

Artists included in this study who support this overall thesis include J.M. Barrie, Christina Rossetti, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Horace Walpole, Lord Byron, Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, R.L. Stevenson, Matthew Arnold, Edmund Burke, Martin Scorsese, Dan Brown, and J.K. Rowling. Their texts show how

unconventional supernatural phenomena are involved in the creative process by preserving childhood curiosity (Chapter I), are othered through textualization efforts that vilify supernatural agency through horror and terror-inducing techniques marked by traditional Gothic criticism (Chapter II), support platonic and romantic soulmate relationships that do not conform to social intentions (Chapter III), and encourage the discovery of Truth through various socially subversive tendencies (Chapter IV). I complete the study with an examination of contemporary works to illustrate how nineteenth-century philosophies associated with supernaturalism continue to affect our current world state (Chapter V). This is especially apparent as we struggle against a New Terrorism that subverts authentic supernatural interactions to preserve fundamentalist interpretations of traditional religious and social systems.

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## INTRODUCTION

### STIGMATIZING THE SUPERNATURAL: SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL ACTS OF OTHERING PARANORMAL EVENTS IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE OF THE LONG NINETEENTH-CENTURY

In *The Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant asserts that sublime objects “raise the forces of the soul above the height of vulgar commonplace, and discover . . . a power of resistance of quite another kind, which measure[s] ourselves against the seeming omnipotence of nature” (80). While Kant articulates the value of meaningful relationships between humans and supernatural phenomena, he simultaneously offers a fundamental reason why humanity fears the supernatural. Though revealing greater purposes for existence and providing access to more profound knowledge, these interactions, I maintain, have the potential to undermine dominant ideological social structures in the areas of religion and education, to name a few.

By examining the revolutionary ideals produced by the Romantics and Transcendentalists, I will argue that science and industrialization did not wholly succeed in pushing artistry to the periphery of society. Instead, I will illustrate how subversive supernaturalism resisted othering efforts by social agencies in relation to five particular –isms: Romanticism, Transcendentalism, Modernism, Postmodernism, and Pseudo-modernism. I will articulate my particular philosophical bend on each of these –isms shortly. My primary method will apply Marxist, Psychoanalytic, and Cultural critical techniques to examine the supernatural philosophies embedded in works by J.M. Barrie, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Horace Walpole, Edgar Allan Poe, Charlotte Bronte, Wilkie Collins, Dan Brown, and J.K. Rowling.

Efforts to obfuscate non-traditional supernaturalism occur due to its subversive nature. When supernatural phenomena lie outside of and/or subvert dominant social, educational, and religious structures, specific historicization efforts, usually articulated through textualization acts, other what appear to be alien supernatural phenomena. My criticism is not of all historicization and textualization efforts, though. Rather, I wish to call attention to incendiary finite structures that, in their efforts to structure history, ultimately eliminate authentic events for the purpose of ideological promulgation. Leroy Searle asserts that “texts are presumably instruments of communication” (3). Far from this benign designation, though, they are “institutional facts and cultural interventions that may affect one’s sense of personal, religious, cultural, ethnic or national identity, just as they shape historical cultures in manifold ways” (3). Texts, especially fictional works, make important contributions to the process of historicization and remain important components to cultural legitimacy. Searle opines that these important transactional moments “ennoble, just as they define and limit, the scope of collective social and cultural life” (4). Therefore, “we cannot afford to treat [historicization] casually” (4). I am concerned with the misuse of such communication acts, particularly when they vilify, alienate, and refute supernatural events that allegedly subvert and/or suggest ideals outside of accepted structures.

Towards the end of this study, I will suggest how past historicization and textualization efforts continue to affect our modern world. Preceding dominant structures create what I call a tradition of marginalization, which is a general term to characterize the othering efforts of social agencies and which affect our relationship with the supernatural realm of existence. Today’s writers show an acute sensitivity to what is a

new crisis of faith that emerges out of this tradition of marginalization. An examination of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series all indicate in various ways the inability of traditional religious structures to address the spiritual needs of many individuals who live in a contemporary technology-driven environment. Brown's novel illustrates the debunking of traditional patriarchal religious structures and their repression of the Sacred Feminine at a time when the Catholic Church in particular continues to hemorrhage followers worldwide.

When supernatural experiences fit within already established matrices, individuals share freely without fear of retribution. Established social agencies other these phenomena in various ways, should these interactions subvert or challenge prescribed social norms. This tradition of marginalization stretches back to the ancient Roman government and its response to what it perceived as the Cult of Christianity. As this new faith system became popular, history chronicles a clash between followers of the traditional polytheistic religious system and believers of the new upstart faith. This led to horrible atrocities on both sides. Romans massacred Christians to protect their particular faith, while Christians attacked Romans in order to establish functional space within the mainstream social order. As Charles Freeman writes in his study, *The Closing of the Western Mind*, Emperor Constantine's support of Christianity "transformed [Christianity] from a religion of outsiders to one of insiders, a transformation of incalculable importance for western history," especially when one considers that a similar event has not occurred since (153). This is perhaps the last time Western history witnessed an effective wholesale resistance to this tradition of marginalization. Of course, once

Christianity became an accepted mainstream social structure, it constructed a new, more virulent methodology that continues to influence today's world. The reason is obvious. Much as Roman religion resisted the Cult of Christianity to avoid losing its position of dominance, mainstream Christianity oppresses emergent cults to avoid a similar fate.

There have been efforts, though, to unseat Christianity's dominance, and with it, this tradition of marginalization. In the long nineteenth-century in particular, a non-violent reinvestigation of religion through secular means criticized religion, especially Christianity, to an extent never before witnessed. A new consideration of the supernatural emerged through secular artistry. This emerged initially through the advent of Romanticism. For the purposes of this study, I consider Romanticism from the perspective of Michael Lowy and Robert Sayre, who assert in *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity* that it was a dissident movement opposed to a modernity born out of "capitalist realism" (19). Lowy and Sayre cite Lukács, who in *The Theory of the Novel* finds a "Romanticism of disillusion" (19). Authors of the period negotiate an attempt to bridge the "incommensurability between the soul and reality, in which 'the soul [is] larger and wider than the destinies which life has to offer'" due to the influence of industrialization and science (19). More specifically, Romantic writers wish to facilitate the soul's "return to its homeland, in the spiritual sense," which is the "nostalgia at the heart of the Romantic attitude" (19). Such wistfulness emerges because people had a sense at the time of "a lost paradise accompanied by a quest for what ha[d] been lost" (22). The active principle most appropriate to this study's consideration of supernaturalism in the context of Romantic thought is its "anxiety, state of perpetual becoming, interrogation, quest, [and] struggle" (22-3). In essence, the Romantics wish to

find deeper spiritual interconnectivity for the future through an “attempt to find or re-create the ideal past state” (23). As I will also argue, though, this effort does encounter some resistance. The rise of Gothicism’s popularity during the period is one particular example. At the surface it tends to vilify the past through horror and terror-inspiring supernatural figures who point to a more superstitious past.

Still, Romanticism encouraged artists to experience transcendent moments without a mortal intermediary. This model conflicts with Christian thought, which asserts the importance of priests in particular to facilitate spiritual interactions and growth. George Eliot’s 1846 translation of David Friedrich Strauss’ *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* provides a scientific investigative model to consider long-held beliefs by Christians dating back to its establishment as the state religion of Rome. Strauss finds “the possible existence of the mythical and the legendary in the Gospels,” which associates the Bible as a mythical, rather than a historical, text (87). In fact, Strauss argues what to many would be blasphemy; that is, the Bible is, “in the first place . . . not history; in the second it is fiction” (87). These efforts question the common belief that the Bible represents an accurate historical account of Jewish and Christian histories, particularly the Gospel’s four accounts of Jesus’ life.

In raising doubt, writers like Strauss and translations by individuals such as George Eliot speak to an emergent skepticism during the period. Research such as this undermines writers like John Henry Cardinal Newman, who says in Chapter Five of *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* that believing the doctrine of the Church is easy when one believes “that the Catholic Roman Church [is] the oracle of God, and that she . . . declared this doctrine to be part of the original revelation” (264). Tension between these

two forces emerged because of the French Revolution, a movement fed in part by what Helen Maria Williams calls “the fanatical and discontented clergy which swarmed about [King Louis XVI’s] palace” (100). These “non-juring bishops and archbishops . . . having lost their wealth and their influence by the revolution, prompted the king to run all risks in order to gratify their own resentment” (100). These actions vilified the concept of revolution for some members of the British populace.

Yet a contiguous revolution of ideas emerged which were associated with a drive towards strong selfhood in new political and artistic considerations that considered the supernatural from innovative secular positions. Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads*, and Wordsworth’s *Preface* and *Prelude, Or Growth of a Poet’s Mind*, mirrored by the American Transcendentalist thought of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, provide alternative structures by which humans can achieve nirvana. For instance, Emerson states in *Spiritual Laws* that “our young people are diseased with the theological problems of original sin, origin of evil, and the like” (78). Rather than expose children to the “dead weight of a Sunday school,” Emerson believes guidance is available for all, but the only way to acquire this knowledge is through “lowly listening” (80-1). Individuals find enlightenment through a location “in the middle of the stream of power and wisdom which animates all whom it floats, and . . . are without effort impelled to truth, to right, and a perfect contentment” (81). This same archetype appears in Thoreau’s decision to live in the forest, Wordsworth’s “thoughts recollected in tranquility,” and Coleridge’s considerations of the supernatural. While not a direct attack on traditional religious structures, there is an indirect reconsideration of secular methodologies devoid of catechism and ritual to acquire Truth.



While Great Britain did not necessarily see a political revolution, it did experience an ideological revolution, particularly in terms of artistic creativity. Similar concepts also influenced American writers, where Transcendental writers illustrated a “Spirit of the Age” that surpassed geographical boundaries. In this study, my usage of the term “Transcendental” or Transcendentalism comes from Arthur Versluis’ text, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions*. He writes, it is “fundamentally an intuitionism, a belief that Truth can be intuitively perceived by higher Reason, that this intuition precedes and invigorates all religious awareness, and that it can penetrate the various forms of world religions, extracting from them their essence” (12). Later Victorian authors lauded Romantic and Transcendental thought as essential to human progression. For instance, in his text *Modern Manufacture and Design*, John Ruskin states the importance of “bringing the power and charm of art within the reach of the humble and the poor” for their self-development, which is a concept in support of Wordsworth’s artistic theories (1592-3). These same writers understood how the rise of science and industrialization threatened to squelch these efforts. Again, Ruskin laments how the development of industry would ensure “no spot of English ground [remained], on which it would be possible to stand, without a definite chance of being blown off it at any moment, into small pieces” (1590). Indeed, they saw how science as an epistemological force typically supplanted religion, and with it, faithfulness in supernatural potentialities. This shift in devotion undermined faith and replaced it with a virulent skepticism that did not disappear until empirical proofs emerged.

With the Fin de Siècle, authors endorsed Romanticist ideals and likewise agreed that science and industrialization caused danger. These writers witnessed a formalized

effort towards scientific empiricism through the establishment of modernism, an overarching philosophy with roots as far back as the seventeenth-century, which undermined centuries of religious devotion. As Tim Armstrong opines in his monograph, *Modernism*, the selfsame extension of Enlightenment thinking generated a “discourse which actively promote[d] the modern against the inherited: the discourse of rationalization, progress and autonomy: the abolition of superstition and the mastery of nature” (2). While the critical dialogue this movement engendered promoted the elimination of irrelevant or outdated knowledge, I would argue that there was too great a focus on rationalization, progress, and autonomy. Through othering techniques such as Gothicism, this scientific mindset not only stigmatized emergent cults during the nineteenth century but also questioned established religious frameworks as well. This rational-based attack on spirituality undermined development of the spiritual self in favor of a more developed intellectual self. I concur with Armstrong, who finds the “demand to ‘make it new’ places modernism and modernity in proximity, and often involves a violent rejection of the petrified values of ‘art’ in favour of ‘life’ of reform” (5). Such efforts emphasize reality and rationalism while de-emphasizing romanticism and feeling.

As I illustrate throughout this study, Modernism’s contradictions are its greatest flaws. To Armstrong, Modernism is characterized “by a series of seeming contradictions; both a rejection of the past and a fetishization of certain earlier periods; both primitivism and a defence of civilization against the barbarians; both enthusiasm for the technological and fear of it; both a celebration of impersonal making and a stress on subjectivity” (5). Efforts by writers throughout the nineteenth-century to escape this modernity concurrently illustrate how authors become trapped within its web of fluctuating

tendencies. Efforts to use literature to further a counter-Enlightenment and anti-modernist agenda fall within a contradiction of rejection through the construction of new structures that bear attempts at radical experimentation. These ironically resemble the same structures that are othered but which are identified through revised patterns of expression.

While I accept the radical nature of Modernism and its promotion of newfound systems, I remain critical of its tendency towards what Tim Armstrong refers to as “Fascism,” which it attempts through its “expression of a stability of social relations” (5). As Sara Blair relates in *Modernism and the Politics of Culture*, this established stability comes through the promotion of “ideals of cultural unity and organicism, hierarchy, and social order” (162). As Blair notes, the potential psychic shock provided by Modernist experimentation is quickly undermined by the “force of familiarity and canonization,” since “writers during the era of high Modernism” struggle to negotiate self-expressive experimentation and the pressure to adapt Modernism’s “formalism and techniques, even its defining idioms, often so as to contest its political commitments” (162). The Modernist writer uses the form to rebel against typical accepted modes of expression. Yet using modernist systems of expression in fact limits the writer to a particular structural form though it appears he/she produces an innovative alternative perceptual construct. While different, the new mode of expression tends to resemble a prior construction merely repackaged.

As a result, true rebellion to oppressive structures is lost through conversion to an alternative system that returns the writer to a similar and familiar starting position with simple linguistic and/or conceptual alterations. As Blair notes, the culprit for this

contradiction in efforts comes from the tension of creating new modes that “could simultaneously mean the open embrace of modernity’s opportunities and the defensive rejection of its challenges” (166). More specifically, Blair finds that Modernism is a “unified movement promoting a distinct set of concerns, foremost among them a commitment to experimenting with the cultural power of literary traditions and forms” (166). It is no surprise, then, that this particular –ism does not embrace the supernatural text. Though such authors may use the Modernist form to articulate their revolutionary concepts, the topic itself, that being a realm of existence not discernible via scientific means, exists outside of the distinct criteria that are a part of Modernist ideology.

With the emergence of significant trust in science’s ability to discover absolutes and panaceas that govern all levels of existence, efforts by Modernist’s Realism squelch any text that promotes a supernatural idealism external to accepted structures of meaning. This quest towards surety significantly undermined spirituality in secular contexts as well. Consequently, Fin de Siècle authors saw Romanticism recede as Arnold laments in *Dover Beach*. The “Sea of Faith,” which experienced a temporary improvement through the efforts of Romantic ideals, once again began “its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar” (21, 25). The cause was the “confused alarms of struggle and flight” inspired by the “ignorant armies [who] clash by night” through their assertion of definitive modernist values (36, 37). In this way, Victorian concerns about the dangers of science and industrialization became a reality.

In America, focus on authentic supernatural encounters resembled the concern of Transcendental writers. As with their Romantic counterparts, these American authors understood the power of sublimity in the picturesque. The likes of Ralph Waldo

Emerson generated essays and provided lectures to inform the public about the importance of preserving and nurturing one's spiritual acumen, whether it occurred through secular or religious structures. Like the Romantics, Transcendental writers did not necessarily dislike traditional religions in theory. They did, however, fear that these systems might become ideological programming agents intent on controlling the masses rather than enabling authentic spiritual development akin to the ideals of Eastern metaphysical phenomena.

For instance, Henry David Thoreau embodied these rustic lifestyles, retreating to the forest so he could "suck out the marrow of life . . . if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it" (88). Likewise, poets such as Jones Very manifested these theories into the act of artistic creation. Prose from these authors projected similar stylistic considerations centered on simplicity of expression and theoretical underpinnings alert to finding sublimity through natural encounters. As witnessed in Europe, though, the Industrial Revolution and rise of science made its way to America, too. Yet the particular brand that developed here was more virulent, permitting as it did the free market democratic system, regulatory strategies which could be best defined as laissez-faire. People subsequently spurned the rustic pastoral of America's founding past. Instead, they gravitated towards an urban artificiality, where it became more difficult, if not impossible, to find the sublime and picturesque lauded by Romantic and Transcendental thinkers amid the squalor of these urban tenements.

Rowling's incredibly popular *Harry Potter* series likewise responds to this crisis by suggesting the adoption of a new secular religiosity that embraces the spiritual ability latent within each of us, as well as our ability to communicate with the supernatural

through similar immortal essences. Pullman's *His Dark Materials* builds upon Nietzsche's proposition that "God is Dead." European consciousness sees the replacement of the "God-Man" with the "Man-God" due to the emergence of the reactive life (154). Pullman illustrates through the series' evolution, culminating in God's death in *The Amber Spyglass*, that we no longer correlate "divine will and reactive life" (154). Instead, humankind has the ability to displace God through human devotion to the reactive life, wherein "God suffocates" (154). These texts reinvigorate contemplation of the supernatural to address contemporary spiritual concerns by suggesting alternate systems in the tradition of Romantic and Transcendental ideologies. Like their predecessors, these efforts subvert dominant popular structures. Still, these texts are among the most popular works of fiction today, which suggest hope within a contemporary context. As occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there is renewed interest in Romantic and Transcendental ideologies to encourage productive and meaningful relationships with supernatural phenomena, which, in turn, might yield a greater sense of individuality and heightened epiphanies during these profound moments of spiritual enrichment.

The term "supernatural," admittedly, tends to be rather amorphous. For the sake of clarity, when *supernatural* appears in this study, I refer to any action or event which traditional scientific methods cannot necessarily explain. Often, these experiences provide mortal individuals with transcendent moments that reveal higher Truths, and often they do so at the expense of human structures created to control a particular group. Society often others these supernatural incidents to maintain dominance and keep these structures intact. These squelching efforts, however, frequently distract individuals from

a higher state of Truth. As part of these events, some *supernatural agent* becomes involved, often the specific being who introduces the person to these transcendent Truths. As Bown, Burdett, and Thurschwell define in their Introduction to *The Victorian Supernatural*, these agents are often in the form of “ghosts, fairies, gods, demons, pantomimes, and machinery that science cannot wholly explain” (1). An additional concept I introduce involves the supernatural and supernatural agent within a conceptual structure defined as *supernaturalism*. Here, I pose a secular construct concerned with a higher form of existence not necessarily aligned with or defined by traditional religious structures. This study illustrates how the supernatural, supernatural agencies, and various incarnations of supernaturalism provide alternative perspectives on common cosmological, epistemological, and ontological concerns which often subvert or lie external to popular thought. Seeing them as a threat, social agencies often refute these events, agents, or structures.

Dominant ideological structures, as I note above, primarily undermine supernaturalism through a process of othering, usually carried out through acts of historicization accomplished through oral or written textualization efforts. Though various definitions of the other exist, my definition in this study functions as the binary opposite of sameness, wherein individuals usually find comfort and security as they conform to notions of identity. As Jean-Paul Sartre asserts in *Notebooks for Ethics*, it is crucial for humanity to assimilate “a consciousness in order to conceive of progress as one thing” (430). This homogenization of consciousness contributes to a dulling universality of thought, wherein most individuals achieve some form of boring certainty in terms of knowledge and orientation. For Sartre, this effort ensures that the “external

universe [remains] constant,” wherein “a series of generations” find goals whose invariance ensures continuity, since “each one takes up the work where the other has left it” (430).

While uniformity leads to consistency, it problematizes the introduction of new knowledge especially if its divergence is of particular or innovative significance. Sartre finds strict uniformity difficult given the natural human predilection towards differentiation. He writes, “though everyone intends order . . . it is not always the same order” (430). These variations fall “outside the subjective into the objective Spirit and gives itself up without any defense to a new surpassing” (430). Here perhaps is where modernism’s failure is most profound. Through its rejection of the past, modernism hoped to construct new systems that would establish stability and a starting point for further investigation. Unfortunately, this becomes problematic since, as Sartre suggests, social ideologies evolve through a “perpetual fall and transformation of the subject into an object” (430). This process of objectification lies outside of prior established systems, which leads to a profound disordering. When this occurs, human agencies work through mediation to ensure “unity of one consciousness” (430). As I will argue later, herein is modernism’s greatest flaw. While as a philosophy it promotes disorderliness in the context of what is the past, modernist thought fails to consider the likelihood, if not the definitiveness, that it, too, will undergo similar restructurings.

In fact, structuring efforts became so complex by the 1950s and 1960s that a new radical framework of thought, postmodernism, emerged in response to modernism’s certainty and zealotry in the discovery of absolutes. As I earlier illustrate, a significant concept within Modernism is the belief in the existence of a realist knowledge



that is independent of subjective perceptual considerations. As Lawrence Cahoon writes, postmodernism questions the certainty of modernist thought. It queries whether it is possible to find “objective knowledge of the world independent of the knower, ‘univocal’ meaning of words and texts, the unity of the human self, even the very notion of truth, as well as the cogency of the distinctions between rational inquiry and political action, literal and metaphoric meaning, and science and art” (1). Fundamentally, postmodernism suggest that rejection of “the fundamental intellectual pillars of modern Western civilization” push humankind towards the discovery of new epistemologies to eclipse the arcane modes of modernist thought (1). Modernism believes that the incorporation of science as a primary means of metaphysical and epistemological agency would establish profound certainties largely incapable of dispute with respect to all epistemological, metaphysical, and cosmological concerns.

For instance, Thomas Kuhn asserts in *The Nature and Necessity of Scientific Revolutions* that the cumulative nature of normal research “owes its success to the ability of scientists regularly to select problems that can be solved with conceptual and instrumental techniques close to those already in existence” (202). Of course, the benefit is the confirmation of already established systems of thought that see a conservative-to-moderate tweaking as opposed to a radical restructuring that most postmodern thought supports. The deliberate nature of science according to Kuhn means the researcher knows “what he wants to achieve, and he designs his instruments and directs his thoughts accordingly” (202). Of course, this significant focus could lead to a dangerous myopia ignorant of alternative structures that could lead to more profound discoveries.

One of these areas of knowledge potentially ignored within a scientific modernist schema is the narrative, which Lyotard finds is always “in conflict with science” (259). More specifically, modernist scientific epistemologies produce a “discourse of legitimation with respect to its own status” (259). Like Lyotard, I use the term *modern* in this study to “designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse [which makes] an explicit appeal to some grand narrative” (259). This process excludes alternative textualization and historicization efforts that may fit outside the grand narrative but nevertheless textualize authentic historical events particular to supernatural agency. For these reasons, postmodernism and its deconstructive tendencies are important. As Lyotard asserts, our contemporary society and culture exists within a postindustrial society which contributes to our postmodern condition. Within this construct, we question the “legitimation of knowledge [since] the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative of emancipation” as some modernist supporters would opine (264).

More specifically, as Max Weber asserts in *Science as a Vocation*, it is possible to “learn [knowledge] at any time” (128). This means, “Principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation” (128). In this “disenchantment,” the world no longer needs “magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savages, for whom such mysterious powers existed” (128). Instead, “technical means and calculations perform this service” through a process Weber refers to as “intellectualization” (128). Rather than put forth such efforts to arrive at complex monolithic structures that impede the discovery of Truth, it is important, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak retorts, to attend to

the “double session of representations rather than reintroduce the individual subject through totalizing concepts of power or desire” (319). Consequently, Spivak sees the possibility “that the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of Other as the Self’s shadow . . . as it reinscribes the social text, even as it is erased, however imperfectly, when it claims to be the final determinant or the transcendental signified” (320).

Deconstructive efforts by postmodernists lead to pseudo-modernism, though, where no definitive Truth exists. Charles Harrison uses the example of art in his text, *Conceptual Art and Painting: Further Essays on Art and Language* to illustrate the failings of modernism in providing definitive structures by which to interpret art, specifically, but all efforts of signification, generally. He writes, “it has been a realistic requirement of modernism since its inception that the substance of the aesthetic be found work worked in face of the unaesthetic” (117). While postmodernism can be partially blamed for the reasons I earlier posit, it is clear in our New Millennial culture that failing to provide clear truths in the process of constructing, communicating, and confirming meaning is a profound relativity that undermines any possible objectivity. Instead, what surfaces is a radical subjectivity. As Harrison notes, when

paintings establish their meaning by reference only to other paintings—texts by reference to other texts, art objects by reference only to other art objects—if there are not some ordinary unaesthetic materials being worked on in culture, then there can in the end be no noninstrumental or nonaesthetic criteria of success and failure. (117)

Instead, the critic must rely upon internalized and subjective evaluative structures that limit the perceptual space inhabited by the subject through relational dynamics that inhibit an exteriority that establishes definitive objective standards.

While few would have predicted the demise of Modernism, this study illustrates how nineteenth-century Romantic and Transcendental assertions regarding supernaturalism predict science's limitations. Later Victorian and Fin de Siècle thought reinforce such initial doubts. Specifically, I show the restrictions of a priori and empirical thought as validation structures. Since these two systems are critical to the scientific method, the mediation Sartre discusses to resolve the conservative to moderate changes experienced in supernaturalism's divergences will force everything "to be started over again" (430). Attempts at negotiating these differences prove futile since the mediation effort itself becomes "an obstacle" more so than a means of convergence through compromise (430). Under such conditions, what was "the Same becomes the Other" for the same reasons Spivak articulates (430). Social agents come to realize integration through synthesis is not possible since both systems avoid undermining the fundamental ideologies that led to their initial points of divergence. In response, society consciously or unconsciously stigmatizes the supernatural and supernatural agents as part of supernaturalism through various invalidation efforts. In general, textualizing and historicizing the supernatural take on a general quality of what Sartre calls "disorder," wherein agents, practices, events, and believers are labeled in general as superstitious, or even worse, "evil blasphemers" (430).

Through points of divergence, Sartre finds a "perpetual opposition between the given order, which is disorder for those newly arrived on the scene (the established

order), and a living disorder (a negation of order), which is a subjective order” (430). I find this subjectivity relative based on perception, though, since “consciousness exercises negativity” towards the other until enough time elapses for additional consideration (430). If after further objective review the disorder proves genuine, then these selfsame functionalities that project the supernatural (in this case) should re-textualize and consequently re-historicize supernaturalism as the same rather than different through an altered, more inclusive context. Throughout this study, I illustrate the particular processes society uses to other divergent supernaturalism. Conversely, I document how the supernatural, supernatural agents, and supernaturalism resist these efforts while simultaneously establishing validity through sameness, even while this may re-project the previous same as a new other.

Through such deconstructive inversions, the typical signifier-signified relationships break down at a fundamental phoneme level. This necessitates a linguistic reconstruction that includes the former otherness that is now sameness, since these particular objects and constructs find a priori and/or empirical legitimacy. As Sartre suggests, these efforts are important beyond acceptance of supernaturalism. From a macrocosmic perspective, this typical struggle involves a more fundamental layering which inhibits human progress. Specifically, each “new project of putting things in order is constructed on top of the negation of the preceding one and ideology includes many more layers of the human order” (430). The resultant ossification through the significant increase in simple ideological density makes progress and associated action problematic if not impossible.

While each new layer of ideology is of particular value, the dissimilitude between each layer leads to a bifurcation that inhibits the elimination of prior knowledge through invalid structures. As Sartre confirms, “the ideology, as it closes in on itself and passes over the other imprisons a large number of men” (431). On the surface, this model appears eclectic, suggesting a repositioning through an inclusive open ellipsis. Yet a deeper analysis reveals a circuitous structure trapped within its own illogic. The apparent open ellipsis suggests progress; in truth, it is “instead marching in place . . . in the relation of the subjective to the objective” (431). Sartre calls this phantom progress an involution, which witnesses “the subjugation of the subjective to the objective, of the subject to the Spirit” (431). The Romantics and Transcendentalists constructed new philosophies that drew upon some western religious traditions (such as the presence of an authentic, knowledgeable, powerful supernatural agent), yet they deviated by suggesting the possibility for private audiences with supernatural phenomena wherein one can acquire higher knowledge without an intermediary.

While these suggestions align with eastern metaphysical thought, such ideas skew popular western metaphysical and religious traditions. In one sense, these Romantic and Transcendental writers pushed humanity towards Hegel’s “diversity of consciousness,” where one rediscovers “each different from the others, the unity of the object, that is, of the Spirit” (431). As writers like Burke articulated through their study of the sublime, this Spirit is an ethereal substance which exists “behind the consciousness and realizes itself through them,” where human cognition becomes “an epiphenomenon” (431). Most look at such processes exclusively within the microcosm of the one; I assert a similar macrocosmic method, though, for the larger social structure itself. Romantic and

Transcendental writers wanted to drive humanity beyond religious gains through a secular spirituality that included traditional religious structures but that did not necessarily rely on these methodologies. With these efforts, writers hoped for a New Enlightenment through an anti-Enlightenment, where humans embraced both feeling and logic together to move beyond a priori and empirical structures towards a greater inclusivity of the universe's potentialities, perhaps by generating a new alternative validation structure more inclusive of etherealities. In this way, Romantic thought provides a new cognitive structure wherein the adoption of sense offsets the limitations of our logic- and experiential-based sensitivities.

This study investigates five particular othering techniques employed by social and religious ideological spheres manifested in historicization and associated textualization acts. The commonality among each concerns supernaturalism's subversiveness or alterity and the resultant response by dominant social structures. To begin, I explore the relationship between the process of artistic creation, the supernatural as muse, and the tendency within this imaginative dynamic to produce new perspectives that often undermine accepted thought. In particular, I explore the central role of childhood curiosity and innocence in the discovery of novel insights. I use J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* to study the importance of childhood curiosity and the manner incorporated by society through parents to stifle this inquisitiveness to protect dominant controlling social ideologies. Through a deconstruction of typical scholarship concerning Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*, I illustrate how society targets women in particular who are especially in-tune with the supernatural realm. To sever this particularly profound relationship, gender expectations construct ideologies that demand female subservience

to masculine power agents. Further distractions include the importance of birthing and raising children, which inhibits the development of profound relationships between women and supernatural agents. Through William Wordsworth I suggest how Romantic ideologies can indeed promote reconnection with the supernatural realm even after alienation promoted by the same separatist systems found in Barrie and Rossetti. I include Coleridge as well, whose focus on the supernatural illustrates the importance of supernatural connectivity.

In Chapter II, I deconstruct traditional considerations of Gothicism by returning to Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*. My focus is on the Second Preface, where I argue that he expresses a more direct and specific purpose for Gothicism which modern critics overlook. That is, while the horror and terror associated with Gothic events is important, the fixation on such characteristics distracts one from a deeper purpose, which is to offer stark criticisms of social ideological systems and associated acts of historicization and textualization. Often the tendency is to overlook the possibility that human agents rather than the supernatural produce true horror and terror. I apply this new consideration of Gothicism to Byron's *Manfred* to suggest the influence on British literature and Poe's *Ligeia* to illustrate affect on American texts. In both cases, I illustrate how a reconsideration of vilification reveals important criticisms of human social behavior by the authors in question.

Next, I demonstrate the role that the supernatural plays in the facilitation of deeply spiritual platonic and romantic relationships through an examination of Collins' *The Two Destinies* and Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. In particular, I illustrate how supernatural phenomena mediate connections between intended spiritual beings, even though society



interferes for financial or social reasons. The final particular nineteenth-century issue I study is the alterity of supernaturalism as a means to explore Truth and the tendency of social systems, in particular religions, which subvert such investigative efforts. I specifically examine Arthur Conan Doyle's *Land of Mist*, where the triad of Professor Challenger, Malone, and Enid project a new archetypal triad. Each individual represents a different bend on supernaturalism. Challenger is the social agent who subverts supernaturalism through scientific empiricism out of fear of supernaturalism's potential to undermine established systems based on science. He stigmatizes unique supernatural phenomena such as levitation and mesmerism as parlor tricks which prey upon the superstition of the ignorant. Enid represents the coming twentieth-century postmodern mindset who doubts the certainty of modernism's scientific certainty and associated capabilities. She continually posits the potential for supernatural cults as authentic, even though artificial instrumentation cannot confirm the empiricist evidence that suggests the validity of these fringe movements. Malone completes the triad. He is a skeptic who awaits either traditional or contemporary supernatural structures to prove their authenticity through modern scientific experiential means or alternative epistemological systems that could replace the limited science-based methodologies.

From there I consider the unique yet consistent efforts within Fin de Siècle literature to construct separate binaries to compartmentalize and thus establish control over the mortal, scientific, literal, civilized self and its vilified alter-ego, the immortal, artistic, metaphoric, and barbaric self within R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. I also discuss how Matthew Arnold's poem, *The Buried Life*, shows the hidden self that, though dark and barbaric, is central to artistic production

stimulated through interactions with supernatural agency. My study of Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* illustrates how the sublime more so than beauty leads to the discovery of Truth for the reasons Percy Bysshe Shelley articulates in *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. I particularly show what happens when the artist permanently loses interconnectivity with the supernatural due to accepted social agencies like religion. My examples include Wordsworth and Coleridge, two revolutionary artists who late in life see their artistic potency become flaccid, perhaps due to their identification with established religion as several prominent scholars assert.

The final chapter will analyze, synthesize, and evaluate how nineteenth-century concerns of the Romantic, Transcendental, Victorian, and Fin de Siècle disturb our contemporary culture. Specifically, I relate how epistemological and metacognitive trends throughout the century lead up to and into the New Millennial period. This discussion explains the current popularity of secular supernaturalism, evident in the novels, films, and other media that are in high demand today. The specific texts I study include Martin Scorsese's film, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, and J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. In *The Last Temptation of Christ*, I discuss how Scorsese's film represents a significant yet mild consideration of alternative historical accounts of Jesus' life on Earth, specifically his relationship with Mary Magdalene. When I progress to Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, I consider his resurrection of Scorsese's earlier thoughts regarding Magdalene but from a more profound angle—that is, the Church's subversion of the sacred feminine. While a supernatural figure in her own right, Brown suggests that the Church conceals the

historical validity of Christ's marriage and Magdalene's pregnancy to ensure a consistent divine perception of Jesus and an idealism dominated by patriarchy.

My study of *Harry Potter* builds upon my analysis of Scorsese and Brown. I posit that the recent popularity surrounding Dan Brown, J.K. Rowling, Stephenie Myers, and Philip Pullman address a new spiritual crisis in the wake of a transition to a New Millennial period marked by a New Terrorism fed by religious ideology and associated zealotry. I show how Brown and Rowling construct a new archetypal triad that builds upon my discussion of Doyle's *The Land of Mist*. Anchored by the heroic academic in the guise of Robert Langdon, Harry Potter, Dumbledore, and many other Hogwarts professors, this character type saves authentic supernatural history from permanent eradication by subversive elements like Opus Dei and Voldemort. I also couch this discussion in a consideration of how nineteenth-century concerns for authentic supernaturalism, human relationship with its agency, and the influence of a New Terrorism haunt our New Millennial world. Specifically, I examine how these fundamentalist forces seek to destabilize emergent or established faith and social systems to create a vacuum caused by a crisis of legitimacy. These radicals then work to fill this vacuum with their own perverted analyses and interpretation of what are peaceful, if not authentic, religious texts.

In sum, this study chronicles the importance of meaningful human relationships with supernatural phenomena. While religions tend to dominate this particular human need and provide the necessary means to enlighten humankind of its profound shortcomings, these systems do not provide universal sublime encounters that satisfy all individual's unique existential questions. Alternative structures, particularly ones

proposed by the Romantics and Transcendentalists, provide important additional structures whose authors are prime examples of these modes' effectiveness. Essentially, humankind needs supernatural agency in some form to satisfy a primeval need. The texts included throughout this study show how human structures focus on the authenticity of these systems rather than promote a spiritual and epistemological myopia that interfere with the development and evolution of our supernatural selves.

CHAPTER I

THE SUBVERSIVE SUPERNATURAL: HOW HISTORICIZATION AND  
TEXTUALIZATION ACTS OTHER PARANORMAL EVENTS AND  
CURIOSITY'S ROLE IN INDIVIDUAL RESISTANCE TO SOCIAL  
INDOCTRINATION AS SEEN IN *PETER PAN*, *GOBLIN MARKET*, AND  
THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE

Death is a mystery that has confounded nearly every civilization over the course of human history. The literary record of humanity shows that philosophers, theologians, writers, and people from all walks of life have spent a great deal of time reflecting and conceptualizing what happens when the biological processes associated with life cease to function. The topic continues to tantalize humanity. Historically, humankind has textualized what occurs after the cessation of life in a variety of different ways. In this chapter, I illustrate how the examination of supernatural texts may intend to recapture the phenomena historicized within a context that reveals a more objective characterization of these supernatural phenomena. Unfortunately, though, the more common practice others the supernatural through labels, most often as superstition or figments of one's imagination.

As I will show, writers of the nineteenth-century assert that we must separate the influences of dominant ideologies from actual events to provide an accurate historical record. This would perhaps enable an understanding of the supernatural phenomena that is independent from the common social act of othering. I would argue that the texts under discussion in this chapter display how society uses dominant ideologies to other supernatural phenomena. I would also assert that these texts offer additional cultural

evidence of the nature of social perceptions of the supernatural present at the time of the text's creation. The author's textualization of the fictitious history that is a part of the plot, character development, and other literary elements embeds this information.

To the ancient Greeks, death represented a passage from one form of life to another. Mark P.O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon in *Classical Mythology* note that, in the Homeric Underworld, "all mortals end up together pretty much in the same place"—the realm of Hades (277). Actions in one's past life determine appointment in Hades, for "ordinary mortals do not suffer for their sins" (Morford & Lenardon 277). In Judeo-Christianity, morality and one's works determine if one ascends to heaven or descends to hell after death. As Death relates in the drama *Everyman*, "For before God thou shalt answer, and show / Thy many bad deeds, and good but a few; / How thou has spent thy life, and in what wise, / Before chief Lord of paradise" (Jacobus, ed. 107-10). One will go to heaven if, in the final reckoning or accounting, the individual has accepted God's free gift of grace which results from Christ's death or has maximized his/her potential and used it for the benefit of humankind. However, if the person has shunned the gift, has used his/her talents selfishly, or has failed to maximize the talents provided, the consequence will be assignment to hell—a place of permanent suffering.

Humankind's fascination with death is only one finite representation of a larger topic that is routinely considered—that of the supernatural. Bown, Burdett, and Thurschwell, in their Introduction to *The Victorian Supernatural*, define the supernatural as ghosts, fairies, gods, demons, spirits, pantomimes, and machinery that science cannot wholly explain (I). As with any "-ism," I would argue that Supernaturalism involves a secular belief in the existence of and actions by gods, demons, pantomimes, and

machinery that cannot be wholly explained through science. Furthermore, I would argue that the supernatural includes the ability to channel unexplainable human power through mortal forms, whereby these mortals can perform actions and become privy to knowledge usually concealed from the average human being. As this dissertation will prove, concealment of supernatural acts and phenomena is not due to actions by the supernatural agent but is instead a product of socialization via the historical act of textualization that others the supernatural, consequently leading to disbelief in or the undervaluation of supernatural agents and supernaturalism.

As noted above by the Homeric Underworld and the Judeo-Christian perspective of heaven and hell, humanity's textualization of the supernatural and supernaturalism results in historicization. The product of such historical acts is the creation of mythologies. This label insinuates that supernatural agents, supernatural actions, and supernaturalism are somehow devoid of scientifically verifiable evidence and based instead on blind subjective belief. Barber and Barber, in *When They Severed Earth from Sky: How the Human Mind Shapes Myth*, argue that most myths "stem from actual events and real observations of the world, [which] can be understood better through understanding the close relationship [that exists] between myth, language, and cognition" (3). In other words, myths often do communicate real knowledge but do so through a concretely constructed symbolic expression that enables deeper understanding and consequent analysis.

Unfortunately, though, society tends to textualize and historicize the supernatural in a way that invalidates its existence and, consequently by extension, the knowledge that

supernatural agents attempt to communicate. As Hayden White states in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*,

the historical consciousness on which Western man has prided himself since the beginning of the nineteenth century may be little more than a theoretical basis for the ideological position from which Western civilization views its relationship not only to cultures and civilizations preceding it but also to those contemporary with it in time and contiguous with it in space. (2)

In this case, the act of linguistically capturing supernatural phenomena for the purpose of preservation and communication results in a definition that consequently influences the ideological position from which one perceives supernatural phenomena. The stimulus is rarely captured or communicated in an objective way; instead, a subjective contextualization usually occurs, which influences how other individuals of the same or later period independently respond to that stimulus. Furthermore, the basis for contextualization is often predicated on the value and belief systems common to the culture. Therefore, accurate communication by others depends on the stimulus' relationship to the social value and belief systems of the culture that textualizes, and consequently historicizes, the act. For instance, consider how Salem residents attempted to historicize the actions of reputed witches in the 1600's, wonderfully captured by Arthur Miller in the drama, *The Crucible*. Douglas Linder relates that,

During February of the exceptionally cold winter of 1692, young Betty Parris became strangely ill. She dashed about, dove under furniture, contorted in pain, and complained of fever. The cause of her symptoms may have been some combination of stress, asthma, guilt, boredom, child abuse, epilepsy, and



delusional psychosis. The symptoms also could have been caused, as Linda Caporael argued in a 1976 article in *Science* magazine, by a disease called “convulsive ergotism” brought on by ingesting rye infected with ergot (rye was commonly eaten as a cereal and was an ingredient of bread). Ergot is caused by a fungus that invades developing kernels of rye grain, especially under warm and damp conditions such as existed at the time of the previous rye harvest in Salem. Convulsive ergotism causes violent fits, a crawling sensation on the skin, vomiting, choking, and--most interestingly--hallucinations. The hallucinogenic drug LSD is a derivative of ergot. Many of the symptoms of convulsive ergotism seem to match those attributed to Betty Parris

([http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SAL\\_ACCT.HTM](http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SAL_ACCT.HTM)).

Unfortunately, this extensive medical and chemical knowledge did not exist in the 1600's. Consequently, members of the community sought alternative answers during a time which was filled with superstition, mixed with an intense suspicion of witchcraft, and fueled by religious fervency. As a result, Lindner notes that

Another theory to explain the girls' symptoms [emerged]. Cotton Mather had recently published a popular book, *Memorable Providences*, describing the suspected witchcraft of an Irish washerwoman in Boston, and Betty's behavior in some ways mirrored that of the afflicted person described in Mather's widely read and discussed book. It was easy to believe in 1692 in Salem, with an Indian war raging less than seventy miles away (and many refugees from the war in the area) that the devil was close at hand. Sudden and violent death occupied minds. Talk of witchcraft increased when other playmates of Betty, including eleven-year-old

Ann Putnam, seventeen-year-old Mercy Lewis, and Mary Walcott, began to exhibit similarly unusual behavior. When his own nostrums failed to effect a cure, William Griggs, a doctor called to examine the girls, suggested that the girls' problems might have a supernatural origin. The widespread belief that witches targeted children made the doctor's diagnosis seem increasingly likely ([http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SAL\\_ACCT.HTM](http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SAL_ACCT.HTM)).

Cotton Mathers' text, *Memorable Providences*, combined with the religious fervency of the period and the unexplainable nature of the girls' illnesses, created an atmosphere that encouraged the townspeople to historicize these events as evidence of the devil's presence in the form of witches, rather than to consider such illness as having a more natural source. The point here is not to prove or disprove the validity of the Salem Witch Trials; perhaps, as the townspeople claimed, the devil truly was working through witches and torturing the girls with illnesses. While this may sound like an insane proposition to our modern culture, consider how many of today's followers of Christianity believe the numerous biblical passages strewn throughout the Old Testament that narrate punishment of communal groups, such as the Egyptians, through pestilence that God himself sent forth. Note how the social ideologies that surround both periods in question, the 1600's and our modern culture, offer different subjective interpretations of an objective event—in this case, the girls' illnesses. The bases for these interpretations are dominant ideologies that surround and influence those who historicized the events immediately after their occurrence or who have since attempted to deconstruct the historical record passed down over time.

Acts of textualization and historicization are particularly important to consider since, as Aers, Cook, and Punter discuss in *Romanticism and Ideology: Studies in English Writing 1765-1830*,

writing is a social activity necessarily immersed in a diversity of contemporary practices, ideological forms and problems; its minute particulars articulate forms of life and outlook, imaging and displaying the writers' attitudes towards received ideology and existing circumstances, but also performing concrete work on that ideology and those circumstances by virtue of the very process of writing, which ultimately results in individuals and collectives mak[ing] their own history, and an essential aspect of this making is the construction of meaning according to their own aspirations, experience, and practice. (2)

The study of an author's textualization and consequent historicization of supernatural phenomena represents both the individual and social perspective. As Frederic Jameson states, "history is not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, [where] our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious" (35). To interpret a text from a supernatural perspective, then, the critic asks the following questions: Does the individual indeed believe in the supernatural phenomena encountered? Would the larger social circle believe? Has the author textualized the event in an accepted context, such as an accepted traditional religious structure like Judaism, Christianity, or Islam? Alternatively, did the author choose to present these accepted religious and/or the accepted social structures as a means to critique and perhaps deconstruct the current ideology? Could the intention be the

replacement of this deceptive mythos to incorporate readily the supernatural as a relevant and real phenomenon—an occurrence that is beyond the explanatory powers of existent social and/or religious systems?

Critical questions such as these imply that the act of historicization through the textualization act by the author can result in inadvertent othering; however, from the perspective of Walter Benjamin, this act confirms the intention of Historicism, which “contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments” (263). It is important to remember, though—and critical questions, as he further opines, help to stimulate deeper examinations tied to this thought—that “no fact that is cause is for that very reason historical” (263). Instead, critics must distance themselves from the actions of the past and recognize that “historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger” (Benjamin 255). Consequently, it is of central importance that every new era attempt “anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it” (Benjamin 255).

As represented by cultural mythos, religions, oral tradition, and the like, supernatural events have continuously occurred over the course of human history. Cultures have attempted to explain these events through different means, yet through each, one common thread exists: expression of the phenomena occurs through a narrative that concretizes the abstract nature and/or philosophy that surrounds the event. This is an important point to consider since, as Frederic Jameson states, “certain texts have social and historical—sometimes even political—resonance” (17). In the context of this study, the resonance is the consistent treatment of supernaturalism through acts of textualization

and historicization that have othered the supernatural. This occurs either through vilification and/or through ideological constructs that communicate to the population that the supernatural is evil and/or a figment of one's imagination. Often, arguments present the belief that these phenomena are explainable through the new scientific methodologies under development in the late 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. I would argue that the textualization and subsequent historicization demonstrate the stigmatizing and othering of supernatural acts and the resultant supernaturalism. Writers of the periods in question demonstrate two important ideas. First, the social acts of textualization and historicization other and consequently stigmatize the supernatural. These textual and historical acts also stigmatize followers of secular and/or occult supernaturalism. This is especially prevalent when the supernatural and supernaturalism lie outside of and/or subvert the socially accepted value systems that exist, even if the othered/stigmatized act contains Truth. Secondly, they provide important insight into how notions that define supernaturalism are constructed and whether supernatural agents even exist in the first place.

When a writer becomes a part of a supernatural construct, he/she becomes a mouthpiece through which supernatural agents are able to communicate. An ancient folklore captured by Tim Reeser, author of *Ghost Stories of St. Petersburg, Florida*, states that a ghost seer is a person "born at a certain time of day . . . or particular day, [who] possesses the clairvoyant power to see ghosts and things that other persons cannot see" (54). This folklore suggests that one is able to experience the supernatural due to their birth day/time. Of most importance here is the idea that, when one sees a ghost or other supernatural phenomena, whatever effort an individual makes to share their

experience represents a textual act—the consequence of which is a historicization of the phenomena.

As this chapter will demonstrate, children or adults who maintain or recapture some degree of their childhood curiosity are best able to reject the partial or full social indoctrination which others the supernatural and consequently enables dialogue with supernatural agents. Specifically, this chapter will expound on this perspective through a careful analysis of four Romantic and Victorian writers, as well as a series of secondary source criticisms. I begin this examination with an analysis of Blake's *Introduction to the Songs of Innocence*, in which I will demonstrate that an alternative reading suggests a process by which one can establish a close relationship with supernatural agents; specifically, Blake demonstrates this model through the interactions between a mortal poet and an immortal being manifested through a child. This model features the conveyance of this supernatural knowledge in abstraction. In turn, the poet becomes the mouthpiece for the supernatural agent and uses a complex transformative process in which the supernatural knowledge is, from a linguistic perspective, restructured and converted into utterances that enable understanding of this supernatural knowledge by all, rather than just by an elite group of individuals.

Once I have demonstrated the Blakean model for establishment and maintenance of a communicative relationship with the supernatural realm, I will then demonstrate how J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* represents the importance of childhood curiosity as a means to commune with the supernatural. Barrie demonstrates that children are most able to establish and maintain this relationship since they have not yet been subject to the ideological programming that eventually inhibits and later destroys connections with the

supernatural realm. Barrie also suggests that adults can maintain a connection with the supernatural. To do so, though, he argues that one must reject socialization and accept marginalization. The individual is exiled by the dominant social ideological agents (in the case of Peter Pan himself, it is his mother) or he must exile himself/herself to avoid severing this relationship. While Blake believes the poet can remain a member of society, and an important one at that, Barrie argues that to remain in society will lead to the full suppression, and perhaps ultimate death, of the child within the adult. This suppression or death consequently destroys the communicative structure established earlier between the individual and the supernatural agent.

Upon completion of my analysis of J.M. Barrie, I then move into a study of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*, in which I analyze a typical ideological structure that others the supernatural and results in the destruction of the child, which is replaced by a properly socialized female. I argue that the dominant ideological structure in the poem others the goblin men through the incorporation of Christian imagery intended to suggest the evilness of the goblins and the rebirth of Laura through Lizzie's Christ-like sacrifice. From my perspective, though, Laura's rebirth occurs through the sacrifice of her feminine childhood. She is converted from obedience to a non-traditional religion, represented by the goblin men, to an alternative and more traditional religious structure which is accepted by the dominant socializing agents. Through evidence reinforced by the research of Kathleen Blake, among others, I will demonstrate how this structure does not free Laura, though a superficial reading of the text seems to represent that is the case. Instead, I will demonstrate the enslavement of Laura through the purposeful

disempowerment of her individual self. This occurs through assignment to a role accepted by society—namely, that of motherhood.

I complete this chapter with an analysis of selected poems by William Wordsworth, which illuminate how Romantic ideology and the associated structure of its poetics focus on the relationship between mankind and the supernatural as represented and expressed in the natural—that being the natural-supernatural, a term that represents how the supernatural is found and expressed within natural phenomena. This term, natural-supernatural, represents the Wordsworthian and Coleridgean notion explored in *The Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* about the importance of one's exposure to nature as a means to find the supernatural and its associated truths. Additionally, this ideology suggests how nature and isolation in nature establishes and/or re-establishes communication with the supernatural through the rediscovery of a curiosity that is akin to childhood curiosity, as argued by the earlier writers referenced in this chapter. Again, I also represent how social ideological agents attempt to suppress and/or eliminate connection with the supernatural realm, usually in the guise of established religious traditions, cultures, and historicization efforts.

To begin, childhood curiosity is requisite to establish and maintain a connection with supernatural phenomena. As Barbara Benedict asserts in *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry*, “both curiosity and the occult are seen as offering false versions of the world that rely on what is conceived of as unreliable evidence: the evidence of the eyes” (53). Deception of vision occurs, but as Benedict states, “curious people believe themselves rather than conventional wisdom: curious and credulous characters are twinned in culture as examples of self-absorption” that often leads to social



exclusion, ranging from mild to severe (53). This study, generally, and this chapter, specifically, considers the phenomenon that curious people seek “concealed knowledge, and so [attempt] to find a new world,” one that often the elite would wish to remain concealed, since the existence and various elements of such a new world could subvert the dominant ideological construct that ensures continued control (Benedict 53).

Benedict also notes that the occult, to which curious people seem drawn, offers such new worlds, which are often “full of mysteries above nature” (53). This is especially appropriate since the term “occult” is “rooted in the Latin word for concealment and related to ‘occlude,’” signifying “things hidden, obscured from sight, or secret and pertain[ing] to aspects of nature only science or alchemy can reveal” (Benedict 53).

Additionally, linking the term “occult” to supernatural phenomena occurs in a variety of ways. Usually, this occurs after the invention of a new religious system. The dominant, older ideology, perceiving the new religious system and its followers as threats, others the new ideology by referring to its followers as occultists, a term associated with “occult” and usually surrounded by negative connotations. One need only to examine *Dulcitius* by Hrotswitha of Gandersheim, in which the text demonstrates how followers of the new religion of Christianity, which is considered a threat to the established polytheistic religion of the Roman Empire, are labeled occultists, most specifically the three female martyrs: Agape, Chione, and Irena. These three women earn this occultist label due to their ardent belief in the newly established faith of Christianity, to their refusal to worship the false deities of the dominant Roman ideological religious construct, and to their refutation of the sexual advances of the masculine political leaders. It is particularly fitting that Hrotswitha of Gandersheim selects women, since they are a

traditionally disempowered and perceived weak sect of social systems. However, in this case, they demonstrate the potential strength of the feminine gender role by acting as agents of resistance, even when their very lives are threatened. The text also represents the potentiality of upstart new ideologies based around collective faith in alternative representative belief systems in supernatural agents, and these systems' abilities to deconstruct, undermine, and potentially supplant the dominant religious ideological systems.

While accurate in establishing how ensnared curious people become in false superstitions which relate to the supernatural, Benedict fails to note how this same curiosity can empower people to resist dominant ideologies. The newly discovered worlds and knowledge can subsequently address some of the long-standing questions that have dogged humankind for generations. I would argue, from a cognitive perspective that the preservation and/or re-establishment of one's inductive logical faculties as the dominant perceptual framework by which one processes their surroundings result in the establishment/re-establishment and maintenance of a communicative link with the supernatural realm. Once the child or child-adult begins to think in more deductive, exclusive ways that are the consequence of social ideological programming, this connection begins to destabilize. Elimination of the child or child-man permanently disrupts connection with the supernatural realm. All that remains are shadowy past memories that lack the effervescent characteristics of an engaged and engaging relationship.

William Blake's *Introduction to Songs of Innocence* demonstrates that the ability to experience the supernatural goes beyond mere activation of the five senses by the

supernatural agent. Instead, a deeper communication occurs, whereby a supernatural agent conveys knowledge that exceeds what humankind can acquire through traditional epistemology. Blake discusses piping through a wild valley and “On a cloud [seeing a] child,” who tells him to “Pipe a song about a Lamb” (5-6). The mortal character does so, yet later the child asks him to move from the more abstract means of communication through song and instead to “sit thee down and write / In a book that all may read—“ (13-14). As ordered, the mortal makes “a rural pen, And [he] stain’[s] the water clear, / And [he writes his] happy songs / Every child may joy to hear” (17-20). While references to “child” and “Lamb” have clear Christian implications, a consideration of this poem outside of a religious context leads to a different interpretive reading. The poet (or artist, for that matter), is in the act of textualizing, and consequently historicizing, what can be considered a supernatural event in the middle of a wild forest. He communes with forces of nature that exist beyond the detection of traditional scientific processes.

Of course, Blake legitimizes his supernatural experience through an act of historical textualization that is within the accepted norms of society, since the imagery within which he couches this experience is Christian. Imagine, though, if the act of textualization, and hence historicization, was not in a Christian context. In such a case, would the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* be perceived as an excellent morality poem, even if based on the author’s own unique, independent experience with supernatural phenomena? Would the perception of the supernatural event go beyond that of a literary device? I would argue that more traditional, secular considerations of this poem would consider the supernatural event as a literary device. Most would not read *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* as transcripts inspired by a writer or artist’s

communication with the supernatural realm; instead, they would read it as a representation of spiritual and/or social issues present at the time. As William Reeves argues in his article, *Blake and Dickens: The Similar Vision*, “particular people and places” would be viewed as devices by which Blake could contextualize the “presentation of the ‘strange disease of modern life’—in their view the spiritual/mental bondage which made life more unbearable with each ensuing year” (37). Reeves’ reading would be accurate from a Marxist perspective, in that these devices become the machination for a “spiritual revolution” of some sort. However, this perspective overlooks an important alternative reading. Rather than see the utterance of the child and the resultant discourse as a device to express revolutionary thoughts, the dialogue becomes an exchange between a mortal agent and a supernatural being. The resultant product, the poem itself, then becomes a transcription mechanism to capture and later share the dialogue.

While humankind has always been fixated on the supernatural, the period of unbridled childhood, when curiosity is at its peak, best enables communication with the supernatural realm. Children are the least socialized and hence are less likely to question the validity of the supernatural realm from a skeptical perspective. As Barbara Benedict states, “curiosity has long been considered a virtue in Western culture. Yet for even longer, curiosity has also been depicted as the cause of mankind’s errors” (1). For those who perceive curiosity in this way, children and their unbridled curiosity are most dangerous to the accepted status quo. When considered in relationship to the supernatural, the medium, using the unbridled nature of childhood curiosity, “see[s] beyond the visible. These curious creatures display the impious ambition to know their mortality” (Benedict 17). Emphasis here is on the notion of impiety; to be pious is to

follow the accepted religious norms of a culture. To be impious, one acts in what society considers a sacrilegious way to uncover yet discovered truths, since the theology of the established religions do not satiate the questions asked by the curious mind. As James Engell states, “If God lives in human hearts and minds, and if his truths are eternal, then faith and truth should continue to express themselves in symbolic art, [for] without a living voice to transform the particulars at hand, faith will petrify” (254). Consequently, Blake’s choice of Christian symbols enables a curious study of the nature of innocence and experience through supernatural insight provided by the floating child. The performance occurs in a re-examined traditional Christian ideology that is mildly subversive. The process also updates Christian ideology with more current information that addresses a worldview now informed by science and the influences of the industrial revolution. I would also argue that, should the poems use non-Christian imagery, the definition of the supernatural experience would be in the context of a literary device or some spectacle in the form of a monstrosity, consequently devoid of any symbolic, and therefore interpretive, value.

Additionally, a consideration of Blake’s poem beyond the pale of Christian imagery leads to the recognition that it contains an additional very subversive concept fueled by interaction with a supernatural representative in the guise of the floating child. In ordinary social structures, adults are authoritative individuals who work to socialize children in the encrustations and accretions of knowledge. To exemplify this, consider Paolo Friere’s concept of the banking approach to education expressed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where parents or teachers inculcate the child regarding appropriate and inappropriate, or moral and immoral activities.

In Blake's poem, though, a deconstruction of the traditional roles of parent and child occurs through an inversion of the typical binary opposite of parent as educated and child as uneducated. Here, the child possesses the knowledge, and the adult figure is the pupil. The adult-figure receives from the child-teacher knowledge possessed by supernatural agents. As Jonathan Cook notes, Romantics believed that "education is as much a matter of benign neglect as of supervision. Whatever potentialities the child has should develop spontaneously. The natural world plays an important part in this attitude toward childhood . . . as [it is] the best setting for this kind of development"—one where the individual is "uninhibited, expressive . . . with [no] penalty of isolation or exile" (45). This thinking contradicts the typical education mindset held by others during the period; as Cook states, James Mills would have thought letting children play and learn in such an unstructured, natural environment an act of madness. Instead, children should be "indoors mastering the principles of political economy, on the assumption that the child was an amorphous stuff waiting to be moulded by the parent" (45). Of course, there is a significant consequence to this mindset, as Northrop Frye argues in *The Keys to the Gates*:

Innocence is characteristic of the child, experience of the adult. In innocence, there are two factors. One is an assumption that the world was made for the benefit of human beings, has a human shape and a human meaning, and is a world in which providence, protection, communication with other beings, including animals, and, in general, "mercy, pity, peace and love," have a genuine function. The other is ignorance, of the fact that world is not like this. As the child grows up, his conscious mind accepts experience, or reality without any human shape or

meaning, and his childhood innocent vision, having nowhere else to go, is driven underground into what we should call the subconscious. (237)

I would argue, then, that this explorative mindset or childhood innocent vision regarding nature goes beyond the scope of exposing children to the wonder that is nature. Rather, as Blake's poem demonstrates, the man-child in possession of a free mind, devoid of the "experienced" cognitive perceptual structure articulated by Frye, has the ability to connect with the supernatural essence that surrounds all of humankind, since destructive deductive thoughts that consider the world devoid of meaning or human shape do not stymie him. Consequently, communication can now occur with the supernatural agents, and later textualization of the experience allows for sharing with other mortals who do not possess this mediumship or for the purposes of comparison with others who have had similar supernatural encounters.

Mills's consideration of political economy, among other topics, is also centrally important to a child's intellectual development. A focus on issues of money is consistent with material concerns which often interfere with individual reflection that is beyond concern for one's bodily existence. Children who focus on tangible, economic matters rather than more abstract, agnostic spiritual considerations demonstrate the consequences of an increasingly industrial culture. The production of tangible goods is more important, while there is less concern over more intangible, ethereal, and unquantifiable subjects, such as one's connection with and ability to learn from surrounding supernatural phenomena, including that depicted in the *Introduction to the Songs of Innocence*.

An additional point to consider is the nature of the interaction between the child and the poet: a model that represents common supernatural experiences and which fits

into the revolutionary ideology that was evolving during the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries. The interaction discussed above does not take place in a public, artificial environment, nor does it occur between one supernatural representative and multiple humans. Instead, the event occurs in a one-to-one format surrounded by a solitary, natural environment. With the burgeoning Industrial Revolution beginning to infiltrate England, Marilyn Butler states that a new awareness developed, which perceived “society as an organism” (178). Consequently, individuals perceived themselves not so much as disconnected entities, but instead as a part of a larger social machine. As such, the individual developed a responsibility to the group to use his or her available resources and/or talents for the betterment of the group, coupled with one’s own advancement.

Butler also states that the eighteenth century represents this inclusive, group-centered focus through “the literary artist . . . the painter, the etcher and the composer,” all of whom need to reconsider their audience and move to a more public focus (179). They often produce for their individual benefit— plus, the benefit of a patron— and they come “to address art, paintings, etchings, and compositions not to a patron but to a public” (Butler 179). Thus, Blake’s poem demonstrates that supernatural interactions occur in a purposefully altruistic context between the artist and phenomena that intends altruistic benefits for the individual, the society, and the supernatural realm, rather than a member of the social elite. While the nature and content of this information gleaned from this interaction with supernatural phenomena is later provided to other humans in a variety of expressive formats, the artist is the primary beneficiary of this interaction and resultant information. There is little thought given to the message or the form in which it



is delivered. Rather, the artist produces for the sake of an accurate rendition of the experience and the knowledge communicated. There is no or little consideration about the consequences of this newly acquired knowledge.

The subversive nature of Blake's message is also typical of texts that present knowledge acquired from supernatural sources and is consistent with his early poetry, which often, according to David Punter, characterizes religion as a force that "cut[s] off the mind from the real source of its energies"—namely, reason (9). Instead, the mind becomes preoccupied with a misapplication of reason that disengages one from his/her soul through the interjection of subversive ideologies that corrupt reason's ability to examine independently one's surroundings and connect to extant supernatural phenomena. According to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "reason, which is good, can be found alone in the soul" (Punter 9). Reason's seat in the soul therefore insinuates that the application of pure reason in an objective method can facilitate communication with supernatural agents that is devoid of subjective, ideological influences. Religion's habit, in Blake's mind, is to focus on the body and the energy produced by it. The individual then becomes distracted from what should be the primary focus, reason, which can aid the individual in connecting to the supernatural and contemplating the knowledge that it conveys.

From this standpoint, then, I would argue that Blake portrays two ideal characteristics that are critical for supernatural mediumship. One, the individual must possess enough innocence and associated childhood curiosity to consider the world from an inductive, inferential perspective in which reason is applied objectively. This is especially important within the context of specific religious theologies, which catechize

individuals to perceive supernatural phenomena that exist outside of its accepted religious framework as figments of the imagination or a product of some form of psychosis. As Richard Noakes states, investigators of individual experiences with supernatural phenomena draw on “studies of ‘altered’ mental states, empirical research in human physiology and much older philosophical and psychological works, [which promulgated] arguments that well known psychological and physiological causes were sufficient to explain what happened in the séance” and in other interactions with supernatural phenomena (31). Such investigators’ “extensive knowledge of mental disorders, including insanity, hysteria, and somnambulism, underpinned this naturalistic interpretation” (31). Such investigators insert scientific theory based on empirical evidence and research as a means to explain, and consequently other, that which are perhaps genuine supernatural interactions.

I would argue that the application of such scientific principles in an assumptive, deductive fashion is problematic, though, since it involves a misapplication of reason, which closes the mind of the individual to the possibility that the experience is, indeed, genuine. In contrast, the application of an inductive, inferential mindset, linked with innocence, will lead the individual past typical skepticism; additionally, the person will be more likely to receive what the supernatural agent attempts to communicate, rather than seek some type of scientific explanation. Two, the individual must possess an artistic temperament, since it will enable communication of the experience and the lessons learned through textual, oral, or artistic media that can then be shared with other individuals. This notion confirms Northrop Frye’s own research. He cites Blake’s belief that “poetry, painting, and music are ‘the three Powers in Man of conversing with

Paradise, which the flood did not sweep away” (Bloom, ed. 131). Frye is careful to note that Blake’s statement does not represent an alternative religious experience; rather, poetic activity similar to that practiced in *Introduction to Songs of Innocence* “is fundamentally one of identifying the human with the nonhuman world” (Bloom, ed. 131). The artist’s ability enables communication with the supernatural world through the identification, and consequent connection, between the mortal and immortal spheres.

Conversely, one could consider how this interaction represents the creation of a new religious ideology, informed by the supernatural, which is intended to reconnect individuals in a new world order marked by the rise of science and industrialism. James Engell argues in *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* that Blake sees imagination as “the sole way to create art and to reveal religion, two acts existing in and through each other” (244). According to Engell, Blake “is the only English Romantic to realize the critical hope of the late eighteenth century, that the new idea of the imagination would produce an original series of myths rather than reinterpret classical ones” (245). This idea does not mean that the supernatural interaction between the poet and the child in the poem is imagined; rather, as Engell says, Blake “accepts innate ideas, or innate capacities to create certain perceptions, as part of a large connection between the material form of nature and the ideas or activity of the divine-human imagination” (249). Consequently, it is “man’s creativity [that] meets with God’s,” where the resultant product is a regenerated nature that raises “transitory forms to the symbolic level of ‘ever-Existent Images’ and ideas” (Engell 249). The supernatural informs the poet, then, in the manner suggested in the poem. The poet is responsible for the translation of abstract information into pre-existent symbolic forms that are concrete and recognizable

to other humans. This confirms Engell's findings in Blake's poetry that there exists a "pre-established harmony between the psyche and nature [where] the mind has the creative potential to mold nature to something amenable and meaningful" (Engell 249). Thus, the poet uses existent signifier-signified relationships and, through creative deconstructive manipulative linguistic acts, captures the knowledge contained by nature, yet conversely expands and/or restricts these pre-created utterances so that the prefabricated symbols are as accurate as possible in transmitting the information provided by the supernatural agent.

It is also important to consider how Blake's statements in the *Introduction to the Songs of Innocence* represent additional subversive considerations that are in concert with those of later Romantics and Victorians who espouse the importance of humankind's connection to the supernatural. As Alfred Cobban states, Romantics revolted against many Eighteenth century philosophies, among those the prevalent "theory of the mind" that was produced during the Eighteenth century (Bloom 133). Cobban defines this theory as a "superficial psychology of sensation": a perspective that Alan Richardson confirms in *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*. In the realm of science, developments from the Eighteenth century led to speculation moving into the Nineteenth century that "the seat of the soul is strictly limited to the brain, nowhere else" (Richardson 8). What is perhaps most damning about this hypothesis is the implication it carries for the existence of the supernatural and the ideology that is a part of Blake's poem, which will later be a part of other Romantic writers, and which will become a central concern to Victorian writers who see the imperialistic potential in man's over-reliance on science. To believe that the soul is limited to the brain is to question

inherently “the necessity of God and the integrity of the self” (Richardson 12). This perspective asserts that explanations for the mind, and any human spiritual considerations, are explainable through psychobiological factors that dismiss the possibility of the soul’s existence independent of the body; consequently, it also calls into question the existence of the supernatural. Instead, this mindset suggests that the soul is a human-formed construct intended to explain a part of human consciousness: a concept likened to a myth, if you will, which served earlier generations as a means to explain the unexplainable, but with the advent of modern science, a myth that science attempts to prove as invalid.

Furthermore, I would extend Richardson’s argument regarding Eighteenth century ideology and the influence of scientific thought in the Nineteenth century. Supernatural considerations attempt to explain the unexplainable. Yet the same scientific community considers stories used to confirm the existence of the supernatural as superstition and/or drug-induced fancies. John H. King supports this perspective in *The Supernatural: Its Origins, Nature, and Evolution*. In this 1892 text, King condemns

popular superstition with a eugenic view. [King] sees superstition, and belief in the supernatural in general, as evidence of the degeneration of the urban and rural working classes, contending that intoxication acting in ignorance produces “the wide belief in mystic principles and powers, in ghosts and spirits, in transformation, [and] in the conquest of death and disease.” (Bown, et al 8)

King’s passage builds on the arguments provided by Cobban and Richardson that the new science, which evolved during the Nineteenth century, attempted to invalidate the existence of the supernatural. It attempted to explain interactions between such apparent

phenomena and humans as the product of myths that influence the psychology of the individual who has experienced the phenomena, or are the result of chemicals introduced into the body, like alcohol and/or other mind-altering substances, that lead to hallucinations.

In a world dominated by collective ideologies that suppress individual beliefs, where can one escape to maintain effective communication with the supernatural realm, as suggested by Blake? Fantasy fiction writers, many of whom textualize mystical worlds as natural supernatural phenomena, provide one answer. These apparently fabricated worlds are perhaps more real than the late 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century worlds that promote and consequently advance an over-reliance on scientific epistemology. They lay witness to a natural world that coexists with the supernatural and creates a natural supernatural environment that inverts and deconstructs the binary construct which others the supernatural. The appropriate means of self-governance is the inductive, sensual, and instinctual, Freudian ID-based methodology found in fantasy worlds, rather than the current science-based ideology that relies exclusively on the cold logic of adulthood as the accepted approach to one's self-governance. Those who practice the skepticism or doubt that are a part of the adult world are othered and placed on the social periphery— an inversion when one considers how such qualities dominate a scientifically-minded reality that attempts to rationalize the supernatural as an unrealistic byproduct of biological explanation or chemical influence.

Furthermore, the fantasy worlds created by children through interaction with supernatural agents may be, in fact, more real than that which adults and their dominant social ideologies attempt to posit as reality and which usually others as fantasy by

labeling them unreal. Rosemary Jackson, author of *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, cites Lewis Carroll: “Life slips away and life on the other side of the great river becomes more and more the reality, of which *this* [referring to the real world] is only a shadow” (141). Carroll’s comments put forth an earth-shattering, highly subversive idea within an absolute, evolving modernist mindset bent on using science to solve all the mysteries of the universe through empirical research. Perhaps reality is the fantasy world produced by an imagination manifested in the mind of children and connected to the supernatural following the communicative model suggested by Blake. The fantasy world that these children inhabit and attempt to share with others is, then, more real than that asserted as reality by the dominant social ideologies. These children and child-minded individuals understand the reality of the supernatural and, consequently, see the level to which the adult world is a fictitious misapplication of reason and, therefore, false. As Jackson states, it is the George MacDonalds, Charley Kingsleys, and Lewis Carrolls who “draw attention to problems of signification, presenting a confused, topsy-turvy world which lays no claim to re-present absolute meaning or ‘reality’” (141). These authors recognize the difficulty and perhaps impossibility articulated by later postmodern writers of providing absolutist knowledge to a world that is constantly in a state of flux. It is then impossible to quantify or qualify one’s perceptions, which render empirical confirmation, even through science, improbable.

Such a perspective also significantly contradicts what Geoffrey Gilbert asserts is modernism’s claim for origination: the disavowal of “its relationship to the literary marketplace,” whereby the practitioner is “as free and autonomous in relation to its

economic conditions. That freedom is conceived as alternately serene or critical, as disinterested or determinedly negating” (240). This negation has a significant pessimistic impact on a liberal mindset that is open to the possibility that socially peripheral subjects, such as supernatural phenomena, exist. Instead, the liberal mindset open to such possibilities is, from a modernist perspective, “not in control of the forces building and destroying its world. This is to deny—or to relegate to a space within representation—the excesses and vacancies of agency that crowd and abandon the liberal individual,” whereby the ghost is eliminated (Gilbert 247). As a result, it can be argued that the fantasy worlds of the late 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century literature represent a proto-postmodern ideology that deconstructs developing modernistic, scientifically-oriented linguistic and perceptual binaries that create, communicate, and provide order and structure to established and accepted knowledge.

Additionally, fantasy worlds manifest more idyllic worldviews that accept the supernatural and, instead, other those “realistic,” skeptical-minded and, consequently, myopic perspectives that do not give any true consideration to the potential existence of the supernatural. As Jackson notes, this is the beauty of fantasy fiction: it refuses “prevailing definitions of the ‘real’ or ‘possible,’ a refusal amounting at times to violent opposition. A fantasy is a story based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility; it is the narrative result of transforming the condition contrary to fact into ‘fact’ itself” (14). For this reason, I would argue that the supernatural often is most accepted and, consequently, given the greatest opportunity to influence those who inhabit these fantastic realms. Here, the supernatural is not subversive. To present these worlds in our real, scientifically-minded world results in a



perception of the fantasy world as the champions of the supernatural realm.

Consequently, society labels these worlds as subversive, since, as Jackson states, they undermine “rules and conventions taken to be normative” (14). From one standpoint, then, I would argue that fantasy fiction uses methodologies demonstrated by Blake to communicate to others that these worlds may in fact, exist, and do, indeed, embrace supernatural phenomena. Two specific texts from the periods in question best represent these concepts: Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* and J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*.

Many perceive Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* as a Victorian fairy tale intended to warn young girls against the evils of deviant men and sexuality. I would argue an alternative reading: *Goblin Market* shows how othering of the supernatural commonly occurs due to social forces that perceive the messages conveyed by the supernatural as deeply subversive and, consequently, disastrous to a young girl’s socialization and status. To set the framework for this analysis, consider the research of Catherine Robson, who in *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman*, argues, “the daughter clearly represents the home as a realm of emotion worlds away from the maelstrom of competitive commerce” (53). It is the young girl’s ability to “provide a place of solace for the hard-pressed male” that is of central importance in familial and social environments. Robson cites Sarah Strickney Ellis’s *Daughters of England* (1843), which positions the role of the daughter as follows:

Never does a daughter appear to more advantage, than when she cheerfully lays aside a fashionable air, and strums over, the more than the hundredth time, some old ditty which her father loves. To her ear it is possible it may be altogether divested of the slightest charm. But what importance is that? The old man listens

until tears are glistening in his eyes, for he sees again the home of his childhood—he hears his father’s voice—he feels his mother’s welcome—all things familiar to his heart in early youth come back to him with that long-remembered strain; and, happiest thought of all! They are revived by the playful fingers of his own beloved child. (Robson 53)

To Ellis, the role of the daughter does not just include dutifulness. Instead, it suggests that the daughter is to maintain purity, so that she is able to recall, primarily, men back to a younger, more innocent time in their lives. Robson says, “The daughter is able to transport her father back to the emotional richness of his childhood, to a sensuously realized past that stands in sharp distinction to the *longueur* of the working day” (53). The daughter’s role is to provide a cleansing contrast, represented by her purity in opposition to the dirtiness that is a part of industry and society. Exposure of the daughter to subversive considerations, though, will result in the loss of this much-treasured purity. If the message conveys a purity and naturalness that can be associated with the natural, supernatural, or natural supernatural, then this ideology often contradicts that manifested by society, where the daughter will have become, in the eyes of society, corrupted, impure, and consequently, not marriageable. It is in this context that, I would argue, Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* represents a criticism of social othering of the supernatural experience.

Similar to Blake’s *Introduction to the Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, supernatural agents make contact with Lizzie and Laura “Among the brookside rushes” in *Goblin Market* (Rossetti 33). Hence, the supernatural agent is again most able to establish a connection with a human representative in a natural environment, perhaps

where the usual social structures associated with the artificial characteristic of life in the city are not able to interfere. As is common with most Romantic and Victorian pastoral literature that discuss the ability of nature and supernatural agents to commune with humans, the attractiveness is provided through the description of succulent fruits, along with the phrase, “Come buy, come buy” (Rossetti 5). This is where a more traditional reading of *Goblin Market* begins to break down when considered from a supernatural critical perspective. Here, one reads the acts of the goblin men as seductive and subversive, which suggests that the goblin men are asking the young women to pay for these unique fruits with a priceless commodity— their own purity.

Typically read in a negative context, the supernatural agents, or goblin men, are rapists. Such interpretations focus on two key scenes: Laura’s purchase of the goblin fruit and Lizzie’s later act to save Laura’s life. When Laura informs the goblin men that she has no money, they respond, “You have much gold upon your head” (Rossetti 123). By clipping a “precious golden lock” and dropping “a tear more rare than pearl,” Laura is allowed to suck “their fruit globes fair or red,” which she “sucked and sucked and sucked the more” (Rossetti 125-126, 128, 134). As Diane Purkiss states in *At the Bottom of the Garden: A Dark History of Fairies, Hobgoblins, and Other Troublesome Things*, “for generations, readers have felt the poem’s sexual meanings; the fruit is so excessively pleasurable, so tempting, and yet its consumption is death, not only the death of the soul but the death of reputation” (239). Contemplate, though, the possibility that consumption of the fruit leads not to the death of the soul, but to the empowerment of the soul through the elimination of socially-defined reason and its replacement by a different form that

offers a more objective perceptual lens capable of detecting and interacting with supernatural phenomena.

A traditional reading, as Purkiss demonstrates, perceives Laura as sacrificing her maidenhood by paying for the fruit with her golden locks of hair and pure, unstained tears so that she may experience the company of men, who are merchants. This business model, suggested by their pedaling of fruit, conveys a value system more concerned with the profitability of a relationship as opposed to its benefit to the other person, especially the one who surrenders a valuable possession for a commodity. In this case, the goblin men provide a commodity of limited value, fruit, for an invaluable possession— a woman's virginity and related social status. Laura's involvement in this exchange violates many of the precepts, as stated by Robson, which were essential to Romantic- and Victorian-era women: they were meant to symbolize "the security of the perfect contemporary home[,] the imagined mutability of lost childhood[,] and the rural past" (55). Consequently, these expectations led to the creation of an ideal female nature that is "evacuated of self-will [and] display of character," where stasis is "elevated to the position of an ideal" (Robson 55). Laura's decision to bargain with the goblin men violates the stasis ideal. Purkiss argues, "The process of buying and selling goblin fruits mark the entry into adulthood," a process that violates social convention, since a father-figure who has the ability to profit from her transition from maidenhood into adulthood should broker such a change (239). Additionally, her choice expresses her self-will and individual character by taking charge of her own future, both of which are natural products of human intellectual development and maturation, yet which represent a significant social violation according to Robson's research. This reading characterizes

the acts of the goblin men as subversive and evil, a notion supported by the effects of Laura's consumption of the goblin fruit and the description of the goblin men. Rossetti characterizes the goblin men in the following way:

One had a cat's face,  
One whisked a tail,  
One tramped at a rat's pace,  
One crawled like a snail,  
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,  
One like a ratel tumbled hurry scurry. (71-76)

A traditional reading labels the acts themselves committed by the goblin men as evil: their described external appearance confirms this traditional interpretation. They are hunters (cat and wombat), and in possession of tails, suggestive of snakes and Garden of Eden imagery. Society considers rats to be disgusting creatures, and a snail and a ratel are creatures whose frame is very close to the ground, akin to snakes, and consequently considered negatively. All of this imagery represents the subversive and evil characters of these goblin men. The after-effects of Laura's consumption are as follows:

Day after day, night after night,  
Laura kept watch in vain  
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.  
She never caught again the goblin cry:  
"Come buy, come buy;"—  
She never spied the goblin men  
Hawking their fruits along the glen:

But when the noon waxed bright  
Her hair grew thin and gray;  
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn  
To swift decay and burn  
Her fire away. (Rossetti 269-80)

Laura's deteriorating physical state leads to further issues that violate social expectations for women of the period. When it came to her ordinary routine:

She no more swept the house,  
Tended the fowls or cows,  
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,  
Brought water from the brook. (Rossetti 293-96)

Instead, Laura spends each day sitting "listless in the chimney-nook / And would not eat" (Rossetti 297-98). Due to Laura's consumption of the goblin fruit, then, she is no longer motivated to engage in the ordinary chores associated with women of Laura and Lizzie's station in life.

Consider, though, an alternative reading of the poem from a supernatural critical perspective, in which the goblin men are not the vilified. Instead, I would argue that a textual deconstruction demonstrates society's tendency to other the supernatural due to its subversive nature related to the ideological values associated with a woman's station in life.

I begin with an analysis of Laura's consumption of the goblin fruit. If the fruit supplied by the goblin men are so poisonous and fraught with evil, why is Laura's description of the fruit so positive? Laura says,

You cannot think what figs  
My teeth have met in,  
What melons icy-cold  
Piled on a dish of gold  
Too huge for me to hold,  
What peaches with a velvet nap,  
Pellucid grapes without one seed:  
Odorous indeed must the mead  
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink  
With lilies at the brink,  
And sugar-sweet their sap. (Rossetti 173-83)

Traditional readings could liken the goblin fruit to the response of a drug addict after his first high. However, when reading this section from a supernatural perspective, I see echoes of the apple from the Tree of Forbidden Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. These extraordinarily pure, fresh, and succulent fruits become the agent by which Laura establishes a connection with the supernatural realm. Her literal consumption is symbolic of a figurative consumption of enlightened supernatural ideas that render the mundane details of everyday existence, as dictated by social pressures, inconsequential in the larger schema of Nature. This explains Laura's unmotivated state regarding her chores. It also explains why, when Laura and Lizzie "talked as modest maidens should," Lizzie converses with "an open heart," while Laura is found "in an absent dream," wherein she now no longer desires the "mere bright day's delight" but instead is now "sick in part" and instead "longs for the night" (Rossetti 209-211, 213, 212, 214). Rossetti uses the

traditional binary opposite of day and night to reinforce the social stigma of the night as evil.

However, the passage, I would argue, also contradicts itself when read outside of the social conventions suggested by Robson. One might consider, for instance, the absent dream as a positive consequence of the goblin fruit. In this reading, Laura is no longer engaged in idle chatter and thought but instead contemplates deeper, more ethereal knowledge and associated questions posed to her through consumption of the goblin fruit. This would be the equivalent to Adam and Eve's character change after eating the apple, when, because of heightened self-awareness, they immediately clothe themselves. I would argue that Laura's experiences are the same and represent a direct violation of the social expectations of women during the period, who were to be static, pure, and resistant to any self-expression or development outside of that allowed or even impressed by their parental—most often male—figures. Instead, Laura's consumption of the goblin fruit makes her aware of both herself and her surroundings. Consequently, as time goes by and she engages in continual reflection, the tasks she is so willing to perform the morning after her encounter with the goblin men are now superficial and petty in comparison to the larger issues exposed to her.

While the unnamed poet in Blake's *Introduction to the Songs of Innocence and of Experience* maintains his connection and works to foster it, Laura, unfortunately, does not have the same opportunity. Instead, she experiences rebirth in a scene loaded with ritualistic Judeo-Christian imagery. The goblin fruit facilitates permanent disengagement from the supernatural realm. In a physically violent scene interpreted traditionally as



gang rape, the goblin men cover Lizzie in the juices from the goblin fruit as they attempt to force-feed her. When their attack ends, Lizzie returns to Laura and tells her:

Come and kiss me.

Never mind my bruises,

Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices

Squeezed from goblin fruit for you,

Goblin pulp and goblin dew. (Rossetti 466-70)

Lizzie's impassioned exchange invites Laura to demonstrate her love and affection.

Some may read the passage as an attempt to re-socialize Laura using the same process as the supernatural agents, the goblin men. However, in a scene reminiscent of Jesus Christ's Last Supper, Lizzie entreats Laura to "Eat me, drink me, love me; / Laura, make much of me" (Rossetti 471-72). This figurative consumption of Laura reverses the effects of the goblin fruit. By internalizing the goblin fruit juices altered by their mixture with Lizzie's flesh, Laura is engaging in a first communion of such, where a reintroduction and re-indoctrination into the society, from which she had earlier distanced herself, occurs.

Laura's figurative consumption works: she endures a painful physical trial that is the antithesis of her consumption of the goblin fruit. At the end of this experience, Rossetti tells us, "Life out of death" occurs (524). A reading influenced by Christian ideology would believe Laura's rebirth as a member of society occurs through the associated death of a socially subversive other produced by agents of evil. From a supernatural reading, though, this painful experience signifies a violent destruction of the communicative bridge she constructed with the supernatural agents known as the goblin

men. Additionally, this painful “life out of death” is, indeed, death, but a negative death—the purposeful weakening or destruction of a soul that had just begun to assert itself and become strong. While Laura may live physiologically, I would argue that the continuation of her spiritual existence is debatable. At the furthest extent, she has become a broken, weak-soul or soulless being whose physical form survives and is now pliable to the whims of society, but there is little which exists beneath the surface of her flesh.

The result of this rebirth becomes evident the next morning. Rossetti states that, when Laura awakes the next morning, she believes her goblin fruit experience is a dream. In addition, she shows no ill physical effects: “Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey, / Her breath was sweet as May / And light danced in her eyes” (539-41). From the perspective of a traditional reading, the end of the poem is positive: Laura and Lizzie both marry, and the goblin fruit experience becomes the source of an important tale intended to warn their children about the dangers of the goblin market. Laura and Lizzie “talk about the haunted glen, / The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men, / Their fruits like honey to the throat / But poison in the blood” (Rossetti 552-55). This oral history represents a social othering of the supernatural, where the tale warns children, especially women, against interactions with such agents.

However, Diane Purkiss offers a different interpretation. The intention of this oral history is to protect the children from evil. A deeper examination suggests that this lesson is intended to prevent something far more dangerous: maturation into an adulthood independent of social expectations. She maintains that the poem is “an answer to the desire to be an adult, a desire equated with illness and death here. Only by remaining in

perpetual, arrested development can Laura and Lizzie stay alive. To grow up fully is to die” (240). I would add to Purkiss’ interpretation. When read from a supernatural standpoint, the poem demonstrates how society negatively perceives supernatural agents that exist beyond control of an ideology that supports domestication through social conformity. Exposure to supernatural ideology promotes individual maturation, in that the child is able to see how his/her existence is a part of the larger framework of life, the world, and beyond. Such knowledge can age an individual, perhaps at an advanced rate. As Rossetti’s poem demonstrates, this accelerated maturation and acquired knowledge are dangerous and should be avoided at all costs, since they subvert the ruling dominant ideology.

While Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* demonstrates effective social interference between women and supernatural agents, J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* offers a much different fantasy that involves both males and females— a world wherein the supernatural agents are able to overcome social interference and expose children of both sexes to all the wonders that the supernatural has to offer. Please note that, for this analysis, I will use the American edition of *Peter and Wendy*, published by Charles Scribner’s Sons in October 1911. Early in the novel, the narrator states that, on the magic shores of Neverland, “children at play are for ever beaching their coracles. We too have been there; we can still hear the sound of the surf, though we shall land no more” (7). This brief, simple statement contains a great deal of meaning when interpreted within a supernatural construct informed by the notions expressed in *Introduction to Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and *Goblin Market*. The statement demonstrates that children are best able to interact, potentially forever, with the supernatural in a

comfortable fantasyland where anything is possible. The “forever” referred to by the narrator only ends when the matured child acquires social indoctrination, which teaches children to disbelieve in the idea of the supernatural.

Instances of social indoctrination exist throughout *Peter Pan*. Mrs. Darling, early in the novel, talks about odd stories regarding Peter Pan, a mysterious entity who, “when children died, . . . went part of the way with them, so that they should not be frightened” (8). On the surface, this sounds like a pleasant social historicization of a supernatural agent. Mrs. Darling admits to believing in him for some “time, but now that she [is] married and full of sense she quite doubt[s] whether there [is] any such person” (8). As the child then matures into a woman, the social system introduces a scientific, skeptical, and empiricist worldview defined as “sense,” which discounts and convinces the maturing child that the “sound of surf” Barrie refers to earlier is unreal. This is a crucial development, since I would define this “sound of surf” as the carrier signal of the supernatural. Mrs. Darling demonstrates the extent of this carrier signal’s power since society has clearly brainwashed her to believe that the supernatural fantasy world of Neverland and its supernatural agents are an unreal, silly fantasy.

Yet to hear Wendy mention Peter Pan triggers memories in Mrs. Darling, and it is most definitely possible that Mrs. Darling still hears the carrier signal, though conditioned to ignore it. This hearing, yet failure to listen, is common to the human consciousness and its associated means of perceptual manipulation. We train ourselves to ignore sounds that surround us, because they are annoying or constantly around us. More importantly, external agents often program our consciousness to disbelieve in their existence. As a result, though the sounds still exist, we either do not detect or are only

able to detect subtly their presence. The novel also suggests that the female gender role is more capable of establishing a connection to the supernatural realm and detecting supernatural phenomena. The placement and maintenance of women on the social periphery through the promotion of ideology like the domestic goddess empowers the female to detect supernatural phenomena, even after socialization, most often through marriage and motherhood. While these female characters become agents of the dominant ideology, the supernatural phenomena still attempt to interact with these women.

Furthermore, as Wendy demonstrates, to hear the roar of the sea that represents the supernatural is a natural, rather than an artificial, phenomenon experienced by a child's imagination alone. Though Mrs. Darling attempts to invalidate Peter Pan and Neverland to Wendy, her experiences with Peter "all [seem] too natural . . . that you [can]not dismiss it by saying she ha[s] been dreaming" (9). The default natural ideological and perceptual structure of children is set not only to interact with supernatural agents and phenomena, but also to believe that such events are a natural part of existence.

Society, however, historicizes supernatural agents as unnatural and demonic. The supernatural agent known as Peter Pan, from the perspective of Diane Purkiss' interpretation of the Barrie novel, is textualized by society and consequently perceived by adults as "a nursery demon feared by mothers, [a person] who kidnaps children and steals them away" (19). This act of thievery, aside from a literal, physical abduction, also has a figurative idea imbedded within: the influence of the supernatural, manifested through Peter Pan, subverts the socialization process intended to force the young child to mature and become a contributing member of society. Instead, he provides a contrary ideology

that is composed of constant play and forgetfulness—an ideology that works in stark contrast to a social period marked by the developing industrial revolution, wherein humans, regardless of their age, are to mature as quickly as possible.

One needs only to consider the historical record of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the rampant child labor. Consider Blake's poem, "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Experience*, as an example: it clearly articulates the socialization process that values the work of adulthood over the play of childhood. The expectation is that young children move as quickly as possible beyond the playing stage and forgetfulness of youth. Instead, the children show progress through acceptance of work responsibility, perhaps as young as six years old working in coal mines, and the acceptance of the responsibility of memory, whereby they become conscientious in the performance of the activities associated with their positions and which fulfill the social responsibilities expected by their parents, families, and societies (Purkiss 19). As Purkiss states, Barrie uses the supernatural to textualize a subversive concept: "growing up rather than perpetual childhood is the thing to be feared as a loss of identity. Heroism . . . is not confined to adults who have left childhood behind, but confined to children who still revel in childishness: only children can defeat monsters like Captain Hook" (19). Thus, true heroism is the resistance of social indoctrination that others and vilifies the supernatural, and instead is the consistent battle waged in the mind of the child to maintain his/her childhood and, consequently, the ability to sit on the beach, rather than just listen to the long, withdrawing roar of Arnold's *Dover Beach*.

*Peter Pan* evidences how one can resist social indoctrination that others the supernatural. Barrie also discusses the consequent effects should a child be unable to

resist such indoctrination. Early in the novel, Peter tells the Darling children that “children know such a lot now, they soon don’t believe in fairies, and every time a child says, ‘I don’t believe in fairies,’ there is a fairy somewhere that falls down dead” (25). I would argue that this text provides an innovative feature that few other supernatural texts provide: it investigates the consequences of social othering of the supernatural beyond severing the child’s connection to the supernatural agent. When a child linguistically unplugs from the supernatural realm through the utterance, “I don’t believe,” the destruction caused by this utterance goes beyond that of the internal child. Instead, Barrie suggests that this statement affects the physical existence of the very agents who inhabit the supernatural realm. The social indoctrination of young children, therefore, has a detrimental impact, which represents the notion that the artificial world of adulthood and society, the natural world, and the supernatural are significantly interconnected, each world possessing the potential to inflict serious physical and ideological harm on the other two. This is an important notion I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Five, since J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series significantly magnifies and demonstrates a similar construct.

As *Peter Pan* demonstrates, there is a significant consequence to an individual’s resistance to, in general, social indoctrination. Rejection of the ideological structure that determines one’s perspective on the validity of supernatural experiences represents this notion. When Peter leaves his mother to journey to Neverland, he thinks his “mother [will] always keep the window open for [him], so [he stays] away for moons and moons and moons, and then [flies] back; but the window [is] barred, for mother [forgets] all about me, and there [is] another little boy sleeping in my bed” (101). Peter’s success in

reaching Neverland and the consequence of such is apparent when he attempts to return home, only to find his means of entry closed and a child in Peter's bed to replace him. Michel Foucault offers insight into the cause and effect relationship evident in this scene in *The Politics of Truth* by discussing techniques of domination and techniques of the self. An individual learns how to negotiate one's role in the empowered social structure by understanding where the "technologies of domination of individuals over one another overlap processes by which the individual acts upon himself [and where] the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion or domination" (181). It is important to identify where social forces attempt to suppress self-identification and what adopted techniques are popular. This process would help discover the specific circumstances where the revelation and concealment of individual ideology occurs.

There are consequences when an individual fails to develop a social filter. In the case of Peter, he never develops an awareness of what is and what is not socially appropriate, nor does he attempt to live a dual existence, which maintains the unique self in conjunction with a social self that reflects adherence to the dominant social structures. Instead, Peter knowingly and purposefully escapes the world of adulthood for the world of fantasy and childhood, manifested in the supernatural realm known to Peter as Neverland, the name itself linguistically suggesting that it is a land that never has existed, never can exist, and/or never will exist from an adult perspective. Additionally, an individual never has, never can, and/or never will visit this place, no matter what anecdotal evidence indicates otherwise.

When Peter makes the decision to reject society's goal for childhood maturation—namely adulthood—his mother closes the window and replaces him in his



bed with a new child, which is a not so subtle suggestion to Peter, specifically, and children, generally, that rejecting the dominant social structure has a significant repercussion—potential permanent social disenfranchisement and replacement. This rejection is represented by the Lost Boys, who, the narrator states, know in “what they [call] their hearts that one can get on quite well without a mother, and that it is only the mothers who think you can’t” (101). Peter’s decision, and that of the Lost Boys, represents a rejection of governance: a notion that, according to Foucault, represents “a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which impose coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified” by the specific individual or social construct (182). Society believes, through governance, that a child will temper his relationship with the supernatural. As he grows older, the child may attempt to straddle the social ideology of rejection with the personal ideology of acceptance. The consequent negotiation of these extremes results in the formation of a personal ideology that enables existence within the social system along with maintenance of the self. However, as Peter grows older, this maintenance, based on a delicate equilibrium between the social and individual, becomes increasingly problematic. Eventually, society usually defeats the individual. As a result, the child ultimately rejects the supernatural, since he recognizes the virtual impossibility of managing a dual existence—one social by nature, the other individual by nature. The individual nature nurtures a relationship with the fantasy world, and along with it, the supernatural. However, to become an adult, the child must reject this duality and camp himself wholly in the social realm. Ultimately, the child must reject himself and accept the provided social identity.

A child could choose to reject this socialization, though. Peter's wholesale refusal of the dominant social ideology culminates in his exclusion from the real world and his desire to kill those he blames for polluting the minds of young children—adults. Peter is “full of wrath against grown-ups,” who he blames for “spoiling everything” (102). His anger is so intense that, whenever he enters the tree-home, he would breathe “intentionally quick short breaths at the rate of about five to a second” (102). The basis for Peter's actions is an old Neverland saying: “every time you breathe, a grown-up dies; and Peter [kills] them off vindictively as fast as possible” (102). Thus, Peter, playing the role of warrior for Neverland in the adult world of reality, attempts to prevent the death of fairies caused by children's lack of belief, which results from social indoctrination. Peter protects himself and attempts to shield children from such programming through the agency of forgetfulness—a technique that, he believes, ignores the harmful effects of living that colors one's perception of the world and enables the maintenance of a purer, more individual idealism. However, this comes at a price: the inability to develop and maintain permanent relationships with people, specifically children, who eventually choose the adult reality and consequently, and at least partially, reject the fantastic and idealistic Neverland of childhood.

The changed relationship that occurs between Peter and Wendy best represents the negative consequences of this forgetful ideology. Early in the novel, Peter and Wendy develop a special relationship. By the middle of the novel, Peter hopes that Wendy will become a surrogate mother for him and the Lost Boys. However, as the text continues, this relationship begins to disintegrate. Ironically, Wendy's exposure to Neverland hastens her maturation. As the only maternal female figure available to Peter,

the Darling children, and the Lost Boys, she begins to act as a mother, telling the children bedtime stories and dispensing medicine. Peter experiences mixed responses to this development in Wendy's character. Though earlier he applauds the role she plays, he later recognizes the consequences. When she attempts to medicate Peter, "just as she [prepares] it, she [sees] a look on his face that makes her heart sink" (104). The expression on Peter's face represents his recognition that Wendy has begun to act in an adult maternal role. This brings Peter back to remember his own mother who has since rejected him and the lifestyle he chose to live, where he permanently rejects the adult reality for the Neverland fantasy.

The complete consequence of Wendy's maturation caused by Neverland becomes fully evident at the end of the novel. Peter attempts to prevent Wendy's return, instructing Tinkerbell to "close the window; bar it!," in the hopes that, "when Wendy comes she will think her mother has barred her out, and she will have to go back with [him]" (144). Should Wendy see the window barred, Peter hopes that Wendy will remember Peter's story and view the barred window as a sign of the same maternal and social rejection he experienced. Consequently, he hopes, Wendy will return to Neverland with Peter, where she will continue to foster her relationship with Peter and the supernatural agents associated with the fantasy world of Neverland. Ironically, Peter enables Wendy's return and that of the Darling children, as well as the Lost Boys from Neverland. Rather than keep the window barred, Peter relents, blaming the "laws of nature" and his desire to avoid "silly mothers" (145). While this act does not appear to make sense, given Peter's desire to keep Wendy associated with Neverland, two factors can account for his decision. One, he recognizes that Wendy's return to Neverland as an

influential maturing maternal figure could eventually cause Neverland to assume the same realistic characteristics associated with the adult world. Second, he recognizes the consequences of convincing Wendy to remain in Neverland through a lie: that being Mrs. Darling's apparent rejection of her and the Darling children by locking the window, which instead is an act perpetrated by Peter. One can also interpret that Peter, recognizing the negative consequences of his actions on Mrs. Darling herself, wishes to avoid causing pain to the "silly mothers" to whom he refers in the passage.

The consequence of full social maturation by children, according to Barrie, is direct disconnection from supernatural agents and the supernatural world. Barrie states that the Lost Boys, who are enrolled in school a short time after their return, see "what goats they had been not to remain [in Neverland]; but it [is] too late now, and soon they [settle] down to being as ordinary as you or me or Jenkins the minor" (151). Barrie's statement represents a phenomenon about education noted by Walker Percy in The Loss of the Creature, where he notes that people socialized through educational systems do not confront new stimuli "as a sovereign person" (550). Instead, the highest role one can conceive for is that of recognition for "the title of the object, to return it to the appropriate expert, and have it certified as a genuine find" (551). Percy's statement notes that recitative approaches to education act as socialization opportunities that blind the subject and inhibit an authentic learning experience. Instead, the individual seeks to understand the stimulus within the accepted social constructs, which leads to the creation of mostly deductive perceptual lenses that weaken, if not eliminate, the inductive lenses that are necessary for authentic learning experiences. Such inductive lenses are also critical to the sort of supernatural vision discussed by Blake. Consequently, the children become, as

Barrie notes, ordinary. The soul experiences a significant impairment, if not total elimination, of the individual uniqueness commonly stimulated by the soul's interaction with supernatural phenomena.

Barrie also articulates how easily social ideologies spread throughout a group housed in close proximity to each other. He demonstrates this through the Lost Boys' experiences in the schoolhouse and subsequent experiences at home, outside of the apparent socialization environment. Within the same period as the Lost Boys' experiences in school, Barrie relates, "It is sad to have to say that the power to fly gradually left them. At first Nana tied their feet to the bed-posts so that they should not fly away in the night . . . but by and by they ceased to tug at their bonds in bed" (151). The literal manacling of the children's ability to fly represents a limitation of their physical abilities, perhaps a part of human capability that, for whatever reason, society has deemed impossible and/or inappropriate. Figuratively, though, the children's binding represents a limitation of their abilities to use their imaginative faculties fully, which Barrie's novel shows is an absolute necessity for communication with supernatural agents and transportation to supernatural worlds like Neverland.

The combination of Nana's actions with a formal educational system removes the uniqueness of each child as witnessed in Neverland. Ordinarity replaces this uniqueness. The children obtain altruistic future goals that align with activities that serve the greater social good. In exchange for sacrificing their individuality, the children have future opportunities to attain positions of high social status and financial income. Barrie tells of the sad future of the Lost Boys and the Darling children:

You may see the twins Nibs and Curly any day going to an office, each carrying a bag and an umbrella. Michael is an engine driver. Slightly married a lady of title, and so he became a lord. You see that judge in a wig coming out at the iron door? That used to be Tootles. The bearded man who doesn't know any story to tell his children was once John. (153)

The social expectations of the world replace the dreams of the children by demanding that the Darling children and the Lost Boys avoid the world of fantasy and the dreams inspired by worlds like Neverland. The only acceptable exception occurs when these worlds provide mindless entertainment. Children show maturation by avoiding supernatural agents or phenomena, since they are able to terrify and leverage humans from the world of reality, and subvert the dominant ideology. Society considers childhood loyalty to supernatural agents as ironic, since its tangible, real existence is questionable at best. For instance, society would perceive as ludicrous the Lost Boys' initial resistance to school, since the children initially defend their allegiance to Neverland and its unstructured nature. Schooling becomes a disparate construct, in that it is a structured atmosphere that has a tendency to stymie the creative and energetic thoughts generated by the imaginative atmosphere found in Neverland. Society's treatment of Michael represents this notion: he is the child who resists social indoctrination the longest of any of the children. Barrie states, "Michael believed longer than the other boys, though they jeered at him" (152). This abuse represents the assertion of peer pressure as a means to subvert the apparent realness of the supernatural, subsequently convincing Michael that belief in such phenomena and such a place is ludicrous. Since the supernatural phenomenon of Neverland does not actually exist and

its ideological structure subverts the dominant ideology, society perceives such worlds as unworthy to influence adults who live, in Barrie's judgment, too wholly in the world of reality.

While the consequences of this maturation through social indoctrination are evident in the changes witnessed in the Darling boys and the Neverland Lost Boys, the most obvious, and saddest, evidence of the change caused by one's maturation and consequent assumption of the roles prescribed by society is evident in the change in Wendy's character. Earlier in the novel, Wendy appears to be the most adept at interacting with the supernatural, evidenced by her initial uninhibited interaction with Peter: she is the Darling child who first interacts with Peter, she appears to have the strongest relationship with Peter, and she demonstrates her ability to, at times, dictate to him what she considers the most appropriate actions. As mentioned earlier, though, she is the one who experiences the greatest growth throughout the novel, based on her experiences in Neverland, where she begins to assert the social expectations for women in the fantasy world of Neverland, as dictated in reality. She matures the most, and this extensive maturation becomes the focus of Barrie's fiction at the end of the novel. The intention, then, on Barrie's part, is to demonstrate how quickly the pendulum can swing. At one moment, the individual possesses a deep and intimate connection with the supernatural, whereas at the next moment, one moves to the supernatural periphery— a position where the individual can still, in a fleeting and distant sort of way, hear and perhaps see the supernatural, but sacrificed are the spontaneous and intimate correspondence with the supernatural at an earlier time. Often, this results from one's inner desire to mature or from a forced maturation which is thrust upon young people by

social influence: facilitated by society, one takes on an adult social role in reality or attempts to assert in the fantasy world the social ideology of reality.

Barrie suggests that separation from the supernatural fantasy world occurs through a painfully slow weaning process. Wendy's initial realization that she has changed occurs on the first anniversary of the children's journey to Neverland. When Peter arrives to pick up Wendy, she wears the "frock she had woven from leaves and berries in the Neverland" (152). While her usage of leaves and berries as materials for this frock represents a desire to re-assimilate into the Neverland environment, Barrie's comment that immediately follows demonstrates the extent of her socialization: Wendy is fearful that Peter will "notice how short [the frock has] become" (152). I would argue that Wendy's concern for the appropriateness of her dress represents how strongly the real world's social mores have taken possession of her perceptual framework and how aware she has become that her physical maturation is commensurate with—and indeed merely reflects—her social and intellectual maturation. She has become aware of her sexuality from a social perspective, represented by her Eve-like creation of a frock constructed of leaves and berries from the Eden-like Neverland she had at one point populated.

The consequence of this newfound Eden-like awareness and subsequent shyness becomes evident the next year when Peter "did not come for her" (152). Her self-awareness, influenced by the social mores of reality, inspires her to create "a new frock because the old one simply would not meet" (152). There are two important elements contained in this text. Firstly, replacement of the original, natural frock with a new, artificial, more appropriate design represents how reality has come to dominate her



thinking. Secondly, recognition of this size differential represents how aware she has become of her growth. As a result, Wendy becomes even more aware that she needs to act like the reserved, socially prescribed adult, rather than the spontaneous and uninhibited child witnessed at the beginning of the novel. When Michael whispers to Wendy, “‘Perhaps there is no such person . . . as Peter Pan,’” Michael begins to “cry at this thought” (152). Barrie states, “Wendy would have cried if Michael had not been crying” (152). At this point, the expected logical and rational control of one’s faculties, as expected by an adult, takes hold over Wendy. I would argue that this explains Peter’s conscious failure to appear, rather than mere forgetfulness. Furthermore, both children’s statements and contemplation of the idea that Peter may not exist violates the “belief” requirement that is necessary to sustain fairies. By uttering, considering, and then sympathizing with such a consideration, both Michael and Peter are not only harming the fairy world and cutting themselves off from it, but they are also perhaps inhibiting their ability to see Peter or impeding Peter’s ability to return.

In my reading, Barrie demonstrates how one can attempt to resist this social indoctrination once one becomes aware of its effect. However, he also demonstrates the effectiveness of such resistance. Wendy does attempt to resist this social indoctrination, for she tries “not to have growing pains; and she [feels] she [is] untrue to him when she [gets] a prize for general knowledge” (153). I would argue that Wendy’s main problem towards the end of the novel revolves around the linkage of physical and intellectual maturation to adulthood. Entrapment of Wendy occurs due to socially induced pressure, which is predicated on a binary absolutism—the basis of a modernist social perceptual framework. Consequently, there are only two types of human existence—the child and

the adult. One cannot inhabit both spheres simultaneously. Furthermore, one cannot possess the body of an adult yet remain a child at heart. Instead, the social view is that childhood is a stage that one experiences on the road to adulthood. Because resisting such maturation is not only futile but also inappropriate, there is no opportunity for Wendy to create a complex, bifurcated self that is able to exist in both the realms of reality and fantasy simultaneously. Either she remains a child who exists in the fantasy world of Neverland or she becomes an adult who exists in the real world. There is no gradation available, nor can two emotional, intellectual, and spiritual addresses exist simultaneously: the gripping message of the novel centers on the reality that one may be domiciled in one reality only.

Wendy and Peter's next meeting represents her inability to manage such a complex internal self-relationship. Instead, she needs the assistance of an individual able to see and communicate with this realm. She finds this individual in her daughter, Jane. Barrie characterizes Jane as the ideal child who is able to experience the fantastic supernatural realm populated by the likes of Peter Pan. She possesses "an odd inquiring look, as if from the moment she arrived on the mainland she wanted to ask questions" (153). This inquiry-based, inductive-reasoning skillset, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is a vital component by which one can communicate with the supernatural realm. In contrast to the youthful idealism of Jane, when Peter reappears to Wendy with Jane's assistance, Wendy is "a married woman, and Peter [is] no more to her than a little dust in the box in which she [keeps] her toys" (153). Wendy has not only grown up, but she has also lost the romantic, idealistic perceptual lenses that are unique to children, generally,

and Jane, specifically, and which are necessary for one to maintain an intimate relationship with the supernatural realm.

Society's deep social indoctrination becomes most evident in the dialogue that takes place between Wendy and Jane regarding Neverland and Wendy's memories of flying. Wendy tells Jane, "I sometimes wonder whether I ever did really fly" (154). Vocalization of this reflective comment represents how society often historicizes the supernatural as a fantasy. To question one's memories and to consider the act of doing so as delusional represents the power of the deductive social perceptual template and its ability to corrupt pure memories with altered recollections, thereby reinforcing the dominant ideology. When Jane asks why Wendy is no longer able to fly, Wendy responds that such a supernatural power requires three components: gayness, innocence, and heartlessness, for "it is only the gay and innocent and heartless who can fly" (154). Historicizing the characteristics of individuals who are able to fly through supernatural means as gay and innocent does not cast such individuals—and their supernatural connection—in an unfavorable light. However, the term "heartless" does. It insinuates a theme, in fact, that is consistent throughout the novel. Peter's biggest threat to the dominant social framework is that his overall demeanor appears to promote a non-pluralist, subjective, and hedonistic attitude marked by forgetfulness. In deconstructing the novel, Peter's forgetfulness represents one of the most important elements of maintaining the requisite skillsets of innocence, inductivity, and gaiety that Wendy mentions. For forgetfulness enables the individual to move beyond the hurtful actions one experiences in life and the type of acquired knowledge that moves the individual towards a more dominant deductive thinking methodology which inhibits one's ability to

perceive and interact with the supernatural, since the individual loses what can be considered the most important ability: the power to believe.

An additional element to consider within the context of one's maturation process and associated relationship to supernatural phenomena concerns the parallel lifelines individuals live as they grow and mature. Barrie discusses this notion during the final chapter of the novel. While Wendy, in the role of the mother, has experienced the ideological conditioning that others the supernatural, her daughter is at an earlier point on her lifeline. Thus, she is an additional demonstration, when considered in relationship to Wendy and the multiple life stages she has experienced, that childhood curiosity provides the best opportunity to establish or re-establish a communication framework with the supernatural realm. The latent child, still a potential, albeit weak force within Wendy's psyche, recognizes this possibility. When she is able to see Peter again with Jane's assistance, she greets him, while "something inside her [cries], 'Woman, woman, let go of me'" (155). Wendy's child persona had witnessed the usurpation of its power earlier in the novel by a combination of Wendy's desire to grow up and the associated social expectations of the adult feminine gender role manifested in the position of motherhood. This same self now vocalizes its effort to free itself from the socially-defined role that has effectively restrained her childhood self. Now, with Peter's return, this persona sees an opportunity to escape from the social ideological manacles that have figuratively restrained her and become re-empowered. The image of an adult Wendy restraining the adolescent Wendy signifies this notion. Unfortunately, the adolescent Wendy cannot rend itself free from the adult Wendy—a clear statement by Barrie that the path between childhood and adulthood is not bidirectional but is instead unidirectional.

As a means to articulate fully his parallel lifeline concept, Barrie traces several generations of Darling children. While Wendy's child persona is ultimately unable to shake itself free from the social manacles that have enslaved her, Jane, however, remains a free spirit throughout her youth, like her mother before her. Wendy's initial communication with Peter echoes the inquiry made by Jane to Peter: "Boy . . . why are you crying?" (158). When Peter responds that he has come back to the world of reality to collect his mother, Jane responds, "Yes, I know . . . I have been waiting for you" (158). Barrie's argument here is clear: when it comes to human interaction with the supernatural, it is a never-ending, revolving relationship, with children freely entering and exiting Neverland due to the lack of social restrictions and ideological programming regarding the supernatural and the fantasy worlds that supernatural agents inhabit.

As the child ages, society's programming agents will assert themselves and, almost inevitably, force the child to leave Neverland. However, while the child leaves Neverland unable to return, he/she will produce heirs who will take their place and ensure that humanity always is able to maintain some degree of connectivity to the supernatural, no matter how peripheral and subverted. Barrie articulates this through the pattern by which Jane becomes Wendy, and Jane's daughter later plays the role of the young child possessed of the requisite childhood curiosity necessary to bear witness to and communicate with supernatural phenomena. As a whole, Barrie does offer a rather cynical and pessimistic argument concerning one's relationship with the supernatural, where our relationship with the supernatural is both temporary and fleeting unless one takes the radical step of spurning the world of reality and entering the world of the supernatural and fantasy entirely. In an ironic twist, he also reinforces the same binary

construct between fantasy and reality which he labels as problematic earlier in the novel and which, consequently, he attempts to deconstruct. In other words, Barrie suggests that the maintenance of a relationship with the supernatural is possible but requires the spurning of adulthood and the preservation of childhood—the same militant and illogical either/or proposition offered by adulthood and its associated ideological superstructure. I argue that society's inflexibility leaves little room for an alternative perspective.

The end of Barrie's novel, then, does raise an important question: is his argument regarding the either/or nature of our relationship with the supernatural and society absolute? I would argue it is not. Rather, the possibility does exist that individuals can establish and maintain a connective link with the supernatural realm. Romantic ideology, as presented by the seminal poets of the period, represents how this relationship can be established and maintained. The following section demonstrates how Romantic ideology's close relationship to supernaturalism can enable or re-enable, and consequently empower or re-empower, the childhood curiosity that is so necessary for effective communication with supernatural phenomena.

In the previous texts discussed in this chapter, the authors have demonstrated how the act of historicization has othered the supernatural, a process which consequently places such phenomenon on the periphery of the socially-constructed real world represented by the authors. These texts have also demonstrated the deconstructive effort waged by authors on the social structural relationship established by the dominant ideology, which occurs through a concerted effort of supernatural agents who work through social, real-world representatives. The Romantic Ideology, though, prevalent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in its purest representation, does not require the construction and

consequent deconstruction of the same binary relationships of real-world versus imaginative/fantasy. Instead, the Romantic writers offer a new vision of the world, represented by the “isms” of the period that support and provide a means by which individuals can subscribe to what I would call “supernaturalism.” To this point, I have discussed supernatural phenomena, the closest that this dimension of existence can get to a manifestation familiar to mortals. I would argue that supernaturalism is a potential alternative ideology that contrasts with that offered by society. This ideology legitimizes supernatural phenomena, the powers possessed by such phenomena, the knowledge such phenomena communicate to mortals, and the potential supernatural abilities possessed by those in connection with the supernatural realm through a belief structure, which validates the existence of supernatural phenomena and the information these representatives communicate.

I would argue that one’s decision to support and to allow supernaturalism to influence directly the way in which an individual perceives and, consequently, interacts with his/her environment offers a psychological and spiritual elixir that can inoculate one to the social programming agents that historicize the supernatural within a context that vilifies and/or invalidates its real existence. One’s subscription to supernatural ideology—or supernaturalism, as I will call it—enables one to see and to interact with the supernatural agents, as well as understand it and its message. As many prior critics have argued, the insurgent spirit fed by the French Revolution heavily influenced the Romantic ideology predominant during the early 1800’s. This more general ideology, Romanticism, fed a much more specific ideology: supernaturalism. As Jerome J. McGann notes in *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation*,

In the case of Romantic poems, we shall find that the works tend to develop different sorts of artistic means with which to occlude and disguise their own involvement in a certain nexus of historical relations. This act of evasion, as it were, operates most powerfully whenever the poem is most deeply immersed in its cognitive (i.e., its ideological) materials and commitments. (82)

I would extend McGann's argument into a consideration of supernaturalism.

Romanticism makes an effort to disguise its relationship to the real world which influences its creation. From this perspective, the poem is able to generate a new fantasy world that does not require the establishment of reality as a means to construct a binary relationship. In other words, the poet need not create this fantasy world through reliance on a connection and consequent inversion of the real world that exists outside of the poem's constructed alternative reality. The reader is then free to become a part of this newly-constructed alternative world, and the visualization and perceptual understanding of it is a consequence of the materials and commitments McGann mentions, which drives the cognitive experience of the reader.

The Romantic period and its associated ideology, then, provides the best general perceptual framework by which one can escape fully from the world of reality and enter into the alternative fantasy world. As McGann states, "an Enlightenment mind like Diderot's or Godwin's or Crabbe's would study ["The Ruined Cottage"] in social and economic terms, but Wordsworth is precisely interested in preventing—in actively countering—such a focus of concentration" (84). In support of McGann's argument, I propose that Wordsworth would prefer an alternative perceptual construct, informed by peripheral ideologies like supernaturalism, which would enable the new world found in



the poem to define itself upon a clean slate, rather than work within a pre-constructed social and perceptual framework created only through the deconstruction of the real world—one that, as previously established, others, subverts, and questions the authenticity of the supernatural world.

To demonstrate how this alternative reality produced by Romantic ideology supports supernaturalism, I use McGann's analysis of Wordsworth's poem, "The Ruined Cottage." McGann states that a reading of the poem with the dominant real ideology subverts the supernatural. This results in the omission of distinct details in our memories. Consequently, "the particulars of this tragedy [are driven] to a region that is too deep either for tears or for what Wordsworth calls 'restless thoughts'" (83). This reading removes one's emotional response to the poem. Instead, what becomes "the poem's dominant and most memorable process," the ruination of Margaret's cottage by nature, "comes to stand as an emblem of the endurance of Nature's care and ceaseless governance, just as it glances obliquely at the pathetic incompetence of individual, cultural, and institutional efforts to give stability to human affairs" (McGann 83). Thus, the primary concerns through this human-centered, real interpretation are governance, institutionalism, and general human affairs.

A more Romantic interpretation of the poem, though, requires a "clear sense of the historical origins and circumstantial causes of Margaret's tragedy," considered, in my opinion, within the fantasy world in which the cottage is placed. Such a perceptual lens refocuses the attention of "Armistage, poet, and reader . . . on a gathering mass of sensory, and chiefly vegetable, details" (McGann 83). This focus, whereby one is put into a contemplative stupor, a Coleridgean *Kubla Khan*-type world, results in a

hypnotization at the “sensual surface,” whereby “the light of sense goes out and ‘the secret spirit of humanity emerges’” (McGann 83). Such anaesthetization of the world, signified by the extinction of the “light of sense,” enables the revelation of this secret spirit, prompting the temporary suspension of the social adult ideology that blinds people to the sight of the spirit world. As a result, Armytage, poet, and reader have had their perceptual lenses adjusted, which enable a child-like, inductive contemplation of the spiritual world as represented by physical structures and intellectual rumination. The Romantic ideology’s ability to produce such environments within the construct of its inspired poetic works is crucial to the embracement of supernaturalism, which must demand separation from the real-world ideology, as Barrie so eloquently demonstrates. Its concerted effort to blind adults to the existence of the supernatural realm outside of accepted traditional religious systems and leisurely activities controls one’s supernatural encounter within clearly-defined and managed experiences that ultimately support the dominant social ideology.

Wordsworth expresses his support of supernaturalism through a desire to penetrate, as McGann notes, the “sense of ‘the life of things,’ which lies beneath the external ‘forms of beauty’” (87). This shift in perceptual focus moves the individual from a focus on “what might have been a picture *in* the mind . . . with a picture *of* the mind: a picture, that is—as the pun on the preposition makes clear—of the ‘mind’ in its act of generating itself with an external landscape” (McGann 87). In other words, the poet is able to make manifest the abstract internal self through a projection that implants the specific unique characteristics that make up the self in a concrete object that one cannot only visualize, but also interpret to understand the abstract nature of the self. To

extend McGann's point and to contextualize it within supernaturalism, we note that the poet is able to go beyond merely projecting and concretizing the internal self; in addition, the poet is able to recognize, capture, and consequently communicate to others the ethereal, disembodied selves that are characteristic of supernatural phenomena. This act, so to speak, is similar to covering an invisible man in a substance, such as makeup, that takes the ethereal form and reproduces it in a way that preserves the authentic self, while clothing it, so to speak, in something that is detectable to the human senses. Once the human senses detect the supernatural phenomena embedded in the physical object, the individual then peels back the layers of the manifestation to see and study the abstract, ethereal elements that exist beneath the constructed surface. McGann expresses how this process occurs in *Tintern Abbey*:

The abbey associated with 1793 fades, as in a palimpsest, and in its disappearing outlines we begin to discern not a material reality but a process, or power, exercising itself in an act of sympathy which is its most characteristic feature. No passage in Wordsworth better conveys the actual movement when a spiritual displacement occurs—when the light and appearance of sense fade into an immaterial plane of reality, the landscape of Wordsworth's emotional needs. (87)

McGann argues that penetrating the façade forces one to move beyond the senses. The individual can now understand the landscape of Wordsworth's emotions, as stimulated by the supernatural phenomena represented in the physical object. While McGann's argument is valid and suggests a connection to supernaturalism, I would argue that the soul is the seat of human emotions. Romanticism supports supernaturalism in that it provides a process that enables the recognition of the spiritual phenomena found

throughout the natural world and its associated emotional impact on the individual who is able to bear witness. McGann's focus is on Wordsworth and his emotions only; I would extend his comments to include the overall recognition of an externalized immaterial plane of reality in relationship to the poet.

Wordsworth's articulation of Romantic ideology further supports supernaturalism through a rebuke of traditional religious ideology. McGann notes the same in Wordsworth's own writing, "where he declares himself to be a 'worshipper of Nature' rather than a communicant in some visible church" (87). While there is high value in the social opportunities and the manifest nature of a concretized religious belief system, there are also some clear challenges to such. McGann states that such reality-based institutions often "fade and fall to ruin" (87). However, construction of a system that is less reliant on the external concrete and more reliant on the internal abstract provides greater sustainability and resonance since it facilitates an individualized relationship with the supernatural that does not rely on an external ideology potentially influenced by others. McGann argues, "The mind suffers no decay, but passes from sympathetic soul to sympathetic soul" through the promotion of a linkage between the abstract mind/soul of the individual and the supernatural phenomena, rather than through a dominant, physically-embodied social ideology that is transient at best (87). The soul/mind of the individual is permanent, but the manifested faith system is not.

This Romantic ideology is crucial to supernaturalism, since it supports a connection between the permanent elements of existence, the soul and the supernatural, rather than the transient elements of existence: the body and its associated ideologies. McGann echoes this interpretation. He notes that "Between 1793 and 1798 Wordsworth

lost the world merely to gain his immortal soul” (88). From a supernatural perspective, this is a fitting and appropriate trade-off when considered within the larger context of universal existence. McGann even argues that this ideology, which sacrifices the material for the ethereal, promotes what could be an escapist mentality, which “has been incorporated into our academic programs. The idea that poetry, or even consciousness, can set one free of the ruins of history and culture is the grand illusion of every Romantic poet” (91). As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the only way one is able to experience authentic supernatural encounters is during an individual’s childhood, when the supernatural has yet to be othered, or through a self-purging of the cultural historicization that others the supernatural. As the authors discussed in this chapter make clear, only then can one become truly free to see, objectively, the truth of the spiritual/fantasy world that exists parallel to our adult world of reality.

Escape from the history and culture of reality, however, is a difficult prospect for any individual to navigate—hence, the reason children, as suggested earlier in this chapter, are best able to establish and maintain authentic communication with the supernatural realm. While authors like Barrie indicate one’s maturation negatively affects the maintenance of a relationship with supernatural phenomena, Wordsworth offers an alternative argument. Rather than view maturation as a damning process within the context of supernaturalism, Wordsworth suggests that a different type of growth can actually re-establish and promote a deep connectivity between the supernatural world and the adult individual living in reality. This occurs through growth linked to that of the poetic temperament: an idea expressed in *The Prelude, Or Growth of a Poet’s Mind*.

In *Romanticism and Ideology: Studies in English Writing 1765-1830*, author Jonathan Cook asserts that “childhood is approached . . . in a context haunted by guilt and self-doubt” (60). This haunting, a familiar reference to supernatural encounters, witnesses a recall of “childhood in order to postpone an encounter with the problems of vocation and purpose which divide [one] as an adult” (60). Cook further argues that Book I of *The Prelude* “records a twofold withdrawal, from the city into the country and from the present into the past” (60). The basis of this withdrawal is his “failure as a poet,” caused by a disconnection between him and supernatural phenomena (Aers, Cook, & Punter 60). Problems of vocation and purpose noted by Cook further exacerbate the problems of vocation and purpose. The literal retreat referred to by Wordsworth has a deeper symbolic purpose. He recognizes that he has lost the source of Truth, which he had earlier been privy to based on his relationship with the supernatural realm. Now aware that such a relationship inhibits and threatens complete dissolution, Wordsworth wishes to retreat from the city as a means to recapture a childhood that had been devoid of social ideological interference.

Wordsworth’s desire to retreat from the city as a means to recapture childhood is consistent with the research of James C. McKusick, who asserts the importance of urban withdrawal and re-immersion in childhood. I would assert such a retreat enables the re-establishment of relationships with supernatural phenomena. In *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology*, McKusick asserts Wordsworth’s recognition of the harm caused by the “bodily eye,” as promoted through cultural ideological subjugation. The individual requires confirmation of the supernatural agent’s existence through direct visual experience as triangulated by others. This scientifically-based requirement is “the

inevitable result of an education that stresses the empirical version of reality, predicated upon the mind-body dualism of the Cartesian method” (McKusick 56). McKusick also states that, “In Wordsworth’s view, an excessive reliance on visual data, to the exclusion of more immediate sensory modalities of sound and touch, will result in a ‘subjugation’ of the mind to the cold materiality of external objects” (56). His argument reinforces the importance of children in relationship to supernatural recognition, since they are prone to use sound and touch, as well as the visual, as a means to perceive their surrounding environment. They do not need to see the supernatural to confirm its existence; instead, they are willing also to rely on sound and touch. The visual is an important sense to an adult ideology based on empirical, sight-driven data. Sound and, especially touch, though, are not as easy to place within an empirical, scientific template. As the individual ages, the resultant maturation leads to a “materialistic vision,” wherein the “‘dreamlike’ character of childhood perception” is lost (McKusick 56). Wordsworth, however, believes that emancipation from this subjugation through the reiteration of his youth may be possible, wherein he hopes to recapture the innocence and perceptual framework that has been lost and which, I assert, is necessary to hold a full and vital audience with supernatural phenomena.

Additionally, as Cook states, Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* recognizes one critically important function of supernaturalism: “Nature, the ‘active Principles’ is . . . a form of revelation available to all without the need of any intermediary” (56). Wordsworth recognizes “engagement with the social origins of ignorance and suffering”—namely, that the ideology discussed earlier, which attempts to subvert and other supernatural phenomena through acts of historicization, is counterproductive to a relationship he

intends to develop with supernatural agents. In order to spurn popular ideological constructs that inhibit supernatural faith outside of socially-accepted definitions, the language used in the poem needs to shift to a form that “construes man’s relationship with nature in religious terms,” yet does so in a way that deconstructs traditional religious ideology and consequently frees, rather than enslaves, the individual (Aers, Cook, & Punter 56). Traditional scholarship on supernaturalism as an “-ism” would define it as a part of broad Romanticism. Supernaturalism uses much of the Romantic ideology as a means to guide one towards establishing effective dialectic relationships with supernatural phenomena.

A deeper analysis of Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* supports my assertion that Romantic ideology offers an effective approach whereby one can establish and/or re-establish a connection with the supernatural realm. David Aers notes that, among the various functions of poetry defined by Wordsworth, one of the most important he identifies is the poet’s ability to grasp the “‘mind of man’ in interaction with ‘the objects that surround him’” (64). Most notable in the context of this discussion would be the poet’s ability to seize the byproducts produced by the interaction between the poet and nature, which captures, in Wordsworth’s own words, “Genius, Power, Creation, and Divinity itself” (64). The combination of these four powerful elements, through interactions between supernatural manifestations in nature and the poet, reveals Truth. Aers notes Wordsworth’s statement that “poetry is the most philosophic of all writing . . . Its object is truth . . . Poetry is the image of man and nature” (64). I would posit that the act of poetic creation represents the establishment of a connection between the mortal and immortal realms. The consequence of this association is the revelation of knowledge to



the mortal realm known to the immortal, which becomes discernible through assistance of the mortal, who communicates the knowledge in a more easily and widely discernible language.

While Wordsworth notes poetry's ability to communicate knowledge gleaned from the supernatural realm, such discoveries do not come easy for humans. Common, everyday life in the city and exposure to associated ideologies tend to anaesthetize the human to the supernatural. Such an existence, while satisfactory to the unenlightened, is not fulfilling to one who holds childhood curiosity dear to the heart and is familiar with the supernatural realm. Hence, as expressed in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth develops a longing:

To brace [him]self to some determined aim,  
Reading or thinking; either to lay up  
New stores, or rescue from decay the old  
By timely interference. (116-19)

While these endeavors are conquerable in a private study located in the city, such an environment would not allow for true freedom or artistic inspiration when compared to the binary opposite of the city—namely, the world of nature. While the city is artificial and structured, nature is natural and unstructured. Geoffrey H. Hartman notes that “Nature, for Wordsworth, is not an ‘object’ but a presence and a power; a motion and a spirit; not something to be worshipped and consumed, but always a guide leading beyond itself” (290). Surrounding one's self in such an environment, then, creates a specific mood that undermines the deep psychological restraints inspired by continual exposure to society and all of its ideological trappings intended to other the supernatural.

Individual edification occurs through his guided interaction with the surrounding natural supernaturalism that surrounds him. As Wordsworth states, departure from the city and movement into nature is necessary if he is to “endue some airy phantasies / That had been floating loose about for years,” yet which Wordsworth has obviously had significant difficulty in experiencing (120-21). He hopes that, through re-establishment of this relationship, he will “temperately deal forth / The many feelings that oppressed my heart” (123-24). I would argue that the oppressive feelings to which Wordsworth refers are those inspired by a consciousness and associated conscience influenced by social ideological structures. These influences would label retreats to nature for supernatural communication as idle fantasies, at best.

Similar to Blake and Barrie, Wordsworth seeks communication with the supernatural form to nourish his soul, like that of a child, in a way that “irradiates and exalts / Objects through wildest intercourse of sense” (240-41). The sexual reference, signified by “intercourse,” refers to Wordsworth’s desire for nature to impregnate him with the knowledge of the supernatural realm; consequently, he would become charged with the creative power that would produce poetry, consequently enabling a manifestation of that which is abstract. As Wordsworth states, this act of signification is important, since the poetic spirit in the average individual, “By uniform control of after years / Is most abated or suppressed” (264). Individuals tend to lose connection to the supernatural realm for reasons revealed in Barrie’s novel. It becomes difficult, if not impossible, to see supernatural agents and, more importantly, to hear the knowledge that they communicate, since such become “lost beyond the reach of thought / And human knowledge, to the human eye / Invisible” (404-06). Perception of these agents cannot

occur through accepted sensory means, and their knowledge often becomes more abstracted.

Yet one final channel for communication does exist, according to Wordsworth: though this realm becomes increasingly invisible as we age, supernaturalism continues to “liveth to the heart.” The journey Wordsworth documents in *The Prelude* is intended to re-establish connectivity to the supernatural through the vestiges of childhood curiosity that remain in the heart, though social pressures have forced this curiosity to become latent. Should an individual penetrate deep enough into his/her own soul, the individual would then possess the ability to rejuvenate his relationship with the surrounding supernatural phenomena.

Wordsworth’s statement regarding blindness is important, since the poet who preserves or rediscovers this childhood curiosity is provided with “Visionary Power” that enables one to see on a literal and figurative level the “viewless winds / Embodied in the mystery of words,” which enables the reception of “knowledge and increase of enduring joy / From the great Nature” (597, 598-99, 594-95). Impregnation by the supernatural, as mentioned earlier, is not enough. While the immortal nature of humanity as contained in the soul may process the information provided by the supernatural agent, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the mortal, rational, logical thinking side of humanity to process the message. McKusick asserts that Wordsworth’s poetry often suggests a renunciation of the “discourse of erudition,” preferring instead the discovery of “books in the babbling brooks, and sermons in the stones” (59). Wordsworth’s gravitation towards concrete objects, rather than the more abstract discourse of erudition is important. As the

prophet, so to speak, for the supernatural agents he has conversed with, he must share this knowledge with individuals who are more common.

To communicate this knowledge in the purely abstract way that Wordsworth acquired would be an insurmountable challenge, given the commoners' elementary education, at best, in dealing with abstractions. This task becomes more difficult because social programming agents discourage the acquisition of knowledge from supernatural sources, as well as discourse with supernatural agents. As a result, Wordsworth must convert this abstract knowledge into a language that is understandable and recognizable by the masses, a poetic theory Wordsworth and Coleridge discuss as an important element in their revisionist approach to poetic theory, in general, and which is articulated in the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth enables understanding by the masses through a poetic discourse that is concrete and symbolic. This format enables transmission to socially indoctrinated and, hence, enslaved individuals. Specifically, this poetic language uses words that provide concrete form to the abstract and formless knowledge provided by supernatural agents directly to the poet. This is an important and ironic act by the poet. The poetic act of externalization that provides greater accessibility to the message is important. Yet there is irony in how the poet historicizes his supernatural encounter. The act of historicization occurs through language that validates and legitimizes these experiences, yet others manipulate the very same language to invalidate and de-legitimize the experience. Consequently, the poet risks entrapment in a loop that constantly structures and deconstructs language.

When the individual returns to the childhood innocence and curiosity discussed earlier, the individual, once again, becomes "A sensitive being, a *creative* soul" (XII,

208). This occurs when the virtue “enables us to mount, / When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen. / This efficacious Spirit chiefly lurks / Among those passages of life that give / Profoundest knowledge” (218-21). When this knowledge begins to flow freely between the supernatural entity and the individual, his/her spirit experiences a restoration whereby it once again is faithful to a supernatural ideology that shows reverence to a Power

That is the visible quality and shape  
And image of right reason, that matures  
Her processes by steadfast laws, gives birth  
To no impatient or excessive zeal,  
No vain conceits, provokes to no quick turns  
Of self-applauding intellect, — but trains  
To meekness, and exalts by humble faith. (Prelude XIII, 20-26)

The language used by Wordsworth here signifies longevity, stability, and Truth, which is supposed to prepare the adult for recognition of the superior power, function, and ability of the supernatural realm. Additionally, this knowledge should result in a meek, balanced individual who understands his/her place within the universal construct. When this occurs, Wordsworth states that the individual has successfully re-established “those watchful thoughts / Which . . . early tutored” one to perceive “with feelings of fraternal love / Upon the assuming things that hold / A silent station in this beauteous world” (XIII, 40, 44-47). The individual, through this conversion experience, once again recognizes the animated, ethereal beings that exist behind and surround that which appears inanimate or is unseen. Consequently, there is recognition of the familial

connection that exists between the mortal and immortal realms, which deconstructs the de-legitimizing historical record earlier communicated and which has led to disconnection.

Recognition of the power of such social ideology is represented by Wordsworth's parenthetical comments, where he now sees "little worthy or sublime / In what the Historian's pen so much delights / To blazon, Power and Energy detached / From moral purpose" (XIII, 41-44). Prior to this spiritual rebirth, the individual perhaps perceived historical efforts to de-legitimize and subvert the supernatural as not only worthy, but perhaps also sublime since the communication of such ideology perhaps occurred within a traditional and accepted religious construct. Now, the individual recognizes the worthlessness and reassesses even the ridiculousness of this message. In essence, the message is to have an educational and a moral purpose. As Wordsworth says,

Such minds are truly from the Deity.

For they are powers; and hence the highest bliss

That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness

Of whom they are, habitually infused

Through every image, and through every thought,

And all affection by communion raised

From earth to heaven, from human to divine. (XIV, 112-18)

However, the act of historicization successfully severs such a connection, disempowering and de-energizing the supernatural phenomena, a process which leads to the displacement of supernaturalism with a more traditional, socially accepted –ism intended to establish control over the individual and the supernatural through disconnection between both

beings. McKusick notes that an investigation of *Lyrical Ballads* as a whole suggests how unlikely it is for one to maintain a state of “wild awareness,” an awareness that is necessary for supernatural communication (68-69). Instead, the “prevailing tone of the collection is tragic; many of the characters in *Lyrical Ballads* are eventually broken, or at least tamed” (McKusick 69). McKusick suggests that this breaking or taming is due to a vague set of “circumstances.”

I would argue that this occurs because of the historicization process performed by social agents who intend to de-legitimize the supernatural agents and the supernaturalism that one subscribes to as a means of relationship management. Most often, this social ideological programming agent is a traditional religious structure with an associated value/morality system, which disempowers individual agency in favor of social compliance. Should an individual follow Wordsworth’s suggestions in *The Prelude*, though, and realign his/her perceptual lenses, reconnection to the supernatural realm will likely occur through a rejection of the socially accepted and negotiated relationship between the supernatural phenomena and the individual. One can then remain the Idiot Boy depicted in the *Lyrical Ballads*: society labels him as an “Idiot” because he does not embrace the social ideology through acceptance of the historical and contextual relationships that society establishes and which ultimately others the supernatural.

However, within a supernatural context, I allege that Wordsworth deconstructs the usual offensive definition of the term and, instead, assigns it an ameliorative connotation. From this standpoint, this “idiot” refuses the social ideological constructions, thereby displaying superior intelligence because he chooses to look beyond the ideological programming agents, maintains his inductive reasoning abilities tied to childhood

curiosity, and continues to rely on and strengthen his relationship with supernatural phenomena.

The contemplation of supernatural phenomena is a captivating topic. Supernaturalism, as an ideological structure, validates the existence of this realm of existence and in the process attempts to empower supernatural phenomena. For Blake, the child is central to the recognition of supernatural phenomena, and poetry is the most effective means by which to communicate the knowledge it cares to impart. As Rossetti demonstrates, though, society is suspicious of supernatural phenomena, since the ideology it articulates often runs counter to that of the dominant ideologies that assure control of the masses. Consequently, society others the supernatural through historicization and textualization acts that vilify such phenomena or call into question their existence. In the case of *Goblin Market*, Rossetti demonstrates how the othering occurs through vilification. In the process, though, the complexity, when read outside of a traditional Christian ideological construct, deconstructs the negative historicization of the supernatural, and instead demonstrates how the supernatural agents—the goblin men—become a means to empower Laura through legitimizing the female as an individual capable of making choices independent of the patriarchal social structure. The poem's conclusion demonstrates how social ideology interferes with attempts to free enslaved individuals.

Barrie's *Peter Pan* provides a more cynical vision, witnessed by a contrast between the world of reality and the world of fantasy, manifested in Neverland. Barrie demonstrates the ease by which children can see and interact with supernatural phenomena, but he also shows how easily children can slip from the physical world of



reality to the physical world of the fantastic supernatural. Preservation of the child's curiosity can occur through an escape to the fantastic. Yet should the child choose to return to reality, it is almost certain that the child will fall victim to the ideological programming agents that other the supernatural. This is clear by the representation of the fates of the Darling children and the Lost Boys. The only option available to the individual who wishes to sustain a relationship with the supernatural is to abandon the world of reality, as Peter Pan does in his childhood. The only positive notion Barrie offers regarding our relationship with the supernatural is that the world of reality will never completely lose its connection to this realm. Instead, the maintenance of some degree of a connection will occur through the continual introduction of new children into the world.

Still, as the child ages, both worlds lose something, as well as the individual involved. For the child, he loses his curiosity and relationship to supernatural phenomena, as all of the children in the novel lose their relationship with Peter. For the real world, they lose a connection to the supernatural each time a child matures through the refutation of supernatural phenomena and the supernatural world. For the supernatural fantastic world, the loss of a child witnesses the destruction of another relationship with the world of reality, and, by extension, the supernatural realm's ability to communicate with it. Additionally, though, the child's refutation has a mortal consequence on the supernatural agents, since each time a child loses his belief, one supernatural agent ends up dead. In the end, Barrie argues that resistance to the artificial world of reality, even while living within it, is futile; the only option is refutation of reality and permanent residence in the supernatural fantastic realm.

In its articulation of an early and idealistic Romantic ideology, Wordsworth's poetry does offer an escape route to adults that Barrie doubts is available. In Wordsworth, rediscovery of the supernatural realm can occur later in one's life through the adoption of supernaturalism. The basis of this -ism is on much of the natural supernaturalism and individualism expressed in revolutionary Romantic ideology that developed in response to the French Revolution during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. To reconnect, one must retreat from the artificial world; however, the rustication phase need not be permanent. Instead, individual immersion occurs within the natural surroundings of nature, and one uses an inductive form of reason to look beneath the mere appearance of things to discover the supernatural phenomena embedded in these physical objects. Often, this retreat recalls one's childhood and inspires a poetic temperament, whereby one can textualize and historicize supernatural phenomena in an inclusive, rather than exclusive, fashion.

## CHAPTER II

### DECONSTRUCTING GOTHICISM: INTELLECTUAL OTHERING OF THE SUPERNATURAL THROUGH DE-SIGNIFIED OBJECTIFICATION REPRESENTED IN *THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO*, *MANFRED*, AND *LIGEIA*

In this chapter, I will argue that texts which are traditionally categorized as gothic from a supernaturalistic perspective shifts the perceptual framework of the reader so that the supernatural phenomena are no longer intellectually othered. This shift in subject position allows the reader to see how non-religious phenomena, which now appear to be genuine, in fact act in a socially subversive fashion. This transforms our perspective of the supernatural. We can then consider alternative readings of phenomena that function as more than just terror and/or horror-inspiring agents.

Furthermore, I will show how this altered perception of supernatural phenomena is more congruent with Walpole's original intention in his construction of the Gothic literary genre than that provided by later Gothic scholars. For this perception to occur in the context of a Gothic text, an adjustment of the reader's perceptual framework must occur. As Backscheider states, literature touches "the responsive chords in its audience and simultaneously joins other discourses in contesting, subverting, and transforming it" (xv-xvi). While I agree with Backscheider, I nevertheless maintain that in the case of texts where supernatural phenomena occur, a subversion of the dominant ideology of Gothicism and related social ideological structures must occur to enable alternative considerations of supernatural phenomena. I will argue, further, that a supernaturalistic reading of a text labeled as Gothic enables such a shift in perception, whereby the text's subversive qualities towards later scholarly definitions of Gothicism and other dominant

social ideologies, usually manifest through supernatural phenomena, are readily discernible for contemplation.

In his “Preface to the First Edition” of *The Castle of Otranto*, Horace Walpole anticipates that his readers will be most suspicious relative to the apparent supernatural phenomena that appear in his work. Consequently, he discusses what he considers the state of the world during the dark ages between 1095 and 1243, when he purports that the tale first emerged, compared to the more advanced state of society in 1764:

Miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events, are exploded now even from romances. That was not the case when our author wrote; much less when the story itself is supposed to have happened. Belief in every kind of prodigy was so established in those dark ages, that an author would not be faithful to the manners of the times, who should omit all mention of them. He is not bound to believe them himself, but he must represent his actors as believing them. (6)

Walpole’s discussion provides a kind of definition to his new literary type, the Gothic romance, which appears to set an initial standard wherein terror is a necessary and integral agent in the new Gothic form. In this context, terror becomes the “author’s principal engine, [and] prevents the story from ever languishing; and it is so often contrasted by pity, that the mind is kept up in a constant vicissitude of interesting passions” (Walpole 6). Terror, then, and its associated manifestation through supernatural phenomena serves as a spectacular literary device that provides locomotion and evolution to the plot of a gothic text.

Terror also ensures that the text remains interesting to the reader. Anne Williams notes the expansion of this early definition in *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*:

According to literary handbooks, Gothic is a matter of décor and mood—of haunted castle, and brooding, mysterious hero/villain, of beleaguered heroines, of ghosts (“real,” or only believed to be), of an ambiguously pleasurable terror, of the nostalgic melancholy of ruins and of remote times and places. (14)

David Punter offers a commonly accepted definition of the term, similar to Williams’, which includes an “emphasis on portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the presence of highly stereotyped characters and the attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense” (1).

From these perspectives, which I believe to be reductive, Punter concludes that Gothic fiction features the representation of the “haunted castle, of heroines preyed on by unspeakable terrors, of the blackly lowering villain, of ghosts, vampires, monsters, and werewolves” (Punter 1). Within this construct, it is important to emphasize that terror and horror in the agency of supernatural phenomena are nothing more than spectacle. At best, supernatural phenomena in this context serve as literary symbols, usually of an othered past.

While the Gothic structure creates a common and predictable experience for the reader, there is one significant challenge: it considerably influences the reader’s anticipation, which impairs one’s ability to consider the supernatural phenomena in the text as anything other than a terror/horror –inducing literary device. The creation of such anticipatory sets is truly significant, since as Paula Backscheider demonstrates in *Spectacular Politics*, “Literature of all kinds almost invariably contributes to the

circulation and confirmation of the dominant ideology” (xv-xvi). This is a key contribution to the premise of this chapter. Walpole’s early comments about the link between supernatural phenomena—their role as terror-inspiring agents, and their link to ancient superstitions—prepares the reader to consider non-religiously affiliated supernatural activity as false.

While I am critical of the contemporary usage of the term Gothicism and its influence as a literary interpretive agent, I do not propose in this chapter to suspend these Gothic readings of texts. Both traditional and contemporary social and intellectual cultures readily use this term. Moreover, such readings do yield worthwhile readings. However, I emphatically argue that more space be provided to alternative, non-Gothic readings, so that the supernatural phenomena be considered as more than a mere literary device to trigger horrific or terrific responses on the part of characters and/or readers. Instead, I show how a careful non-Gothic reading of these texts switches the perceptual focus away from the supernatural phenomena as spectacular literary devices to real phenomena and events that occur and appear for distinct purposes, which a contemporary Gothic reading would either gloss over or significantly obfuscate.

Walpole’s definition of the term “Gothic” appears to be static and easily applicable, given its original manifestation in the *Preface to the First Edition of The Castle of Otranto*. The term nevertheless continues to evolve. Authors and critics have deconstructed the meaning of Gothicism, resulting in an explosion of meanings, theories, and applications of the term. In current research, the term “gothic” has consequently taken on an amorphous form; thus, the word appears in circumstances that Walpole perhaps never even considered and/or intended. Anne Williams states that “the word’s

omnipresence and imprecision may remind the reader of Justice Potter Stewart's memorable standard for the obscene, which in effect stated: 'I can't define it, but I know it when I see it'" (14). Williams is not alone in her beliefs. Jerrold E. Hogle expresses in "Introduction: the Gothic in western culture," published in his edited text, *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, that the new fictional form conceptualized and created by Walpole lends itself to consistent deconstructive and consequent reconstructive acts from its very inception. David Punter relates that the word "Gothic" has "even now, a wide variety of meanings, and which has had in the past even more" (1). These continual efforts to redefine the term "Gothic" have deconstructed the term so drastically that, I would argue, the term has been largely de-signified. The term "Gothic" now is available for a virtual universal application to most any text, provided the author offers some sort of definition and application of the term.

As I mentioned earlier, my concern with Gothic readings of texts which feature supernatural phenomena centers on the interpretive act that supernatural agents are terrific or horrific representations of the othered past, which humanity perceives as barbaric and prone to superstition. Anne Williams states in *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*, that Walpole's subtitle for *The Castle of Otranto*, "A Gothic Story," communicates to the reader that supernatural events in the text which cannot be textualized through religious linguistic utterances are, indeed, "medieval and barbarous—that is, 'the uncivilized other of the urbane civilized self'" (20). This construct marginalizes supernatural events and, in my opinion, poorly explains such phenomena through logic. This debunking often explains the events through artificial explanations which are masked as natural. Later, science provides additional levels of elucidation, in

which a human construct supported by scientific methodologies appears to explain the cause of supernatural phenomena. These scientific constructs, attempting to demonstrate the natural-born origin of the event, use instead an artificial system that disguises the truth regarding the incident, rather than revealing the phenomena's true nature.

Established religious practices likewise attempt to explain the residual supernatural phenomena that are unexplainable by existent scientific knowledge. Williams notes that these attempts are particularly appropriate, since Walpole's subtitle represents a time when the text is purported to have originally been created, where "the population believed in ghosts and witches and superstitions of all kind" (20). This period contrasts to the one in which Walpole apparently sets *The Castle of Otranto*: one marked by the rise of the Enlightenment and science, which would evolve and represent a new social and intellectual perceptual framework that relies on logical and rational approaches to analyze, synthesize, and criticize one's surroundings and associated phenomena. As Walpole himself notes, modernity's scientific orientation has led to the explosion of "miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events" (6). However, as I demonstrate later in this chapter, Walpole purposely deconstructs his own assertions both within his *First Preface* and in the intertextual discussion that occurs between both the *First Edition* and the *Second Edition*.

While *Castle of Otranto* attempts to explain supernatural phenomena through logic and rationalization, such explanations are incomplete. In fact, Walpole's own creation, Gothicism, criticizes the very act that labels such phenomena as terrific, horrific, and/or explainable via scientific and/or rational means. Contrary to modern conceptions of the Gothic form, Walpole intends to use Gothicism to show how intellectual othering



causes humanity to lose touch with the possibility that supernatural phenomena are real. Furthermore, Walpole believes that perceiving supernatural phenomena as real is necessary to facilitate and recognize the importance of such communicative opportunities, which provides a means to inform others about the universals that exist within the surrounding environment.

Walpole established “Gothic” in literature through inclusion of the term on his title page in the second edition of *Castle of Otranto* in the subtitle, “A Gothic Story.” Hogle, though, points out that “Gothic fiction is hardly ‘Gothic’ at all” (1). Instead, this is a literary form marked by “post-medieval and even post-Renaissance phenomenon” (1). It is a curious blend, as Walpole himself admits, that merges “two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern” (9). Walpole indicates that in the ancient romance, all is “imagination and improbability,” while in modern romance, the Gothic form, as he calls it, represents “nature as it always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success” (9). Why, then, attempt to take two apparently competing forms of romance, the ancient and the modern, and attempt to blend them to create this new, hybridized form of artistic expression? The answer is in the next sentence, which contemporary Gothic criticism overlooks. Walpole states that invention has not been wanting in his modern age, but “the great resource of fancy have been damned up, by a strict adherence to common life” (Walpole 9). This is a critical expression central to the apparent contradiction of the Gothic form, one that has fed the myriad of interpretive speculations and consequent deconstructive acts.

Walpole asserts in his first edition, and as quoted earlier, that the ancient period, and thus the ancient romance he speaks of in the second edition’s preface, is defined by

moderns as a barbaric period in human history. Walpole states that *The Castle of Otranto* is a tale discovered “in the library of an ancient catholic family . . . printed at Naples . . . in the year 1529” (5). I read this statement as Walpole’s attempt to distance himself from the text, since the “principal incidents are such as were believed in the darkest ages of Christianity” (5). While the text’s linguistic structure has “nothing that savours of barbarism,” he does assert that an apology is necessary due to the text’s possession of “miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events” (Walpole 6).

The First and Second editions appear to complement each other, then, as Walpole is disturbed by the ancients, generally, and their romances, specifically, which are infected by a barbarism that threatens to unravel much of the modern, rational-based intellectual development evident in Renaissance and post-Renaissance cultures. As E.J. Clery argues in “The genesis of ‘Gothic’ fiction,” the Gothic age “was a long period of barbarism, superstition, and anarchy dimly stretching from the fifth century AD, when Visigoth invaders precipitated the fall of the Roman Empire” (21). The ensuing darkness lasted until the Renaissance, which revived classical learning (Hogle ed. 21). Walpole and his contemporaries appear disturbed that superstitious belief and affiliation occasioned the perception that supernatural phenomena are indeed real and natural. Yet his desire to merge the ancient romance along with the modern romance does not represent a comparative endeavor intended to make light of ancient belief systems that would be invalidated by the rise of reason and its application through scientific forms of study. Rather, I would argue that Walpole recognizes the apparent dangers associated with a total commitment to Enlightenment ideology and in that recognition others the supernatural.

While Walpole gives credit to modern romance's consistent yet imperfect ability to represent nature as it "always intended to be," in the next sentence he admits that, while "invention has not been wanting," the great resources of fancy have been damned up, by a strict adherence to common life" (9). I find this a damning condemnation of Enlightenment attempts to other supernatural phenomena and establish artificial constructs that label such phenomena as horrific and/or terrific, devoid of any truth or reality. Walpole's own *The Castle of Otranto*, then, does not celebrate the superiority of the modern romance in comparison to the ancient romance, as contemporary Gothic criticism suggests, through the creation of a hybridized literary form called the Gothic.

Instead, a close deconstructive reading of Walpole's own text suggests the importance of human contemplation of supernatural phenomena through more rational-based approaches. This would be more efficient in supporting the contemplation of supernatural phenomena, since one could move away from the sort of blind belief of which Walpole is so critical in his "Preface to the First Edition." He states that literature should not be used to "confirm the populace in their ancient errors and superstitions," which would lead to the enslavement of "a hundred vulgar minds beyond half the books of controversy that have been written from the days of Luther to the present hour" (Walpole 5). To do so would realize the perfect marriage of the human form: the ability to contemplate supernatural phenomena beyond the sort of religious-based blind obedience to which the vulgar minds are guilty, as Walpole suggests. Instead, one should contemplate such ancient mysteries through modern rationalistic techniques characteristic of the modern romance. As Walpole says, these modern romances, while not lacking in

imagination, do lack the necessary fancy, as he states, to foster a positivist rather than a skeptical consideration of supernatural phenomena and their presence in literary texts.

Unfortunately, though, historical influences tied to the term “Gothicism,” as well as overemphasis on Walpole’s apparent criticism of the superstitions associated with the ancient romance, leads to an othering in which Gothic textual analysis does not move beyond consideration of supernatural phenomena as solely a literary device for peddling terror/horror. Joseph Gixti, in his study, *Terrors of Uncertainty: The Cultural Contexts of Horror Fiction*, cites research by Les Daniels, who argues that “stories of the sinister supernatural,” a characteristic often associated with traditional considerations of Gothic representations of the supernatural, “really began to come into their own after belief in the uncanny [had] been almost extinguished” (17). Consequently, Daniels associates tales of the sinister supernatural as a “distinct entity [that] ‘developed almost simultaneously with the idea of fiction’” (Gixti 17). This is an interesting correlation. In a sense, the dominant ideological social construct nearly succeeds, as Daniels points out, in eradicating of the supernatural from fictional texts, which would, in turn, enable the near complete destruction of its influence with the exception of supernatural phenomena sanctioned in traditional and accepted religious systems.

However, these same fictional texts, specifically in the Gothic form that Walpole invents, ensures that the supernatural stays in the mind of contemporary culture, even though it remains there in an othered form, expressed through Gothic tales that apparently use supernatural phenomena as terror and/or horror-inspiring agents. Martin Barker believes that demand for these tales continues since,

Whilst religion held sway, the supernatural world would seem as natural as, if not more so than, the scientific. This means that surprise and amazement at the odd and the inexplicable could not be separated out, and treated as exceptional and as a possible subject for bravura and delicious daring. The fears were too central and close to home to be the subject for fantastic reconstruction; but in another sense they were also taken as too normal, however terrifying. (ctd. in Grixti 17)

As long as socially authorized superstition remained acceptable through established religious traditions, the supernatural remained a subject worthy of fictional representation. However, when outside of the traditional and accepted religious structures, no matter how natural these phenomena may have appeared, the historicization act in and of itself inspired terror and its associated response, fear.

Even *The Castle of Otranto*, though, deconstructs this very argument. Many have studied this text as an exemplary demonstration of Gothic's tendency to characterize the supernatural in this othered form based on Walpole's comments in his *Preface to the First Edition* and *Preface to the Second Edition*. Keith Thomas, whom Marilyn Butler cites, suggests for instance that "the religious reforms of the Restoration deprived populations in western Europe of certain magical comforts by making a stricter distinction between orthodox Christianity and magic, and thus led to vulgar and educated recourse to witchcraft and astrology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (Grixti 18). This act distinguishes between accepted forms of supernatural phenomena that are associated with religious fervency on the one hand and the othering of phenomena that do not fit into these narrow strictures on the other. Such discrimination forces an artificial interpretation of supernatural phenomena that do not neatly fit into these artificially-

defined categories that are typically associated with traditional religious structures. In fact, the linguistic structures that often validate such phenomena from an established religious perspective simultaneously validate phenomena that deserve invalidation, and invalidate phenomena that deserve validation; this is a point I demonstrate through a thorough explication of *The Castle of Otranto*. Even so, as Thomas suggests,

In the 'rational' eighteenth century, a population which was not offered scientific explanation for its ills, and had no scientific protection (for medicine offered little until the twentieth century), had the same need for reassurance which earlier generations sought from a more naïve Christianity or from witchcraft. And in this connection it is striking how Gothic fiction, with its strangely recurring motifs, has an almost ritual aspect. (ctd. in Grixti 18)

Thomas' statement represents a common misreading of what Walpole attempts to articulate in both *Prefaces*. A Gothic reading posits that this hybrid creation structures the reader's anticipatory set in a way that events, which occur outside of traditional religious explanations, are indeed unreal and the product of a haunted mind filled with improbable fantasy. However, instances such as the appearance of the oversized helmet and scabbard, and the helmet's associated crushing of Manfred's son, cannot be explained or reduced to mere superstition and, hence, improbable acts. Yet a Gothic reading of these texts supports an emergent and ritualistic trend that evolves into a predictable manifestation that becomes in time a commonly represented archetype.

Contemporary literary critical analyses of *The Castle of Otranto* demonstrate the continued consequence of the dominance of contemporary Gothic criticism over texts that contain supernatural phenomena. Kate Ferguson Ellis, for instance, in her text, *The*

*Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* argues that *Otranto* and subsequent Gothic novels feature “haunted castles owned by usurping aristocrats, heroines who are persecuted but not ‘ruined’ by these false owners, and young men of the sentimental-hero type who marry the heroines in the end” (37). In this archetype, a Gothic criticism encourages an interpretation that repeats a historical pattern of supernatural textualization that others the supernatural. Ellis’ scholarship in *The Contested Castle* represents the application of a popular literary critical focus in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s—namely, the focus on the representation and manipulation of space in a fictional work. Ellis uses a Gothic reading of *The Castle of Otranto* to argue that these spaces lack the necessary individual freedom. As a result, the current generations in the text produce the next generations, “where the domestic activities over which women are beginning to ‘rule’ cannot be carried on” (37). While a truly insightful feminine analysis of spatial representation, this reading possesses a particularly strong Gothic perspective in which the supernatural phenomena do little more than symbolically manifest the past. There is little deliberation over the possibility that these phenomena are real and attempt to communicate a warning to the current generations.

Of course, Ellis’ approach to supernatural phenomena as mere literary devices is informed by interpretations like Jerrold Hogle’s, who argues that the specters who appear in Walpole’s novel, as well as the typical Gothic archetypal text, are “ghosts of what is *already artificial* . . . . They are not just counterfeits but ghosts of counterfeits” (Smith 134). The consequence of this and similar perspectives is clear: ghosts and related supernatural phenomena come to represent an “emptied past . . . of counterfeits [that] consequently [allow] the *neo*-Gothic to be filled antiquated repositories into which

modern quandaries can be projected and abjected simultaneously” (Smith 134). Thus the supernatural is textualized and othered in two different yet related fashions. First, while these events do have significance as signifiers of a signified past that is othered, the supernatural phenomena themselves are poor symbols, in that, while they signify a negative and othered perception of the past, they are counterfeit and thus false phenomena devoid of individual significance. In other words, the ghostly apparition represents the othered past, but the apparition itself, as an event considered unreal, does not truly exist and therefore lacks self-identity outside of its symbolic quality. This argument violates the basic purpose of a symbol, which inherently possesses its own meaning, at the same time communicating other, more abstract concepts, such as the othered quality of the past. Second, these ghosts and/or related supernatural phenomena lack any self-identity besides their ability as literary devices to evoke terror and/or horror. Consequently, they are empty signifiers. Re-signification can occur through associative methods that link each signifier with signified modern quandaries, which are often projected, but as Hogle argues, abjected.

Traditional Gothic readings, as indicated in this section of the chapter, demonstrate the shortsighted nature of this literary critical approach in the context of supernatural phenomena. These readings, while providing important insight into such texts, feature an over-reliance on such critical approaches, even with diversification, which intellectually others the supernatural so that the critic is unable to consider the phenomena beyond that of a literary device, usually symbolic. From here, I will offer a supernaturalistic analysis of *The Castle of Otranto*, which will demonstrate how innovative readings can be gleaned from texts when examination of such supernatural



phenomena shifts away from literary devices and/or associated artificial constructs that are perceived as devoid of potential real existence in the text.

My focus, in part, of the Gothic readings of *The Castle of Otranto* is the supernatural phenomena in the text. In literature, supernatural encounters take on a variety of different forms, ranging from deceased mortal beings who re-appear in whole, partial, or reincarnated forms, to creations that apparently never were mortals but that for a variety of reasons become involved in the affairs of mortals. Instances occur when supernatural beings invade and temporarily or permanently possess the mortal form of a person or object. These manifestations find distant supernatural phenomena that still form relationships with mortals. These relationships enable a dialectical communication structure. Mortals then communicate to other humans the messages provided by supernatural phenomena.

In *Castle of Otranto*, the popular Gothic reading of such supernatural beings is tied to common archetypal interpretation of such phenomena. In this perspective, as articulated by Robert Mighall in *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, Gothic novels “dramatize a conflict between representatives of ‘modernity’ and those who stand for the past” (7). These vestiges of the past often appear in the form of supernatural phenomena, such as a ghost, and represent historical figures who are “unfortunately trapped in less enlightened times” (Mighall 7). The consequence of such readings is substantial. Rather than consider these phenomena as possessing important knowledge which might be used to inform decisions of the present and/or future, a Gothic perspective disempowers and subsequently intellectually others the phenomena. They become instead static and archaic symbolic and/or spectacular manifestations that “serve as historical foils to [the]

enlightened age” (Mighall 2). Consequently, in this view a Gothic reading is an act of intellectual othering manifest in textual interpretation. Pastness then carries “negative connotations,” which celebrates “what is modern or progressive in history” (Mighall 6). At the same time, the supernatural phenomena represent the historicized past through “identification and condemnation of what is ‘historical’ or anachronistic in the present day” (Mighall 6). These shades, then, manifest through supernatural phenomena, are “reminders of the ‘dark ages’ as the worship of relics, belief in miracles, the persistence of the Inquisition [and/or] the power of the Pope” (Mighall 6). Many popular readings of *The Castle of Otranto* interpret all of the supernatural phenomena and their associated actions as representations of the past and an attempt to forestall present and future evolutions.

A supernaturalistic reading of *The Castle of Otranto*, on the other hand, suggests a very different reading of the phenomena in the text and their associated actions. In such a reading, their appearance and actions become a much more subversive and scandalous influence. In addition to providing a harsh criticism of Manfred, the text demonstrates the human shortcoming of hubris—the pride that characterizes much of humanity and usually becomes most evident when the mortal protagonist comes into conflict with immortal protagonists. *The Castle of Otranto* is no exception. In fact, much of *Otranto* might lead one to conclude that Walpole’s self-titled gothic tale is an interesting synthetic re-creation of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone* structured in a context that complies to Aristotelian theories concerning drama. As I will show, these significant intertextual connections indicate that *The Castle of Otranto*—rather than a criticism of past

superstitions, as a Gothic reading would suggest—deconstructs common Gothic readings and offers a scathing criticism of modernity and its rejection of the past.

In the prefatory sonnet to *The Castle of Otranto*, addressed to the Right Honorable Lady Mary Coke, Walpole provides an anticipatory set for the reader in which he describes the text as one that relates “fell ambition scourg’d by fate, / From reason’s peevish blame” (ii.12-13). While Walpole makes it a point in both of his prefaces to discuss the ancient tendency to rely on superstition and the inferiority that results from this dependence in contrast to modernity’s reliance on reason, Walpole’s prefatory sonnet serves as the first evidence that the text deconstructs its apparent Gothic purpose to vilify the past. Instead, this preface indicates the powerlessness of ancient or modern man over fate, even when these beings possess the great weapon of reason. While a significant number of texts since Greek drama have explored humankind’s limitations over fate, Walpole alleges in the *Preface to the First Edition* that *The Castle of Otranto* is a highly efficient text in the tradition of the ancient Greeks: “There is no bombast, no similes, flowers, digressions, or unnecessary descriptions” (6). Instead, as Aristotle discusses in *The Poetics*, Walpole states that the entire plot “tends directly to the catastrophe. Never is the reader’s attention relaxed” (6). Comparatively, in Chapter VIII of *The Poetics*, Aristotle states,

The truth is that, just as in the other imitative arts one imitation is always of one thing, so in poetry the story, as an imitation of action, must represent one action as a complete whole, with its several incidents so closely connected that the transposal or withdrawal of any one of them will disjoin and dislocate the whole.

For that which makes no perceptible difference by its presence or absence is no real part of the whole. (30-35)

Walpole, then, is concerned within his *Preface to the First Edition* that the reader understands that the text contains no extraneous material. Instead, all that appears, in keeping with the Aristotelian notion of drama development, is necessary. Walpole later states that, “the rules of the drama are almost observed throughout the conduct of the piece” (6). A Gothic reading of this passage may assume Walpole wants the reader to understand that the supernatural phenomena in the text, which he highlights in both prefaces, is necessary, mainly as spectacular literary devices intended to foster terror and/or horror on the part of the reader and to provide locomotion to the plot.

A supernaturalistic reading, though, would interpret these statements from a much different vantage point. Instead, I would argue that Walpole wishes the reader to understand that correlations between this text and plot elements from *The Oedipus Cycle* trilogy are, indeed, accurate and that the novel complies to Aristotle’s concepts as outlined in *The Poetics*. It also provides a different angle relative to his discussion of the ancient romance in *The Castle of Otranto*. From a supernaturalistic reading, the actions of Manfred mirror those of the kings in these three Theban dramas, wherein the supernatural phenomena known as the Eumenides play a significant role, especially through the oracles of Tiresias in *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone* and Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*.

The *Preface to the Second Edition* offers even more evidence of intertextual links between *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Oedipus Cycle*. Towards the end of the preface, Walpole enters into a conversation with Voltaire and Shakespeare relative to artistic

creation, in general, but more specifically to tragedy. While he agrees with Voltaire that comedy is equal to tragedy, Walpole trusts he “should never attempt to ridicule” Voltaire, for he “has these words, speaking of comedy” (11). However, in brackets Walpole states that “tragedy is, as surely it ought to be, a picture of human life” (11). Again, Walpole’s decision to enter into a discussion regarding the nature of drama, in general, as well as its two ancient subgenres, tragedy and comedy, demonstrates his awareness of *Otranto*’s strong intertextual connections to the ancient Theban dramas and to Aristotle’s nomenclature.

Walpole attempts to confirm Voltaire’s assertions, yet in brackets appears to contradict that confirmation, instead offering support for Aristotle’s assertion of the superiority of tragedy in comparison to comedy. As Martin Kallich notes in *Horace Walpole*, Walpole “is thoroughly neo-Classical in his approach to the art of . . . ‘drama,’ assuming that its beauties are inherent in the craft rules that he has deliberately observed” (95). Aristotle states in Chapter Seven of *The Poetics* that “tragedy is an imitation of an / action that is complete in itself, as a whole of some magnitude” (23-24). Walpole’s suggestion that *The Castle of Otranto* is a “picture of human life” and his stated intertextual connections to Voltaire and implied connection to Aristotle further deconstructs the traditional Gothic interpretations relative to the supernatural phenomena in *The Castle of Otranto*. Aristotle points out in Chapter Four of *The Poetics*:

It is clear that the general origin of poetry was due to two causes, each of them part of human nature. Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all

to delight in works of imitation. The truth of this second point is shown by experience: though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view the most realistic representations of them in art, the forms for example of the lowest animals and of dead bodies. The explanation is to be found in a further fact: to be learning something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of humankind, however small their capacity for it. (4-15)

Walpole emphasizes in his *Preface to the Second Edition* that tragedy is mimetic. I would argue that, given Manfred's actions in *The Castle of Otranto*, he is a tragic hero with significant intertextual connections to the characters of Oedipus Rex and Creon. I will discuss these connections in more detail and their relationship to the supernatural phenomena that appear in the text shortly, but the important point to emphasize at this juncture is this: Walpole's deliberate and studied intertextual connections with ancient texts and modern playwrights, along with his associated desire to remain true to the Aristotelian definitions of drama, tragedy, and associated mimesis, further deconstructs traditional gothic readings of *The Castle of Otranto*. Drama, as Aristotle points out, is to be mimetic—that is, it should imitate real life. Consequently, I would argue that the supernatural phenomena in the text are not literary constructs that signify the ancient's predilection towards superstition and associated criticism of the ancient romance and the past. Instead, I would argue that the supernatural phenomena that occur in the text are real. These events modernize a warning to contemporary culture that disobedience of the supernatural is dangerous and can lead to horrific consequences.

Furthermore, Walpole's embracement of the ancients in comparison to the moderns is purposeful so that he can associate his criticism of traditional religious systems. Though critical of the ancients for their apparent superstition, he is aware that the ancients are more respectful, more fearful, and more responsive to supernatural phenomena. In contrast, moderns believe supernatural phenomena are the product of superstitious beliefs that the Enlightenment's new invention, science, will eventually invalidate. Walpole recognizes the importance of the present and the future that science can afford through proper, balanced application, yet he also recognizes the benefit of the ancients with their strong propensity toward matters of faith. By achieving an effective balance between the two, humanity, Walpole opines, will be less superstitious. At the same time, humanity becomes capable of fostering relationships with the supernatural realm. They can learn from it and apply scientific analytical principles to the information.

Ultimately, as Aristotle states, we turn to drama since it provides us pleasure through the opportunity to learn something. I would argue that this is Walpole's purpose, hidden behind a concern that the superstition in his text may offend or even undermine the credibility of *The Castle of Otranto*. That said, in his *Preface to the Second Edition*, the rhetoric from the *Preface to the First Edition* that intellectually others the supernatural disappears. Instead, it is replaced by a contrast of the ancient and modern romance, in which he says, "in the former all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been damned up, by a strict adherence to common life" (9). In this statement, he makes no attempt to place

the modern romance in a superior position to that of the ancient. Appearing to reverse his former statements in the first preface, he now insinuates that, while the modern romance is efficient in its imitative properties in relationship to common life, the modern romance lacks in fancy when compared to the ancient romance, though invention is still evident. A much different and clearer thesis, then, is evident in this second preface, which represents his initial purpose for *The Castle of Otranto*. The text's intention is not to construct a definition of Gothicism that others both the past and supernatural phenomena as literary constructs alone. Instead, *The Castle of Otranto* signifies an intentional effort to communicate a warning. The novel criticizes acts that demonstrate hubris, disrespect and vilification of the supernatural, and disavowals that intellectually other the supernatural realm. I would argue that Walpole sees Enlightenment thinking and the associated rise of science as the primary sources of these human qualities. Walpole posits through the text that ignorance of the supernatural and an associated overweening belief in human's ability to possess complete or near complete control of it is not only foolish, but also carries significant personal and perhaps worldly consequences. What follows is a supernaturalistic reading of *Otranto* that demonstrates the knowledge communicated through the text and that offers an in-depth illustration of this theory.

To begin this reading, I first refer to an additional ancient Greek text, Plato's *Symposium*, which provides an important insight into a supernaturalistic reading of *The Castle of Otranto*, specifically Manfred's digressions. In the *Symposium*, Plato outlines a third alternative construct of humanity: the androgynous form. Unlike the masculine and feminine forms, these manifestations were "awesome in their strength and robustness, and they had great and proud thoughts, so they made an attempt on the gods[, whereby]



they attempted to make an ascent into the sky with a view to assaulting the gods” (Plato 173). The Greek gods are purported to respond by splitting these androgynous beings. Zeus says, “I have a device whereby human beings would continue to exist and at the same time, having become weaker, would stop their licentiousness. I shall now cut each of them in two” (Plato 173). To Zeus, this act would solve the immortals’ problems, since the human race would be “both weaker and more useful to us through the increase in their numbers. And they will walk upright on two legs. But if they are thought to behave licentiously still, and are unwilling to keep quiet, then I shall cut them again in two . . . so that they will go hopping on one leg” (Plato 173). This act by the Greek gods continues to haunt humankind and impacts decisions tied to hubris, since, as Plato argues, “if we are not orderly in our behavior to the gods, we shall be split again and go around like those who are modeled in relief on stelae, sawed through our nostrils, like dice. For this reason every real man must be exhorted to be pious toward the gods in all his acts, so that we may avoid” a fate in which we are further divided (Plato 175). Plato’s dictum clearly influences Sophocles’ composition of *The Oedipus Cycle*, which chronicles the consequences of hubris as witnessed in Creon and Oedipus.

When *The Castle of Otranto* is read from a supernaturalistic perspective, Plato’s lesson in *The Symposium* clearly affects the events surrounding Walpole’s central character, Manfred, who attempts to wrestle control of his fate away from the gods to ensure the continued rule of Otranto by his family. Manfred’s fate and the text’s associated development point to a lesson that differs substantially from common Gothic readings. Rather than represent an othering of the past and the past’s associated manifestation through supernatural phenomena, *The Castle of Otranto* offers a lesson

relative to humankind's relationship to the supernatural in the forms of gods and goddesses. Those in possession of such power find it necessary to impact one's fate and to punish or reward one based on responses to his/her determined fate. This is not the past, then, haunting Manfred. Rather, the supernatural fulfills a predetermined succession plan that returns rule of Otranto to its ancient and correct lineage. As I will now demonstrate, Manfred is aware of this oracle, yet as humans often attempt, he wishes to take control of his fate, usurp this predetermined decree, and demonstrate that he, indeed, is in charge of his own destiny.

Similar to Oedipus Rex and Creon, Manfred receives a message regarding his fate and that of his family through an ancient prophecy that pronounces, "The castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it" (Otranto 17). Manfred fears this pronouncement, which is similar to that of Oedipus and Creon as well. Attempts by these three characters to avoid their fate demonstrate a belief in prophecies and the supernatural. If such trust did not exist, Oedipus would not attempt to avoid his fate by leaving the surrogate hometown which he believes to be his genuine hometown, nor would Oedipus have ardently trusted advice received from the Oracle at Delphi. Manfred attempts to avoid the prophecy that concerns him and his family at the beginning of the novel. Walpole tells us, "Manfred's impatience for [the marriage of his son to Isabella] was remarked by his family and neighbours" (17). Manfred responds that the basis for his desire to marry Conrad is "on [Hippolita's] own sterility, who had given him but one heir" (17). While a Gothic reading would once again interpret such inability to produce a male heir as a further representation of the past haunting the present in the hopes of affecting the future, a

supernaturalistic reading would read this state from a different perspective. The notion of sterility appears in *Oedipus Rex*, when a Theban priest informs Oedipus that:

Thebes is tossed on a murdering sea  
And cannot lift her head from the death surge.  
A rust consumes the buds and fruits of the earth;  
The herds are sick; children die unborn,  
And labor is vain. The god of plague and pyre  
Raids like detestable lightning through the city,  
And all the house of Kadmos is laid waste,  
All emptied, and all darkened: Death alone  
Battens upon the misery of Thebes. (Prologue 26-34)

When Oedipus sends Creon to discover the cause of this sterility, Creon returns and pronounces that “The god commands us to expel from the land of Thebes /An old defilement we are sheltering,” which Creon states is a “Murder that brought the plague-wind on the city” (Prologue 99-100; 105). An interruption of human ability to procreate is a devastating punishment for human indiscretion: preventing the continuation of a bloodline, if extended into the surrounding natural environment, it affects society’s ability to provide basic physical sustenance. For Manfred, his family’s past actions influence the current state of his family and its ability to sustain its future existence. Manfred admits that Ricardo, Manfred’s grandfather and Alfonso’s chamberlain, poisoned the former ruler of Otranto, Alfonso. After Ricardo’s death, a “fictitious will declared Ricardo” the heir to the throne of Otranto (99). This action angers the supernatural realm, since it represents an unnatural act akin to Cain’s slaying Abel.

Consequently, Manfred relates how Ricardo promises to “found a church and two convents if he lived to reach Otranto” (Walpole 99). Manfred relates that “the sacrifice was accepted”; however, Saint Nicholas, appearing to Ricardo in a dream, promises “that Ricardo’s posterity should rein in Otranto until the rightful owner should be grown too large to inhabit the castle, and as long as issue-male from Ricardo’s loins should remain to enjoy it” (99). A Gothic reading would interpret Manfred’s statement that Ricardo’s crimes “pursued him—yet he lost no Conrad, no Matilda. I pay the price of usurpation for all!,” as a representation of the family’s past haunting the present and consequently affecting the future (99). The true terror, though, is the past’s ability to impact the present, which causes catharsis in the reader, which, in turn, generates fear relative to one’s own family past and its ability to similarly influence the reader’s present and future.

While such a Gothic reading is valuable, it does reduce the dream to a literary device intended to produce terror and horror. This reading does the same to an instance that occurs just before Manfred’s statements towards the end of the novel when “A clap of thunder . . . [shakes] the castle to its foundations; the earth [rocks], and the clank of more than mortal armour [is] heard behind” (98). Again, a Gothic reading would reduce such to a fear/horror-inspiring spectacle. A supernaturalistic reading, though, combined with Ricardo’s dream of Saint Nicholas, sees these events as more than spectacle: they represent a means by which supernatural phenomena communicate their presence and intention to mortals. Both circumstances represent warnings about mortals’ illicit activities and requisite punishment for a transgression of divine law. Additionally, a

Gothic reading suggests that Manfred is guiltless and that his wife's sterility is a product of his family's past offenses.

This is not the case, though, from a supernaturalistic perspective. Instead, Manfred is guilty of the same hubris witnessed in Oedipus's actions in *Oedipus Rex* and Creon's actions in *Antigone*. In the case of Creon and Oedipus, both believe that their rational and logical faculties enable them to take control of their own lives. This hubris ultimately angers the gods and results in the characters' downfalls. Punishment for their actions—Oedipus's killing of Laios and Creon's refusal to bury Polyneices—would have been swift and exact, in a sense even eliminating the need to chronicle the drama surrounding both of their falls. However, I would argue that their fall is due less to their families' past than to the choices that these characters make, which ultimately lead to their downfall. If both Oedipus and Creon would have listened to the prophecies provided by Tiresias, both could have suppressed their hubris and complied with the natural law. Consequently, neither of them would suffer their tragic downfalls. Manfred receives the same opportunity. The ancient prophecy is to inform and to warn; should Manfred obey the edict and cede power when it is obvious that his family's control of Otranto is coming to a natural end, he may not have lost both his son and daughter. However, it is his own arrogance, augmented by this same hubris, which ultimately leads to Manfred's downfall and the horrible consequences unleashed on his family.

Walpole's choice to reach back to two ancient Greek texts as a basis for *The Castle of Otranto* necessitates further discussion. While a Gothic reading of these intertextual connections inevitably traces back to ancient superstitions, a supernaturalistic reading reveals that this text represents a cultural artifact of a striking social criticism

fossilized into the text yet overlooked by the Gothic reading's too insistent focus on supernatural phenomena as fear and horror-inspiring spectacles. Ironically, I will draw from David Punter, a prominent Gothic critic, who relates in *Literature of Terror: The Gothic Tradition*, that

The eighteenth century was the great era of rationalism and Enlightenment.

Associated principally with the French thinkers Diderot and Voltaire, but also in different ways affecting English thinkers from David Hume to William Godwin, the Enlightenment saw itself as the bearer of a radically progressive philosophy.

Eschewing all reliance on faith and revealed religion, it declared itself in favour of scientific progress towards knowledge. (23)

Of particular significance in this context is the *Encyclopédie* (1751-80), which, as Punter indicates, professes a

Systematic account of all human knowledge; perhaps its most persistent claim was that man was potentially all-powerful, that there were no secrets of the universe which would remain unrevealed to him if he were only to pursue the paths of science and reason. The human reason was the only guide to truth; if there was a God, his only function had been to create the universe, and he had no further role to play. (23)

I mention the irony in citing Punter's research since he is a prominent Gothic critic, yet his research regarding the eighteenth century, and the influence of rationalism and the Enlightenment, adds further validity to my argument concerning Gothicism's intellectually othering supernatural phenomena. Punter's research explains Walpole's critical nature in his *Preface to the First Edition* regarding the relationship between

ancient romance and its reliance on superstition and Gothicism, as well as the associated apology Walpole offers of superstitious rhetoric and associated supernatural phenomena. As a new text written in a new form, he feared the potential social response and associated impact of projecting supernatural phenomena as real. From a supernaturalistic reading, Punter's own research deconstructs the perspective that Gothicism focuses on othering the past: his comments reflect a motivation for the significant rewriting of the *Preface to the Second Edition*, as well as Walpole's rationale from the very beginning for writing *The Castle of Otranto* and creating the Gothic romance.

Walpole's second edition represents more confidence in both the content of his text and in the form and purpose of the Gothic Romance. A supernaturalistic reading of the second preface reveals that Walpole writes *Otranto* and creates the Gothic romance not to criticize the past but rather to laud it and the necessity of achieving balance between past, present, and future. His text demonstrates how the modern's disconnection from faith and revealed religion—through the promotion of a radically progressive philosophy that promotes human progress through knowledge discovered using science-based principles—could produce a hubris that ultimately leads to the de-evolution of humanity rather than its continued evolution. A significant fracture of the human self is therefore possible, which de-emphasizes the soul in favor of a body that relies only on logic and rationality. Loyal Rue argues in *Religion Is Not About God: How Spiritual Traditions Nurture Our Biological Nature and What To Expect When They Fail* that the very faiths and religions othered by the Enlightenment are the same constructs that allow humans to “think, feel, and act in ways that are good . . . both individually and

collectively” (1). Consequently, human “ideas, images, symbols, and rituals of religious traditions . . . engage and . . . organize human neural systems for the sake of human survival, and then . . . examine the contemporary conditions that have compromised their adaptive utility” (1). Walpole’s purpose for writing *The Castle of Otranto*, from a supernaturalistic reading, preserves humanity’s utilization of and reliance on religion and faith. While it may offer a Gothic-like criticism of over-reliance on such superstition, a Gothic reading of supernatural phenomena as literary devices that operate as agents of terror and horror is, in my opinion, extreme and ill serves the purpose of the text. In the pages that follow, I demonstrate how Walpole distinguishes between superstitious and artificial responses to supposed supernatural phenomena versus appropriate and natural responses to authentic supernatural phenomena that keeps with Rue’s perspective on the value behind belief and faith in religious systems and associated supernatural phenomena.

Christian and, specifically, Roman Catholic concepts saturate *The Castle of Otranto*. Characters regularly pronounce their hope for God’s assistance and ask for God’s blessing. While such pronouncements may seem common, there is an interesting additional layer to these petitions when placed in the context of continual references to St. Nicholas throughout the text. While many consider such references as indicators of charity and assistance, which the church and two convents named after St. Nicholas provide, additional research into St. Nicholas’ past adds an interesting perspective. St. Nicholas was “known for his holiness, zeal, and miracles” (Delaney 454). While many speak of his generosity to children, Nicholas also “destroyed pagan temples, forced a governor, Eustathius, to admit he had been bribed to condemn three innocent men to death, and appeared in a dream to Emperor Constantine to tell the Emperor three imperial



officers condemned to death at Constantinople were innocent” (Delaney 454). This additional, often forgotten, history is significant in the context of this chapter: it raises a central question tied to Walpole’s comments in the *Preface to the First Edition* related to superstition. Does the Gothic form other supernatural phenomena as associated with superstition, or is the appearance of such phenomena intended to criticize both dominant religious structures and the rise of science?

Similar to St. Nicholas, Walpole purposefully names the righteous monk in the text Jerome. The name is of great significance within Christianity. Both Nicholas and Jerome lived around approximately the same time. Like Nicholas, Jerome was known for “his fiery attacks on pagan life and some influential Romans” (Delaney 327). While Nicholas’ main fame relates to his place as Santa Claus, Jerome plays perhaps a more important, yet less known, role:

Jerome’s greatest achievement was his translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew and his revision of the Latin version of the New Testament in 390-405, a feat of scholarship unequaled in the early Church. This version, called the Vulgate, was declared the official Latin text of the Bible for Catholics by the Council of Trent, and it was from it that almost all English Catholic translations were made until the middle of the twentieth century. (Delaney 328)

Jerome, thus, is an important addition to St. Nicholas in the text. While Nicholas is the more popular character relative to the text’s setting, given his role as Santa Claus, Jerome is a significant name to choose for the monk. Jerome’s character in the text is akin to the devout religious leader who attempts to intercede and guide the political leader down the appropriate and God-fearing path, similar to Tiresias’ role in both *Oedipus Rex* and

*Antigone*. Additionally, Jerome represents a character able to bypass the traditional catechism of the faith and not use it to obfuscate events to empower him and the Catholic faith. Instead, he is a non-traditional religious figure, given the name chosen by Walpole.

While St. Jerome's sermons express "the virtues of celibacy" and the spiritual life devoid of earthly materialism and fleshly pleasures, Jerome's character in Walpole's novel partakes in such worldly activities. He marries the daughter of Victoria, the daughter of Alfonso, the past ruler of Otranto. Consequently, that makes Theodore, son of Jerome, the rightful heir to the throne of Otranto. Since Jerome is married and has Theodore prior to his priesthood, he does not mirror the same virtue evidenced in St. Jerome's history. However, the character Jerome becomes a defender of a faith that is most respectful of the supernatural phenomena in the text, even when such phenomena are devoid of direct and indirect connections Christianity. He does not attempt to read the appearance of the helmet, the scabbard, or the actions of Alfonso's painting as evidence of witchcraft. Instead, he correctly reads and interprets acts, similar to St. Jerome's translations of the Old and New Testaments.

References to St. Nicholas and Jerome throughout the text carry obvious purposes, then. The inclusion of both names suggests that the text criticizes instances of false devotion and religion or errant applications of such religious systems. In a sense, the text makes Walpole into a contemporary St. Nicholas and St. Jerome: his text uses the new Gothic construct to contrast false faiths to a genuine system as expressed and demonstrated by the characters of Jerome and St. Nicholas, who makes multiple appearances in dreams throughout the text. Walpole's criticism illuminates the falsities that commonly surround the Christian faith, as well as the erroneous conclusions posited

through overreliance on logic and reason, which had become central tenets of the new science that emerged during the Enlightenment. I do not believe his purpose is to invalidate either Christianity or science; however, I do believe he meant to demonstrate how blind belief in both systems, for which he criticizes the ancients in the *Preface to the First Edition*, leads to a false read, per se, of supernatural events. In addition, both systems lead to poor decision-making that ultimately occasions one's downfall—an important connection to another Sophoclean drama, *Antigone*. This same intellectual othering of the Supernatural, through the more restricted perceptual structures of Christianity and science, reinforces the challenges and limitations posed by a purely Gothic reading of texts like *The Castle of Otranto*.

Among the many Christian phrases common throughout the text is that of “Good Heaven,” a phrase that appears several times throughout the novel. Jerome utters it when Manfred recants on his earlier decision to save Jerome's son, Theodore, blamed for Conrad's death. Hippolita says it when Manfred hints at his desire to divorce her and to marry Isabella instead. Matilda exclaims, “Good Heaven,” when she fears that her conversation with Theodore has been overheard by the guards and when she is told of her father's plan to have her marry Frederic, who is revealed to be Isabella's true father. This phrase again appears in instances when the character who pronounces it is in some form of significant danger or needs assistance from God. It is akin to the common phrases heard today like, “Oh God,” “Jesus, help me,” and other such utterances that are spiritual in nature. However, each utterance does not lead to direct supernatural engagement that directly assists the characters.

While these statements indicate the depth of subconscious and/or unconscious Christian ideological underpinning of the characters, they also represent an interesting perspective on the notion of superstition: each character turns to heaven in the hopes that his/her prayers will move God to act immediately and satisfy his/her request. This consistent human reliance on supernatural phenomena at moments when humans recognize their disempowered state represents a strong social critique on the part of Walpole and is one specific permutation by which he indicates the duplicity of human supernatural devotion. Humans, that is, turn to a deity at moments when they perceive themselves disempowered, yet rarely do they turn to the deity at moments when they believe themselves to be in complete control of their future. Such statements are usually arbitrary, unconscious/subconscious expressive interjections—the product of common social utterance rather than a contrite and heartfelt appeal to divinity. Such phrases demonstrate one specific failing of traditional religious systems: they handicap one’s ability to communicate genuinely with supernatural phenomena. In a sense, indirect linguistic utterances of the sort I note here do not correspond to the dominant and accepted religious paradigm. Instead, one consciously, subconsciously, or unconsciously utters prayers and other commonly expressed phrases which result more from catechisms and associated teachings than through the specific need of the individual.

Walpole’s criticism of an established Christian ideology is typical of his character, as Pat Rogers suggests. Many of Walpole’s writings, Rogers maintains, manifest a “dislike of establishment orthodoxy” (301). Instead, Walpole commonly expressed his “willingness to identify with outsiders,” and he often expressed “contempt for mindless antiquarians without a real idea set forth” (301). The consistent repetition of

“Good Heavens” throughout the text, as well as instances of similarly uttered signifiers, while possessing a socially understood signified meaning, are Orwellian, prefabricated statements that have very little, if any, true meaning to characters engaged in such utterances. In addition to the phrase “Good Heavens,” other associated signs are evident throughout the text, including churches and convents. Characters regularly escape to such facilities in the belief that they will offer protection for the indeterminate times when they are in danger. In each instance, though, violation of these religious spaces occur, and violent events happen. This advances my previous assertions that Walpole’s criticism is directed at those who rely on traditional orthodoxies and mindless antiquarians who put forth none of their own original thoughts.

While there is evidence of linguistic utterances that establish and/or insinuate supernatural control in instances where none is present, there is an evident lack of contextual effort towards the three most significant supernatural events within established religious ideologies like Catholicism. Additionally, there is little effort to explain away these occurrences through rational or logical deduction. These three instances—the appearance of the helmet and its subsequent destruction of Conrad, the appearance of the helmet and the well-timed animation of its plume, and the levitation and movement of Alfonso’s painting in the castle—are well-chronicled by the narrator. However, none of the characters attempts to interpret these acts, either in religious or rational contexts. Perhaps, as Clara Reeve notes in her *Preface to The Old English Baron*, the reason is that “the enchanted sword and helmet . . . must keep within certain limits of credibility” (77). Walpole’s choice to describe a sword

so large as to require an hundred men to lift it; a picture that walks out of its frame; a skeleton ghost in a hermit's cowl; —When your expectation is wound up to the highest pitch, these circumstances take it down with a witness, destroy the work of imagination, and, instead of attention, excite laughter. (77)

This, in my view, is an extreme perception of the consequence of Walpole's supernatural phenomena. Yet Clara Reeve's criticism is consistent with other Gothic critics and perhaps serves as an explanation for her own Gothic texts, in which supernatural events and phenomena serve one purpose: to evoke horror or pity, as mentioned earlier.

However, I believe that Reeve's perception of the act, and similar Gothic criticisms, miss the true meaning of the term "supernatural." The term is defined in *The Oxford English Dictionary* as that which "is above nature; belonging to a higher realm or system than that of nature; transcending the powers or the ordinary course of nature." Furthermore, the *OED* cites David Hartley, who used the term in *Observation on man* in 1749 to state that it is "inspiration . . . termed supernatural properly, in contradistinction to all Knowledge resulting from the common Laws of Nature" (412). Hartley's text, when married to the *OED's* definition, provides a definition that represents the common understanding of the term during the period of *The Castle of Otranto's* publication in 1764. Both the *OED's* definition of the term and that supplied by Hartley's contextualization demonstrate that the term is an adjective used by an individual to describe something that appears to be real, yet is beyond the power of nature known to humankind and subsequently resists comprehension through human epistemological structures.

However, Clara Reeve's statement that the supernatural events in Walpole's novel must fit within a human definition of what is credible. The phenomena must be within the humanly understood potential of nature or the Laws of Nature. Should these events or those that occur within a text match Reeve's desire, then the phenomena are no longer supernatural; instead, they are natural events that appear supernatural at the moment, yet are finally supernatural because the possibility exists for humanity to discover their natural origins. Note the illogical nature of this assertion tied to the meaning of the linguistic utterance. Why do the supernatural phenomena have to fit within a human construct that judges the credibility of their occurrence? If anything, the critic should see these occurrences as intimations of the supernatural and the extent of the power of those who inhabit this realm, rather than discount such events simply because they fail to fit into the human conceptual system that is limited and deeply flawed at best. Reeve's comments demonstrate the shortsightedness of Gothic readings of supernatural phenomena; however, it also represents the same intellectual othering of supernatural phenomena through hubris that leads to Creon's downfall in *Antigone*, as well as Manfred's downfall in *The Castle of Otranto*.

In contrast to these appeals for interference by accepted supernatural forces associated with established religious systems, Walpole incorporates supernatural phenomena into the text that, with the exception of St. Nicholas' two dream appearances, cannot be associated with Christianity. While a Gothic reading of these phenomena would focus on what William Hazlitt refers to as a "shock [to] the senses . . . with no purchase upon the imagination," reading these phenomena from a supernaturalistic perspective reveals a more purposeful and meaningful motivation (101). While an initial

experience with the dreams, the helmet, the scabbard, or the painting may cause fear/terror, these supernatural phenomena may be frightening in and of themselves. All of these instances are stark reminders of the limitations of human control. From a fear/terror perspective, these signifiers remind humans of past trespasses regarding supernatural rules and/or symbols intended to warn humans against actions that may violate supernatural rule.

However, for humans to consider these supernatural phenomena beyond that of terror/fear-inspiring literary constructs, one must move beyond the fear and horror they inspire and consider why these specific symbols and instances are chosen. These supernatural acts and their associated manifested forms are purposefully selected by Walpole for reasons that go beyond capturing the attention of the characters involved, as a Gothic reading would posit. Rather, these specific manifestations are associated with divine laws and represent retribution for past transgressions, which serve as warnings against future transgressions, and/or represent coming transgressions based on choices made by characters that have already sealed their fate.

A supernaturalistic reading of *The Castle of Otranto* becomes necessary when one considers how traditional Gothic readings interpret the work. John Langhorne offered a Gothic-inspired reading of the text in his February 1765 review of *The Castle of Otranto*. He states, “That unchristian doctrine of visiting the sins of the fathers upon their children, is certainly, under our present system, not only a very useless, but a very unsupportable moral” (71). Langhorne says the acts of the past being visited upon the present/future is the only moral he can detect in the text. Yet in a second, separate review, Langhorne reconsiders this earlier criticism, where he questions such a Gothic reading. In a criticism



dated May 1765, he observes, “It is, indeed, more than strange, that an Author, of a refined and polished genius, should be an advocate for re-establishing the barbarous superstitions of Gothic devilism” (72). Unlike his first criticism, Langhorne in his second does not extend the argument further to consider why these events occur beyond horror and terror. For Langhorne to offer a truly Gothic reading, he would need to accentuate the past and its relationship to the present and future. I would argue, though, that his second criticism represents a shift that moves him closer to a supernaturalistic reading, since he extends the argument and considers that the basis for Walpole’s text is to criticize established religious systems like Christianity.

If the intention of *The Castle of Otranto* is to create a document that explores current and future morality, as well as human involvement in the Enlightenment, traditional religious structures, and the rise of science, why choose romance? Clara Reeve offers an answer in her *Preface to The Old English Baron*: while “the business of Romance is, first, to excite the attention,” once acquisition of this attention occurs, it must be directed “to some useful, or at least innocent, end” (76). The useful or innocent end that Reeve demands is the instruction Walpole provides to humankind’s relationship with supernatural phenomena. Eleanor Fenn argues in her 1784 *The Castle of Otranto for Children* that “the whole volume is replete with refined morality” (82). A supernaturalistic reading considers how the appearance of these supernatural phenomena attempts to communicate to humanity a message enlightened by a realm of knowledge to which humanity is relatively limited, if not wholly unavailable, without intercession by supernatural phenomena. In this circumstance, Walpole cleverly uses phenomena which he knows would fall outside of traditional religious constructs and which would shock a

reader due to the phenomena's association with barbarism and a superstitious past that humanity has worked tirelessly to retire. Once the shock wears off and a reader's emotions recede, the reader should logically look beyond the fear and terror and consider the true meaning behind all of these supernatural events: a reading often ignored or only superficially facilitated by a Gothic reading.

It is quite ironic that scholars perceive *The Castle of Otranto* and its associated definition of the term Gothic in such contexts as noted throughout this chapter, especially in light of the evidence that considers the phenomena's purpose as an opportunity to communicate knowledge of the immortal realm. In his 1811 *Introduction to the Castle of Otranto*, Walter Scott believes that, less than fifty years after its publication, one of Walpole's greatest achievements with the text is his rescue of the term "Gothic":

The peculiar situation of Horace Walpole, the ingenious author of this work, was such as gave him a decided predilection for what may be called the Gothic style, a term which he contributed not a little to rescue from the bad fame into which it had fallen, being currently used before his time to express whatever was in pointed and diametrical opposition to the rules of true taste. (89)

Prior to *The Castle of Otranto*, Scott recognizes how the term Gothic had become a signifier synonymous with superstition and antiquity. Thus it became codified as an available heuristic whereby one could take any sort of phenomena, including those that involve the supernatural, and immediately other these events and/or beings through a preset intellectual construct that disempowers the event/being, while at the same time empowering, confirming, and protecting the dominant ideology. That is, of course, until the dominant ideology and status quo itself become passé, which then necessitates the

same intellectual othering via Gothic linguistic utterances that contextualizes, and consequently affects, a reading of the phenomena that at one point was itself dominant and accepted.

Scott further invalidates a traditional Gothic reading, both in intellectual consideration of the term itself and its application. He recognizes that Walpole's incorporation of supernatural phenomena promotes an initial response of surprise and horror. Yet once one moves beyond these initial emotive responses, inspired by intellectual and social othering of the supernatural through constructs like Gothicism, one begins to experience "that secret and reserved feeling of love for the marvelous and supernatural, which occupies a hidden corner in almost everyone's bosom" (91). Scott recognizes the archetypal perception of the supernatural as entities that humans are naturally drawn to love, appreciate, and bond, for reasons alluded to Chapter I. However, as the child ages, this archetypal, natural perception is nurtured out of the individual and replaced by a Gothicized perception that others supernatural phenomena through terror and horror—two of the most fear-inspiring emotions a human can experience. The rationale is due to the subversive nature of the supernatural and the lack of control humankind has over it. Scott himself cites Walpole in his introductory remarks, noting that, among all of his works, Walpole believes that *The Castle of Otranto*

Is the only one of my works with which I am pleased; I have given reins to my imagination till I became on fire with the visions and feelings which it excited. I have composed it in defiance of rules, of critics, and of philosophers; and it seems to me just so much the better for that very reason. (90)

Walpole's comments cited by Scott echo a letter composed in March 1767 to Mme du Deffand:

Let the critics have their say: I shall not be vexed: it was not written for this age, which wants nothing but cold reason. I own to you, and you will think me madder than ever, that of all my works, it is the only one in which I pleased myself: I let my imagination run: my visions and my passions kindled me. I wrote it in defiance of rules, critics, and philosophers and it seems to me all the better for that. I am even convinced that in some later time when taste resumes the throne from which philosophy has pushed it, that my poor castle will find admirers; it has them even to-day coming on; I have just published the third edition. (Kallich 100-01)

Walpole's experience is equivalent to what Federico Garcia Lorca describes as *duende*: a moment when the author/artist becomes wholly consumed by his/her imagination. This submission, as Edward Hirsch relates, endangers the self, which becomes "imperiled and pushed against its limits, when death is possible," whether this death be literal or figurative (xv). The author, though, undergoes a "rapturous and terrifying experience"—perhaps a reason why texts that explore the supernatural are regularly filled with supernatural phenomena that are fear/terror-inspiring agents (xv).

The author's ability to experience *duende* "puts one in the space of the transcendental, the world beyond," which liberates the imagination and consequently unleashes what Hirsch defines as the "primal force into works of art" (xv). A Gothic reading of *The Castle of Otranto* not only subverts valuable supernatural knowledge, but it also prevents consideration of the text from what I will call a metacreative standpoint.

Walpole's statement demonstrates how movement beyond traditional social supernatural tropes enables an innovative means to convey ideas through a new literary form. It also represents awareness of a novel artistic creative approach that empowers emotions and suspends logic to prevent interference in the creative process. Logic only functions insofar as it can structure the creative experience and ensure communication in a manner that is understandable. This same methodology is required by the characters in this and other supernatural texts to commune with and to learn from supernatural phenomena.

Other contemporaries of Walpole, as well as his critics, noted his brilliance as Scott does; others, however, questioned his competency and effectiveness. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, in her 1810 Introduction to *The Castle of Otranto*, states that Walpole's novel is

The sportive effusion of a man of genius, who throws the reins loose upon the neck of his imagination. The large limbs of the gigantic figure which inhabits the castle, and which are visible at intervals; the plumes of the helmet, which rise and wave with ominous meaning; and the various enchantments of the place, are imagined with the richness and wildness of poetic fancy. (87)

This section from Barbauld's introductory comments focuses on the same supernatural phenomena criticized by others. For instance, John Dunlop, in his 1814 *The History of Fiction* wonders if the same phenomena that Barbauld speaks of in a favorable light were seriously or comically intended; if seriously, it is a most feeble attempt to exercise awe or terror; an immense helmet is a wretched instrument for inspiring supernatural dread, and the machinery is so violent that it destroys the effect it was intended to raise. A sword which requires a hundred men to lift it—blood

dropping from the nose of a statue—the hero imprisoned in a helmet, resemble not a first and serious attempt at a new species of composition, but look as if devised in ridicule of preceding extravagance, as *Don Quixote* was written to expose the romance of chivalry, by an aggravated representation of their absurdities.” (99-100)

Barbauld recognizes that these phenomena convey messages from the supernatural related to Manfred’s errors, both past, present, and intended future. She sees how Walpole moves beyond both traditional literary expression and conscious logical consideration and instead wields his work entirely to his imagination, which allows for the infusion of poetic fancy. This is a critical statement given the role that poetry itself as a literary form can play in the communicative opportunities between mortal and immortal realms as represented in Chapter I. In contrast, Dunlop’s comments represent a reading of the same supernatural phenomena that Barbauld congratulates, in which these phenomena intend to cause awe, terror, and dread. While this may appear to be Walpole’s purpose or appear to offer a Gothic perspective, from a supernaturalistic perspective, it is not. Perhaps traditional Gothic criticism influences Dunlop’s anticipatory set. Towards the end of his criticism, he questions if Walpole’s intentions were similar to Cervante’s intention with *Don Quixote*, where absurdities are exposed. That may be a relatively accurate statement: Walpole’s work demonstrates absurdity, yet the absurdity expresses his criticism of overzealousness towards traditional religious structures like Christianity and Catholicism, as well as secular structures like rationalism, and its associated manifestation through the scientific method.

One could consider Walpole's rhetoric and associated attack on traditional religious structures like Christianity and Catholicism as atheistic. Apparently, *The Castle of Otranto* and other similar writings did raise this question. This occasioned Laetitia-Matilda Hawkins' observation in her *Anecdotes, Biographical Sketches, and Memoirs* that Horace Walpole "was an atheist, I deny, on the testimony of his own expressions. To speak out, and to leave nothing to be misunderstood, he believed, I am confident, in a God; and he had an awful sense of his power, and relied on his mercy" (300). A supernaturalistic reading of *The Castle of Otranto* reinforces Hawkins' assertions that Walpole believed in a God. As she suggests, though, with the form of her linguistic utterance of "a" versus "the," or no qualifier whatsoever, Walpole may have believed in the existence of a supernatural spirit, but he perhaps did not believe in the same form as promoted by Christianity, generally, or Catholicism, specifically.

Research performed by Martin Kallich in his text, *Horace Walpole*, confirms Walpole's doubts concerning Catholicism and its social programming tendencies. Kallich cites "An Epistle from Florence to Thomas Ashton, Esq., Tutor to the Earl of Plimouth in 1740, where Walpole "asks that Ashton teach his pupil in the right spirit of the Ancients, inculcate a 'love of freedom,' and a 'sane philosophy'" (18). Additionally, he notes Walpole's request that "Ashton use history to teach his student a generous liberal attitude toward life and society, and to develop . . . a respect for liberty" (18). Finally, Kallich notes Walpole's "opposition to the priests—'Unlearned, unchaste, uncharitable Saints'—for their venality and hypocrisy, superstitious irrationalism and idolatry, sexual license, and even infant murders" (18). Thus, Walpole demonstrates a history of strong anti-religious and anti-Catholic sentiment, in which "he expressed his

usual antipathy to the primitive beliefs associated with the Roman Catholic Church” (Kallich 93). His concerns regarding established religion, generally, and Catholicism, specifically, come from the church’s tendency to obfuscate Truth when it does not coincide with accepted catechistic doctrine. Furthermore, such teachings paralyze individual freedom—a key ingredient to true intellectual, inductive research. Finally, Walpole recognizes the failings of the very ministers, who teach and profess, yet fail to live as they preach. That said, *The Castle of Otranto* does support his awareness of and belief in divine power and mercy, even if the earthly promulgators and practitioners of this religion are routinely excoriated in his art.

Hawkins also examines Walpole’s indictment of established religions, a point I have also argued. She states that, though she can verify his religiosity, “I dare not say he paid any respect to revealed religion, or to the important truths it has, from time to time, revealed” (300). In a sense, Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, with his self-admitted surrender to his imagination, represents a spiritual text that is proto-transcendental by nature. Newman argues, “instead of making *cathedrals* out of Christ, man, or ‘life,’ we are making it out of ourselves, out of our own feelings” (Hirsch 166). Walpole’s creative license represented in Gothicism and his intentions of using it to offer a substantial religious and social criticism perhaps explains his attitude towards supernatural phenomena in his *First Preface*. Edward Hirsch cites Robert Motherwell’s 1983 foreword to *Abstract Expressionist Painting in America*. Motherwell argues that, “with no known criteria, with criteria in the process of becoming, the creative situation generates an anxiety close to madness”—a statement which helps to contextualize Walpole’s initial denial in creating *The Castle of Otranto*, as well as his treatment of



supernatural events. That said, Walpole's submission to his imagination, to his *duende*, represents a "deep-seeded and risky faith in inwardness," which creates a text that effectively promotes a human relationship with supernatural phenomena. If followed, one can learn as chronicled in the text and in Chapter One of this study. Walpole's text also shows a clear morality beyond his criticism of science and traditional religious structures. A supernaturalistic reading of *The Castle of Otranto* offers a warning to humanity who too frequently usurps the divine through hubris-inspired perceptions of the human potential through logic and reason.

Manfred's transgressions begin when his son, Conrad, is killed by a large helmet, which "dashed [Conrad] to pieces, and almost buried [him]," under a helmet that is described as "an hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being, and shaded with a proportionable quantity of black feathers" (18). While a Gothic reading would place significance on this act from the perspective of a horror/terror-inspiring spectacle and as a symbol of the family's past affecting the family's future, represented by the character of Conrad, a supernaturalistic reading takes an entirely different slant. This supernatural act serves as a test for Manfred: will he take heed of this sign, as interpreted by others, and recognize that his family's rule over Otranto is about to end? If so, he should facilitate a peaceful transition of power, both to minimize harm to Otranto and to protect his wife and daughter.

While some might question Manfred's ability to interpret this test, the sign does hold two messages that, if read without hubris, perhaps he would act in a way that pleases rather than upsets the supernatural realm. First, the size of the helmet is important. Consider again the prophecy that Manfred is very aware of: "The castle and lordship of

Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it” (17). When an unknown travelling peasant observes that “the miraculous helmet was exactly like that on the figure in black marble of Alfonso the Good, one of their former princes, in the church of St. Nicholas,” Manfred has significant additional information that he should correlate and recognize the supernatural’s preference in this matter. The importance of the helmet’s immense size is easy to interpret when placed within the context of the prophecy: it represents the sheer power of the supernatural realm in its ability to levitate and precisely drop the heavy object. Additionally, the black feathers serve a symbolic purpose as well. Black’s archetypal meaning as a portent of death not only is attached to Conrad’s death, but it also serves as an indication that the rule Manfred’s family has enjoyed over Otranto is about to die as well. Finally, the black feather serves a further ominous purpose: should Manfred choose to work against supernatural providence, additional deaths will take place that will directly affect him and his family.

Unfortunately, Manfred’s hubris prevents him from correctly interpreting and heeding the advice. Instead, he turns to the same travelling peasant who recognizes the connection between the helmet and the statue of Alfonso, and pronounces that “the young man was certainly a necromancer, and that till the church could take cognizance of the affair, he would have the magician, who they had thus detected, kept prisoner under the helmet itself” (21). Walpole offers a substantial social and religious criticism in this scene. He criticizes society, where an unexplainable and supernatural occurrence takes place, and the immediate response is to label the event as magic and to seek the witch or warlock responsible. Walpole criticizes ancient superstition, but not in terms of the

supernatural phenomena itself. Instead, he critiques society and its desire to identify an immediate cause for the event based on a deductive application of assumed superstitious beliefs, which results in an accusation leveled at the peasant. Additionally, this explanation suspends Manfred's need to interpret the event himself and to consider potential meanings.

Walpole, though, is also critical of society and its relationship, as well as obedience to, traditional religious structures. Manfred's own words deconstruct his intention to other the supernatural phenomena as a product of a warlock's activity. While he incriminates the travelling peasant, he insists in the next line that the Church must be called to consider the meaning of the helmet's appearance and Conrad's associated death. Manfred's own hubris, as well as his social ideological programming, influences his ability to perceive and read the event from an inductive perspective. Instead of considering the potential meanings of the helmet, the black feathers, and Conrad's death, he associates the acts with magic or an event that is understandable, once a representative of the Church investigates the matter.

If Manfred's inability to understand the significance of the event were tied to his strong religious convictions and/or society's ideological othering of the supernatural, the reader may well understand his failings. Unfortunately, this is not the central cause of Manfred's blindness. Instead, Manfred's actions are a product of his hubris and related passion. As Ann Yearsley states in her December 1784 poem, "To the Honorable H—E W—E, on reading *The Castle of Otranto*,

Ah! Manfred! Thine are bitter draughts of woe,  
Strong gusts of passion hurl thee on thy fate;

Tho' eager to elude, thou meet'st the blow. (79)

Yearsley recognizes that the text demonstrates the dangerous consequences of hubris and passion, which lead humankind to believe it possesses the power to rule the divine/supernatural realm. To ensure his own continued control over Otranto, as well as his family's, Manfred plans to marry Isabella, to whom his son is engaged, and to divorce Hippolita. When Isabella protests, Manfred's hubris and passion are exposed. As he attempts to pursue the fleeing Isabella, Manfred catches sight out the window of the "plumes of the fatal helmet, which rose to the height of the windows, waving backwards and forwards in a tempestuous manner, and accompanied with a hollow and rustling sound" (24). If Manfred missed the earlier symbolism of the helmet, the causality associated with the helmet's sudden animation in relationship to his desire to divorce Hippolita and marry Isabella should now be plainly evident. I would argue that Manfred understands this symbolism, if not consciously, then at least on a conscious/subconscious level. When Isabella also sees the levitating helmet, she cries, "Look, my Lord. See heaven itself declares against your impious intentions!" (24). In response, Manfred states, "Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs" (24). Manfred here takes the first step towards his own ruin: his statement represents awareness of the supernatural/divine design regarding him, his family, and his relationship to Isabella. Unfortunately, his passion and hubris cloud his judgment, just as it does Oedipus Rex and Creon.

The *Oedipus Rex* connection has additional significance to the supernatural laws which Manfred attempts to transgress. Martin Kallich in his criticism, *Horace Walpole* offers a Freudian Oedipal Complex analysis of Manfred's desire. He suggests that the "latent Oedipal themes, incest and mutilation, deriving from the infantile fear of

punishment for the sin of incest, are suggested by the notion of sterility” (103). Specifically, Manfred dreads the prophecy that eventually comes to fruition and disempowers the masculine gender role through an incestuous relationship represented by Manfred’s pursuit of Isabella. Though not his daughter literally, she would have eventually filled a daughter-in-law role had her marriage to Conrad taken place. As Isabella relates, she perceives the role of father and father-in-law in selfsame regard. When Manfred proposes marriage, Isabella is disgusted: “Heavens! You! My father in law! The father of Conrad!” (24). Manfred’s desire for Isabella rouses well before Conrad’s death. He states, “I desired you before,” and further criticizes his recently deceased son: “he was a sickly puny child, and heaven has perhaps taken him away that I might not trust the honours of my house on so frail a foundation” (24, 23). Manfred’s statement of heaven’s involvement in Conrad’s death represents a sacrilegious comment in and of itself, but it also deconstructs his own hubris in that he identifies the power of the supernatural realm to eliminate a human being with very little effort. Nevertheless, he will later oppose the edict of the supernatural realm, an act that will eventually lead to his demise.

Shortly after his harsh criticism of Conrad, though, Manfred attempts to reposition himself as a kind, doting father, stating that “my foolish fondness for that boy blinded the eyes of my prudence—but it is better as it is. I hope in a few years to have reason to rejoice at the death of Conrad” (23). Manfred’s comment suggests that parental emotion influenced his desire to support Conrad’s marriage to Isabella. This ultimately blinds his ability to evaluate the situation in a logical, rational fashion. Now, however, that Conrad is gone and Manfred divorces himself emotionally, he can see the extent of

Conrad's infirmity, the error in his way, and the possibility that the supernatural intended this scenario to develop in this manner. Manfred's proposal, then, represents an incestuous desire, one that Kallich defines, in addition to a social taboo, as "an illicit passion" which violates the supernatural laws. Should Manfred pursue this desire, he will ultimately suffer further disciplinary action. Furthermore, Walpole's construction of Manfred's desire represents an interesting inversion of the Oedipal Complex. Here, it is the father's apparently deep-seated desire to destroy the boy, as Manfred relates, rather than the traditional Oedipal Complex, wherein the boy seeks to destroy his father to capture patriarchal control and dominance over the matriarchal and feminine force which gave him life.

A supernaturalistic reading reveals a cultural critical consideration of Manfred's desire to divorce his first wife, Hippolita. As Pat Rogers relates, among Manfred's many scholarly achievement is his work between 1762 and 1780 on *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, where Walpole organizes the text "chronologically, starting with the misty origins of Henry III, leading through the Tudor period and major figures of the seventeenth century" (300). Hippolita's infertility and subsequent inability to provide a male heir has substantial historical connections to Henry VIII's desire to divorce Catherine of Aragon, especially once his bastard son, Henry Fitzroy, rumored to become the heir to the Tudor dynasty, dies. While Anne Boleyn is not an Isabella-type figure, nor is Henry VIII as old as Manfred in the novel, Henry VIII does nevertheless attempt to manipulate religious tenets to justify his divorce from Catherine and his desire to remarry immediately. As history has recorded, Henry eventually breaks from Rome and the Catholic Church, mainstreams and legalizes Reformation ideology, and indirectly

establishes the Anglican Church. Religious fervency may not have been Henry's motivation. After all, Pope Leo X conferred the title "Defender of the Faith" on him in 1521. Henry manipulated religious doctrine and established an entirely new church to validate his personal preferences, thereby exploiting a doctrine already shown in this chapter to be a source of consternation for Walpole. As an unsigned review in the March 1768 *Political Register* relates,

Mr. Walpole's principles, however, are far from being liable to any . . . objection. He appears, indeed, from the whole of his writings, to be a man of most liberal and generous way of thinking, and never to have admitted into his political creed the ridiculous doctrine of divine, indefeasible, hereditary right. The investigation of truth (and of truths, it would seem, in the present case, rather curious than important) is the end of his labours; not the support of any party or system whatever. (117)

A supernaturalistic reading of the text reveals strong criticisms of both current and past social and theistic ideologies. His purpose, though, goes beyond the provision of additional information. Rather, Walpole recognizes that "the histories of past ages, describing massacres and murders, public executions of violence, and the more private though not less horrid acts of poison and daggers [begin] to be regarded almost as romances" when historicizing agents with a particular agenda become involved in recording the past (ctd. in Rogers 306). As Pat Rogers observes, Walpole recognized the consequences of such inaccuracies and misinformation, whether accidental or purposeful. She says, "Walpole has a remarkable sense of futurity: he is constantly transporting his imagination forward to look at the present from the perspective of posterity" (307). In

addition, though, there is also a “constant intercourse between the distant past and future” (Rogers 307). Walpole’s true genius, then, as represented in *The Castle of Otranto* and specifically evident in his rendering of supernatural phenomena, is the recognition that the past, the present, and the future continuously provide a cycle by which the past informs present decisions and the potential future ramifications. One who truly pays attention to all elements of history—and that includes the history that has not yet occurred—represents a truly inspired individual. Here, then, is the danger of contemporary Gothic criticism that views supernatural phenomena as fear/terror-inspiring literary constructs based on dislike of the barbaric past. When the Gothic others the past using an antiquarian label, people perceive the period in question as superstitious by nature and subsequently inferior to the modern period. We subsequently devalue the past, specifically in its ability to inform the present and to affect the future. Supernaturalistic readings of Gothic texts are valuable, then, because they foreground supernatural phenomena—an act that is critically important.

While Walpole’s intention, as expressed by Walter Scott, may have been to save the term Gothicism, the reality is that centuries of scholarship have deconstructed and consequently reconstructed the term into the very antithesis of Walpole’s intention. As previously demonstrated, critics over the centuries have moved Gothicism from a criticism of social and theistic ideologies that, among many, others the supernatural to a concept which focuses on a text’s exploration of “extremes, whether of cruelty, rapacity and fear, or passion and sexual degradation” (Lloyd-Smith 5). A supernaturalistic reading reveals the intended purpose of a Gothic text, which criticizes social and theistic ideologies.



However, as Alan Lloyd-Smith argues, the Gothic now “tends to reinforce, if only in a novel’s final pages, culturally prescribed doctrines of morality and propriety” through consistent archetypal characteristics of “forbidden excess, with punishment and retribution” in order to foster “social agreements in the interest of progress and social stability” (5). This movement away from Walpole’s intention had a wide-ranging impact on the social and intellectual perspectives of authors after Walpole. They constructed texts in the tradition of *The Castle of Otranto*. Thus, Lord Byron’s *Manfred* and Poe’s *Ligeia* should be read as similar social and theistic criticisms. Instead, like *The Castle of Otranto*, they are intellectually and socially othered by the application of a Gothic construct that significantly deviates from Walpole’s intention, as well as Byron and Poe’s application, and instead mirrors the many critics who I have cited throughout this study. Consequently, the reader’s anticipatory set shifts to perceive supernatural phenomena as terror and horror-inspiring literary symbolic devices that represent a fear of the past and merely as a warning to anyone who deviates from social and religious norms. As I will demonstrate through a supernaturalistic reading, it is critically important to support interactions between supernatural phenomena and human agents. Intellectual and social ideological constructs, such as anti-Walpolean Gothicism, depict the supernatural realm with its forbidden communication outside of traditional religions as taboo and those who foster such connections as evil, devil-like characters.

I start with Byron’s drama, *Manfred*. Bertrand Evans notes in “Manfred’s Remorse and Dramatic Tradition,” an article that explores the work from a gothic perspective, that critics relate “Manfred to Prometheus, to both Fausts, to Mrs. Radcliffe’s dark villains, and to Walpole’s *Manfred*” (752). This association results in an

interpretation of Manfred as “dark, gloomy, mysterious, and remorseful” (754).

Furthermore, Evans states that the Byronic Hero and the Gothic villain have many similar qualities, which he believes are a consequence of the “Zeitgeist of the third quarter of the eighteenth century . . . . The nucleus whence this impulse sprang was the architectural ruin—the most obvious relic of an age which the enlightened century called ‘barbarous’” (754). The archetypal Gothic villain tends to be a “feudal tyrant, dark-eyed, mysterious, foreboding, haughty, with the colors of his habitat on his brow, his mind, and his morals” (755). Gothic critics also assert that such characters draw “consciously or unconsciously upon Satan, the wicked uncle of folk tale, the Elizabethan machinating villains” (755). Additionally, the archetypal scene of Gothic texts consists of a structure, usually a castle, “constructed of parts that were calculated to freeze the blood: of galleries and vaults, labyrinthian corridors and dank subterranean passageways, of sliding panels and fluttering antique tapestries, of spiral staircases and grated dungeons” (755).

Both setting and character “harass a heroine, to send her wildly through dark passages where the darker properties of old castles were set to sustain her peak of terror. In what he was and did, the Gothic villain served first as chief accessory of the ruined edifice itself” (755). While I will not argue with a Gothic reading that highlights these archetypal characteristics per se, I am concerned about the implications of such readings on two fronts. First, this popular reading too often prevents a critic from considering other potential perspectives and associated readings of the text. Second, Evans’ statements represent a significant departure from Walpole’s stated intention in the creation of a Gothic literary genre—one that becomes a voice by which the socialized other, usually in the form of supernatural phenomena, can communicate and can be

considered as a legitimate phenomena, rather than a fear- and terror-inspiring agent.

Such readings are evident in Evans' early comments, where he calls Walpole "the father of the Gothic tradition in literature" and states that the Gothic form which he creates does not represent a

revolt from the conventional attitude towards medievalism when he wrote *Otranto*; on the contrary, he exploited it. Recognition of this fact seems imperative; otherwise the whole history of Gothic literature is subject to misinterpretation, and the accumulation of Gothic terror-paraphernalia is an insoluble mystery. (754)

While I would agree that Walpole's articulation of the Gothic literary genre is exploitative, I disagree with Evans' statement relative to Gothicism's non-revolutionary tenor. As I have shown, Walpole intended the Gothic form to revolt against a conventional attitude that results in a social othering, both of the past and its symbolic representation through haunted settings and ethereal spirit-like characters. This represents the past forcing itself upon the present and the future in an unwelcome way. Rather, Walpole does want the past respected and perceived as indispensably and inevitably subsuming the present and the future. Unfortunately, the consequence of such misreading is clear. The focus shifts to setting, character, and the associated terrific and horrific qualities. This leads to the response of fear based upon superficial readings that consequently reinforce strong social and intellectual ideologies that other the supernatural phenomena and that result in their perception as nothing more than literary elements.

This advancement of Gothic criticism demonizes the Gothic character; consequently, such characters become monstrous. Evans notes in his scholarship that the end of *Manfred* and Manfred's fate as the Gothic monster becomes "an object lesson" (763). Even his "display of remorse," which Evans defines as "ostentatious," gratifies "both the actor and the censor" (763). As a result, Evans' Gothic reading leads him to conclude, "Thus for two reasons remorse became the obsession of the Gothic stage: the desire of the actor for sympathy and exhibition, and the demand of the censor for 'morality'" (763). Evans' argument represents a common reading produced by Gothic criticism: the historical act intellectually others the monster and/or supernatural phenomena. This represents a confirmation of a morality codified in social ideology. In a sense, the drama uses Gothicism in the precisely opposite way from that intended by Walpole. The drama becomes a programming agent that confirms dominant social and religious ideologies, rather than a literary structure that subverts such ideologies. A supernaturalistic reading, though, demonstrates that Byron's purpose is not support of such popular ideologies as Evans asserts. Instead, like Walpole, I believe Byron calls such allegiances into question to demonstrate the benefit, as well as the potential, of humanity to foster an extra-religious relationship with supernatural phenomena: an act which enables the othered supernatural and which empowers particular humans beyond the scope of societal control.

Perhaps Manfred evidences his greatest threat to social order early in the drama. Within the first twenty-five lines, Manfred admits that, "Since that all-nameless hour, I have no dread, / And feel the curse to have no natural fear" (24-25). The notion that no social or religious entity has instilled within Manfred's breast concern for transgressing

specific limitations that establish control over society makes him a potentially subversive force. However, Manfred is an even more dangerous character. In addition to his lack of fear, he has made the following discovery:

The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.

Philosophy and science, and the springs

Of wonder, and the wisdom of the world,

I have essay'd, and in my mind there is

A power to make these subjects to itself. (12-16)

From an epistemological perspective, the source of Manfred's freedom is clear. His reference to "the Tree of Knowledge" is plainly associated with the Judeo-Christian Garden of Eden and the fall of Adam and Eve. While a Gothic reading would interpret this statement as a foreshadowing admonition on Manfred's part that the acquisition of knowledge from supernatural phenomena, devoid of any sort of theistic intermediary, is wrong, I read this statement in a different context. Instead, I posit that it is Byron's intention to question traditional religious systems, specifically Christianity, through his deconstruction of Judeo-Christian imagery, where he asserts that such a tree is not that of Life—a clear criticism of the commonly held belief that Christian theology provides insight to "the way, the truth, and the life."

Benita Eisler claims in *Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Fame*, that Byron remained doubtful throughout most of his life concerning orthodox religious beliefs, a similar criticism Walpole would posit through his Gothic literary subgenre at an earlier period. Eisler recounts that, when Byron reads a volume of letters from Richard Watson, an eighteenth-century Cambridge divine and later Bishop, to Edward Gibbon, Byron

states, “[It] is a gloomy creed,’ he complained of Christianity, ‘and I want a better, but there is something Pagan in me that I cannot shake off. In short, I deny nothing, but doubt everything’” (317). Byron’s skepticism is a product of his own rationality, which becomes manifest through his articulation of Manfred’s plight. As Eisler argues, Byron, “along with Voltaire and other Enlightenment thinkers,” arrived at the following proof:

“As to revealed religion, Christ came to save men; but a good Pagan will go to heaven, and a bad Nazarene to Hell . . . . Why are not all men Christians? Or why are any? If mankind may be saved who never heard or dreamt, at Timbuctoo, Otaheite, Terra Incognita, etc., of Galilee and its Prophet, Christianity is of no avail, if they cannot be saved without, why are not all orthodox? . . . Who will believe that God will damn men for not knowing what they were never taught?”  
(297)

Manfred’s statement that the Tree of Knowledge is not life, then, does not refer to human propensity to sin through the search for knowledge outside of traditional religious constructs. Instead, like Walpole, Byron does not use Gothic archetypes to question the validity of human pursuit of knowledge through secular means, something a Gothic-based criticism would suggest. Instead, Byron deconstructs the traditional Genesis creation story from the Bible. Manfred’s subsequent progression in the drama maintains that theism, the Tree of Knowledge, cannot impart Truth. At the same time, though, Byron subverts many other traditional constructs that discover Truth, since he includes both science and philosophy in his criticism. Again, as Eisler notes, Byron often described himself as “born to opposition,” where he “could no more embrace established religions than he could profess blind adherence to a political party. He could never be a

follower, and his loathing of institutions forced him into a position of aristocratic agnosticism” (298). From this standpoint, then, mainstream Gothic criticism wrongly interprets *Manfred* as Byron’s demonstration of a modern Prometheus, which communicates a moral to its readers to avoid pushing beyond the limits of human knowledge as established by social and theistic constructs. Instead, Byron uses Gothic archetypes to offer a stinging religious and social criticism of attempts to limit human exploration—specifically, human exploration of supernatural phenomena that remain outside the pale accepted social and religious constructs.

From a supernaturalistic perspective, then, Manfred, as the typical Byronic Hero, leads a lonely and blasted existence, aware of the limitations of human ability and recognizing the fruitlessness of the pursuit of knowledge that transcends the supernatural realm. Manfred asks each of the spirits who appear before him for a simple boon: “Forgetfulness—” (136). Byron offers an important continuation to the immortal capability Walpole embeds within *The Castle of Otranto* and subsequently within the Gothic genre. For Walpole’s Manfred, submission to the supernatural realm would have perhaps resulted in a different, more positive fate. Byron’s Manfred, though, pursues knowledge within the very construct Walpole intends for his Manfred, but which he is unable to realize due to his own hubris. Consequently, Byron’s Manfred is aware of “that which is within me” (138). Such self-knowledge, while empowering Manfred, simultaneously damns him. Through acquisition of this knowledge, Manfred becomes othered, just as the supernatural phenomena are othered in *The Castle of Otranto*. He becomes exiled, and even in a circumstance where he can communicate with the supernatural realm, he chooses not to share that which is within him, declaring instead:

“read it there— Ye know it, and I cannot utter it” (139-40). Manfred’s inability to utter that which is within him and which is supernaturally discerned is not due to a lack of education or inarticulateness. Rather, Manfred chooses not to utter that which is within him. A mortal-based moral necessity, a byproduct of his associated allegiance to social and religious constructs, still holds sway over him. This does not contradict my earlier analysis concerning the extent of Manfred’s freedom. Indeed, his soul is now free of the manacles of ideological and intellectual othering. However, it is his mortality, his flesh, which opposes his immortal desires.

As the supernatural phenomena inform Manfred, though, the forgetfulness he seeks is “not in [their] essence, in [their] skill” (147). However, “thou may’st die,” to achieve freedom: not through forgetfulness, but through detachment from the very mortality that torments his immortal spirit (148). Such is not possible, though, and Manfred once again demonstrates that, while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak due to the intellectual and social othering of the supernatural realm that continues to haunt his mortal self. Rather than enter the supernatural realm easily through death, when Manfred contemplates the notion of suicide, he responds emphatically, “Oblivion, self-Oblivion!” (144). Though at the beginning Manfred attests to his soul’s free state, his inability to escape testifies to the soul’s enslavement to the carnal desires of the mortal state. Manfred admits,

To rest for ever—wherefore do I pause?  
I feel the impulse—yet I do not plunge;  
I see the peril—yet do not recede;  
and my brain reels—and yet my foot is firm:



There is a power upon me which withholds,  
and makes it my fatality to live. (19-24)

Facilitation of this literal entombment occurs through the most basic social and religious taboo, which is the power that Manfred speaks of: the teachings that concern how grave a sin it is to take one's life. As a result, the drama *Manfred* progresses beyond intellectual and social othering of supernatural phenomena and their relationship to humanity through Gothic criticism. As David Punter argues in *The Literature of Terror: The Gothic Tradition*, this specific focus leads to what he defines as "the cult of 'Byronism,' [where] the romantic cultivation of the heroic and tragic self underlies much . . . private writing" and carries over into later British and American writers. Byron's manifestation, then, of the Gothic form uses a psychological angle to demonstrate how the supernatural phenomena that exists within every single human is intellectually othered through a different form of terror and fear that is much more primordial: the fear of mortal death and the great beyond.

A Gothic reading of *Manfred* invites as well an exploration of social taboo of incest in *The Castle of Otranto*. While Walpole's Manfred seeks a relationship with his son's intended wife, a relationship labeled unnatural both by society and by the supernatural realm, Byron's Manfred is guilty of an inappropriate liaison with Astarte. Again, perhaps this is an autobiographical manifestation on Byron's part, similar to his criticism of religious and political ideology, wherein he comments on his relationship with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh. While a Gothic reading interprets Manfred from a moralistic perspective, which views Manfred as damned because of his violation of a social taboo, a supernaturalistic reading interprets the text from a different perspective.

When Manfred discusses his relationship with the witch, a representative of the supernatural realm, he discusses his and Astarte's parallels, which suggest that they are each other's soul mate—that is, individuals who complement, complete, and who provide companionship for each other. Manfred says, "She was like me in lineaments; her eyes/ Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone / Even of her voice, they said were like to mine" (105-07). However, Manfred and Astarte's similarities transcend mere physical likeness. Perhaps of greater significance, a psychological congruence exists between both: "She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings, / The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind / To comprehend the universe" (108-10). Unfortunately, Manfred's relationship with Astarte—one that the supernatural realm supports, given the witch's later actions that enable a brief, yet futile reconnection with Astarte—ends prematurely, thereby significantly damaging both Manfred and Astarte. Manfred states that it is his heart "which broke her heart; / It gazed on [Manfred's], and wither'd" (118-19). A traditional Gothic reading, interpreting this damage inflicted on Astarte from a moral perspective, sees Astarte's untimely end as a product of Manfred's role as a Gothic monster and his associated actions that yearn for Astarte and his commission of an act that has been othered by both society and religion. A reader using a supernaturalistic interpretation, however, interprets this sequence of events from a different prerogative. The damage inflicted on Astarte is not due to Manfred's state as a Gothic monster but to Astarte's own reading of a doubt manifested in Manfred's heart, a doubt which produced and promoted by social and religious teachings that other the supernatural connection existing between their two souls. Consequently, this doubt along with his associated inability to act on their love destroys Astarte.

Manfred's experiences obviously parallel the relationship between Byron and his half-sister, Augusta Leigh. As Eisler states, Byron "believed in their blood tie as a mystical bond of flesh and spirit," much as Manfred narrates about his relationship with Astarte (395). Eisler continues, "With Augusta he felt the freedom and ease that came from being wordlessly understood, along with the tension of a desire so powerful that when Byron was still a schoolboy, Catherine Byron had felt it her duty to keep them apart" (396). Consequently, parental and social interference left Byron to feel as if their relationship and interest in each other was sinful, even if it seemed not only proper, but also destined, at least from a supernatural perspective. Similarly, Manfred tells Astarte's spirit, when it later reappears from the supernatural realm, that he believes their relationship and mutual interest in each other to be "the deadliest sin"—a clear suggestion that he judges their relationship as a violation of both social and religious ideologies. This also explains Manfred's previous inconstant heart for which Astarte very astutely reads and suffers. Though their interest and relationship represent the desire to consummate a relationship between two matched souls, traditional religious and social spheres would not sanction such a union. Their blood relationship with each other parallels Byron's own relationship with Augusta. Should Manfred and Astarte become one, they would achieve total physical and spiritual fulfillment in each other: an event that would negate their adherence to both social and religious power structures, and consequently threaten the integrity of these entrenched systems.

The social programming agents who appear in the drama and who oppose the supernatural spirits throughout the drama are the Chamois Hunter and the Abbot of St. Maurice, the Chamois Hunter representing the social sphere, the Abbot representing the

religious. When Manfred seeks solace in the Hunter after his unsuccessful entreaties with the supernatural sphere, the Hunter responds:

Man of strange words, and some half-maddening sin,  
Which makes thee people vacancy, whate'er  
Thy dread and sufferance be, there's comfort yet—  
The aid of holy men, and heavenly patience. (31-34)

While the Hunter represents the social sphere, note the religious language in which the social admonition is couched. I would posit that this is intentional on Byron's part. He takes a rustic hunter, with limited exposure to intellectual pursuits, who is socialized through the dominant Christian social construct that projects the possibility of salvation through Christian agents. Manfred's response takes this into account:

Patience and patience! Hence—that word was made  
For brutes of burthen, not for birds of prey;  
Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine,—  
I am not of thine order. (35-38)

Manfred recognizes that the unique intellectual journey he has taken places him in a superior position to other mere mortals, simply because of his communication with the supernatural realm and the concomitant development of his own soul. He no longer views himself as a part of the social or religious orders that other supernatural phenomenon. Instead, Byron provides a unique and ironic spin to the Gothic form that simultaneously inverts the dominant binary construct while preserving the construct's form. Rather than other the supernatural phenomena, Manfred others the human constructions through his own intellect which demeans religious and ideological spheres

as superstitious inferiors, at the same time elevating the supernatural phenomena and associated ideologies with which he identifies and promotes to other mortals throughout the text.

As notes earlier, the Chamois Hunter represents the social sphere, the Abbot of St. Maurice the religious. The Abbot states that social awareness of Manfred nevertheless conjoins with religious awareness, thereby making Manfred a subversive agent who promotes and participates in taboo behaviors. Consequently, these social and religious agents label Manfred monstrous, since “’Tis said thou holdest converse with the things / Which are forbidden to the search of man” (34-35). This language is consistent with Byron’s Edenic language at the beginning of the drama. Demonstration of the social and religious ideological othering occurs in the lines that assert that such communication is forbidden, since it involves “the dwellers of the dark abodes, / The many evil and unheavenly spirits / Which walk the valley of the shade of death” (36-38). Manfred is not the only monster in the drama, though. Social and religious ideologies attempt to other the same supernatural phenomena that earlier attempted to assist Manfred, coach him to move beyond his mortal condition, and ascend to a supernatural state in which he sheds his mortal frame. A Gothic reading of the text identifies Manfred’s evil as working in concert with that of the supernatural. Positive acknowledgement of supernatural phenomena’s existence occurs, but these supernatural phenomena become othered through a characterization of them as unholy and evil—in short, the source of torment for the Christian soul as it passes through death and ascends to a very limited perceptual construct known as heaven, which represents the preferred endpoint for all conformists.

Similar to the Chamois Hunter, Manfred others the Abbot through a Gothic technique that conforms to Walpole's vision. While a critical Gothic reading considers Manfred's response to the Abbot as blasphemous and evidence of his accession to a non-Christian and evil false deity, a supernaturalistic reading recognizes that Byron uses the Gothic construct in the same guise as Walpole. Manfred's speech also represents an autobiographical commentary, critical of the Christian faith. Byron's construction is similar to that of Walpole's: he criticizes the accepted religious theology through a deconstructive inversion that witnesses the othering of Christian values through a promotion of a more ancient faith that looks to the natural realm to find supernatural phenomena. In the case of Byron, he uses a polytheistic religious structure that mirrors the supernatural phenomena witnessed in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In Shakespeare's comedic masterpiece, the natural becomes manifest in a natural supernatural realm that, when given the opportunity, tempers the harshness of mankind's artificial social and religious constructs through one that is more innate, less logical, and chaotic. While such a realm lacks license in *Manfred*, which perhaps contributes to Manfred's woeful state, he does use the Abbot's entreaty for him to rejoin once again the Christian flock to offer a scathing criticism of the clerical life. He also is critical of a religious structure that, when facilitated properly, leads humankind to salvation, but, if facilitated wrongly, leads to vice and corruption:

Old man! There is no power in holy men,  
Nor charm in prayer, nor purifying form  
Of penitence, nor outward look, nor fast,  
Nor agony, nor, greater than all these,

The innate tortures of that deep despair,  
Which is remorse without the fear of hell.  
But all in all sufficient in itself  
Would make a hell of heaven—can exorcise,  
From out the unbounded spirit the quick sense  
Of its own sins, wrongs, sufferance, and revenge  
Upon itself; there is no future pang  
Can deal that justice on the self-condemn'd  
He deals on his own soul. (66-78)

Similar to his comments about the Chamois Hunter and the dominant social ideological structure, Manfred deconstructs and subsequently inverts the theistic worlds of both heaven and hell. He suggests that acquiescence, as the Chamois Hunter suggests socially and the Abbot suggests religiously, would not save Manfred. Instead, the very act by which he would deny the supernatural connection between his and Astarte's souls would violate the supernatural order in a way similar to Walpole's Manfred, where he pursues Isabella though it, too, goes against the intentions of the supernatural realm. While Byron's Manfred understands this concept, he comes to this realization too late, as does Walpole's Manfred.

Hubris damns both characters, since they trust created social and religious constructs. Both texts demonstrate that the source of the structure's creation, whether by a group (as in the case of Byron's Manfred) or by an individual (as in the case of Walpole's Manfred) does not matter. Violating the supernatural law in favor of a man-made artificial law, regardless of how subversive and taboo the supernatural law may be

to accepted social and religious constructs still results in the ultimate punishment of disempowerment and, since these actions involve masculine figures, emasculation as well. Manfred's hubris leads his mortal self to resist the attraction of the supernatural realm and his own soul's desire to depart. The social and religious spheres, as well as humankind's own preservation instinct, attempt one last salvation that is, ultimately, futile.

Byron then provides a fitting psychological complement through his identically named main character. Walpole's Manfred is guilty of the same hubris witnessed in Byron. However, Byron's Manfred, perhaps through drama's vocalization of a character's internal monologue that both expresses and attempts to correct one's interest, provides an interesting glimpse into a character who struggles between his hubris, his own personal beliefs, and the social ideological constructs that intellectually other the supernatural realm. In contrast, though, Byron's Manfred is a more complex character, in that he both possesses and is aware of supernatural phenomena, which causes him to struggle with external phenomena, but simultaneously to resist the internal phenomena too—the primordial split between humankind's spiritual and material existences.

The Nineteenth century focus on the psychological impact of supernatural phenomena and the consequent attempt to intellectually other such experiences, which is common in readings of Byron and other British Gothic texts, also carries over to American literature of the same time period. As Alan Lloyd-Smith argues in *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction*, the notion of American Gothic as practiced by authors like Poe differs from the British form in that that it represents “certain unique cultural pressures [that] led Americans to the Gothic as an expression of their very different



condition” (4). Specifically, this American form represents “forbidden excess, with punishment and retribution offered in the eventual return to psychic normality” (5). As my analysis of *Ligeia* demonstrates, herein is the central problem: psychic normality, a socially defined term, is marked by a quorum that leads social agents to other personalities and to label as disorders any subversive or potentially subversive characteristics which are similar to those demonstrated in my analyses of both *The Castle of Otranto* and *Manfred*.

Lloyd-Smith argues that such a social agreement is necessary “in the interest of progress and civic stability” (5). As many dystopias demonstrate, such social agreements do not necessarily mean that these agreements correspond with a higher, natural order known to and communicated by supernatural phenomena. Lloyd-Smith confirms this through his admission that “free-thinking characters appear frequently in the Gothic, and they are generally up to no good . . . and proclaim their own superiority and inherent freedom as rational beings above the shibboleths of convention and religious faith” (5). I agree with Lloyd-Smith’s argument, as an analysis of *Ligeia*’s character affirms. I do, however, question how conventional Gothic criticism others the mortal agent, the supernatural phenomena, and the lessons learned through this interaction as monstrous and/or evil since they oppose the accepted social and religious constructs. American Gothicism, then, does share with traditional British Gothicism the notion that such literature demonstrates subversive behavior, and through such evil projections readers witness the consequences of such anti-establishment thinking and behavior. However, as my supernaturalistic analysis of *Ligeia* shows, such criticisms represent a misapplication of Walpole’s original intention of the Gothic form.

Gothic criticism of Poe, as Lloyd-Smith states, tends to focus on the cultural and historical intellectual movements during the nineteenth century. Specifically, Lloyd-Smith relates how “Poe’s culture was dominated by reason, in the form of the ‘Common Sense’ school of philosophy” (68). This intellectual dynamic insisted “on a simple material world, fully understood by the senses and the judgment, and based securely on experience (along with a supposedly innate moral sense)” (68). However, popular transcendental thinking during the period recognized that such “‘Common Sense’ model[s] of experience based on reflection on the evidence of the senses could not account for even the most basic experience of time or space, which must instead depend upon innate qualities of the mind” (68). From Lloyd-Smith’s perspective, this “allowed popularizers of the New Philosophy to claim the existence of Higher Reason, accessible by intuition and introspection” (68). Unfortunately, Lloyd-Smith and other Gothic critics do not follow the logic of these influences in relationship to supernatural phenomena. If, indeed, followers of the New Philosophy sought Higher Reason, open communication with supernatural phenomena would work through these intuitive and introspective faculties of humankind. Emerson argues in his essay *Spirit* that “once [one] inhale[s] the upper air [they are] admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth” (41). Consequently, the individual can access “the entire mind of the Creator, [who] is himself the creator in the finite” (41). Unfortunately, though, Lloyd-Smith and other Gothic critics ignore such an argument, instead believing that Poe’s fiction shows “how his narrators attempt to contain their irrational experiences, drives, and desires within the rational framework” (68). Such a view runs contrary to transcendental ideals that embrace openness to one’s uncontrolled self and subsequently other any attempt to

restrain this self through logic and reason (68). To do so works against engagement with the *duende*, and hence one's creative source, as Lorca discusses and as I connect to Walpole's concept of the Gothic construction in my analysis of Byron.

In contrast to a Gothic consideration that would see logic among the insanity of Poe's characters, I argue that Poe's narrators do not restrain their irrationality. Instead, they appear to contain their illogical natures only insofar as it enables communication of the findings of supernatural phenomena through logical means, which makes the knowledge they acquire discernible. This is a pattern similar to other artists and a point discussed in Chapter I relative to the relationship between supernatural phenomena and mortal agents who develop the capacity to communicate ethereal knowledge through their unique mediums. This notion runs parallel to Sigmund Freud's concept of the *fin de siècle*, which Jerrold Hogle states represents a "sense of the unconscious as a deep repository of very old, infantile, and repressed memories or impulses, the archaic underworld of the self" (3). While a traditional Gothic perspective recognizes this in relationship to the necessary repression of the past, a supernaturalistic reading considers such actions from a more transcendental perspective. As Emerson argues in *Spirit*

We can foresee God in the coarse, and, as it were, distant phenomena of matter; but when we try to define and describe himself, both language and thought desert us, and we are as helpless as fools and savages. That essence refuses to be recorded in propositions, but when a man has worshipped him intellectually, the noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God. It is the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it. (40)

I would posit, then, that such violent and irrational acts, as well as the attempt made by Poe's narrators to explain their experiences through logic, represent a connection to supernatural phenomena—a longing on the part of the narrators to communicate the deeper truths and knowledge of the sort Emerson relates. Unfortunately, this process is largely inefficient, since the weakness and general ineffectiveness of the humankind's language limits what can be captured and transmitted to other humans. One need only consider Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the four Athenian lovers, upon their return from the Green World, attempt to share with the mortals at court their experiences with supernatural phenomena. When Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia speak of their visions, residents of Athens consider their stories fictional delusions. Theseus's speech that associates lovers, lunatics, and poets together articulates the general population's perspective. Bottom, suffering from a similar fate, desires to express his experiences as Titania's lover through what he calls, "Bottom's Dream." It is plainly evident in the cited scenarios from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that humanity struggles in articulating their supernatural encounters for two reasons: the lack of effective language to convey their experiences and the ambient noise that surrounds the communicative environment due to the considerable othering that occurs through historical textualization acts.

Gothic interpretations, then, of supposedly insane and illogical acts represent an intellectual othering that interferes with a critic's ability to read Poe's works from a transcendental perspective. As E.T.A. Hoffman states,

The Gothic tradition in which Poe writes grandly ignores the value systems of our institutions; it deals entirely with the profane. Its great themes are incest and

cannibalism. Characters and events are exaggerated beyond reality, to become symbols, ideas, and passions. Its style will tend to be ornate, unnatural—and thus operate against the perennial human desire to believe the word as fact. Its only humour is black humour. It retains a singular moral fiction—that of provoking unease. (4)

The Gothic critical approach, embodied in Hoffman, largely ignores the potential knowledge gleaned by the supposedly Gothic monster and instead perceives the supernatural phenomena as literary conventions and the text as a vehicle to communicate a moral lesson about acting in a socially and religiously circumspect fashion.

Instead, I would argue that Poe uses the terror and horror in his texts to communicate the importance of moving beyond the intellectualized othering, produced by social and intellectual ideological programming agents and agencies, to this higher state of being. As Edward Hirsch argues in *The Demon and the Angel: Searching for the Source of Artistic Inspiration*, Poe states in *Marginalia*:

There is . . . a class of fancies, of exquisite delicacy, which are *not* thoughts, and to which, *as yet*, I have found it absolutely impossible to adapt language. I use the word “fancies” at random, merely because I must use some word; but the idea commonly attached to the term is not even remotely applicable to the shadows in question. They seem to me rather psychal than intellectual. They arise in the soul, (alas, how rarely!) only at its epochs of most intense tranquility . . . and at those mere points of time where the confines of the waking world blend with those of the world of dreams. I am aware of these “fancies” only when I am upon the very brink of sleep, with the consciousness that I am so. (86).

While Gothic criticism limits itself to questioning the reality and sanity of Poe's tales, a supernaturalistic reading moves beyond such a reductive investigation. Instead, it focuses on the supernatural encounter, and in the case of Byron and Poe, the psychology of the character which Gothicism defines as monstrous. Consequently, a supernaturalistic reading recognizes that character analysis foregrounds and interprets knowledge communicated via supernatural phenomena. As Hirsch argues, Poe's writing represents

uncanny explorations of dream consciousness, nightmare vision, convulsive mind, his obsessive, rational delineation of trances and swoons, of transitional states between sleeping and waking, hypnagogic zones in which the reasoning or imaginative faculties suddenly flicker and yield an unknown force. (86)

Both social and religious ideologies prefer that these experiences in Poe's writings reinforce dominant constructs that other subversive experiences. Unfortunately, as Hirsch notes, an author's *duende* resists this societal strait-jacketing, since the text may invoke "the invisible fiend . . . [Poe's] 'imp of the perverse,' an irresistible demon voice that suddenly impels us to do something unaccountable, something unreasonable and often unconscionable, to peer down into the abyss and then, instead of backing away, to plunge impetuously over the precipice" (86-87). Dominant social and religious ideologies teach that connections to the supernatural realm, those deserving support and encouragement, lead to a purer, more godly soul. This is an important ideology, since it fosters the type of collegial control which religion and society seek. The error here is that for each good supernatural agent, evil supernatural agents also exist which desire to take humankind to the subversive side of humanity and the supernatural realm. As Milton

emphasizes in *Paradise Lost*, knowledge of the devil is of equal importance to knowledge of the unfallen angels—a point Lorca emphasizes through the *duende* and Hirsch through his own research. Milton and other promulgators of dominant ideological constructs cite biblical pronouncements such as 2 Corinthians 2:11—believers are encouraged not to be “ignorant of Satan’s devices.”

Supernatural phenomena that communicate devilish intentions—that is, subversive acts that cause harm to others and which undermine accepted human ideological structures—are labeled evil and the characters who initiate such a journey monsters. Poe, however, in extending Byron and a modifying Walpole, argues that the positive or negative intentions of the supernatural phenomena are unimportant. What is important is the gathering of information from both good and evil sources to ensure a holistic picture. In fact, Poe to my thinking, more ardently supports the inclusion of the supposedly “evil” supernatural phenomena, since it provides insight into both mortal and immortal realms that are real but avoided because humankind chooses to deem it taboo. As Thomas Moore argues in *Dark Eros: The Imagination of Sadism*, authors like Poe and the Marquis De Sade “see fiction as a bitterly honest exploration of the soul” (4). Rather than use fiction solely to explore and project virtue—an agenda John Gardner supports in his crusade for moral fiction—Moore argues that writers like Poe and De Sade recognize that when the writer relinquishes “the effort to present the soul in its best light or with motives of inspiration or self-improvement,” he/she discovers a “black hole [filled with] psychological anti-matter, a complete inversion of societal interpretations and values” (4). While Gothicism labels such an exploration as evil in light of its ubiquitous moral backdrop, a supernaturalistic reading meliorates Poe’s intention of exposing the seamy

side of the human and immortal soul, as well as the dark element within the supernatural itself.

Among the more interesting Gothic interpretations of a text like *Ligeia* is that of Eric Savoy, who argues that American Gothic writers, and Poe specifically, expose to “‘withering skepticism’ the Romantic faith in ‘the individual ego or selfhood’” (176). While a contemporary Gothic interpretation may lead one, like Savoy, to this conclusion, Poe’s prefatory references in *Ligeia* to philosopher Joseph Glanvill suggests a different perspective. A supernaturalistic reading, instead, points to Poe’s confirmation of Romantic faith in the individual ego or selfhood, especially since Transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau assert that our selfhood or ego lies in the spiritual makeup of humankind. Poe cites Glanvill, who argues that

The Will therein lieth which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will. (38).

A Gothic interpretation, evident here, focuses on the notion of humankind’s weak soul, championing the soul’s eventual surrender to God. As demonstrated through Walpole and Byron, contemporary Gothic criticism, informed by Christian ideology, leads to the othering of humans and that supernatural phenomena which has been deemed socially wholesome. A supernaturalistic reading, though, suggests that humankind’s will is, in a sense, equal to God, since our will, as Glanvill argues, originates in the selfsame God. Furthermore, humankind’s structures, reinforcing social and religious ideologies, subsequently intellectualize others who exceed or aid in such accession. Unfortunately,



as Glanvill suggests, this limitation impedes humankind's discovery of any potential limitations that exist for the human soul. In this view, Gothicism itself is the ideological programming agent that restrains humanity and the potential of the soaring human spirit. A traditional Christian reading, using a Promethean context and a Gothic critical lens, labels as blasphemous the notion that humans only enter the immortal realm when the will associated with the soul gives up its mortality. A supernaturalistic reading, though, recognizes that mankind's mortal state—what Byron often refers to as clay in his writing—is permeated by an immortal essence, a supernatural phenomena. Upon death, this immortal essence continues to exist, while our clay fulfills its ashes-to-ashes and dust-to-dust destiny. Poe's *Ligeia*, though, suggests the power that one may wield even at the moment of death and demonstrates why contemporary Gothicism tries to intellectually other such a heretical request. This power goes beyond that normally available to humankind and suggests humankind's power to inhabit the space witnessed in Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* and Byron's *Manfred*, as well as the space that is the holiest of holies to mortals—the human form itself.

Gothic criticism also focuses on the power relationship between Poe's narrator and *Liegia*. Monika Elbert in her essay, *The Ligeia Syndrome, Or, Many 'Happy Returns in Conrad's Gothic'* defines the Ligeia Syndrome as an “archetypal image of the creative Muse/goddess who is so seductive in the context of the Gothic” (131). She argues that this seductiveness subverts and consequently disempowers the masculine gender role; specifically, the disempowerment of men occurs “both by the constructions of women they have created and also by an all-too-real oppressive domestic situation” (131). The focus of her reading is the creative energies generated in masculine characters through

empowered female characters. This Gothic-based reading elevates Ligeia to a position superior to that of the narrator. Her attractive appearance, which Elbert defines as both beautiful and exotic, compliments her “vast knowledge,” which intimidates the narrator (132, 134). While Elbert’s analysis is both interesting and serves to confirm Kate Ferguson Ellis’ gender-based arguments in *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology*, a supernaturalistic reading moves beyond a consideration of the power gender relationships and Ligeia as a femme fatale.

A supernaturalistic interpretation, looking at the relationship between the narrator and Ligeia from a much different vantage point, views Ligeia as a facilitator of supernatural phenomena, not the empowered woman who enslaves her masculine target. Even in her mortal form, the narrator’s description suggests that her immortal self is barely contained. Though her form is “tall, somewhat slender, and, in her latter days, even emaciated,” she should not be seen as sickly (39). Instead, she is majestic and in possession of a demeanor of “incomprehensible lightness and elasticity”; her entrance is announced only “by the dear music of her low sweet voice, as she placed her marble hands upon my shoulder” (39). This contrast between the lightness, elasticity, and warmth of her voice and her pale physical form highlights the true energy and power of her soul—that is, her feeble human form appears incapable of providing an adequate human shape to sustain this powerful inner essence.

In addition to her physical form, Ligeia’s intellectual state further suggests the limitless power of her soul. The narrator states that “the acquisitions of Ligeia were gigantic, were astounding; yet I was sufficiently aware of her infinite supremacy to resign myself to her guidance through the chaotic world of metaphysical investigation,” which

would provide the narrator with the ability to “pass onward to the goal of a wisdom too divinely precious not to be forbidden” (42). Elbert cites this as evidence of the narrator’s inferiority complex. Instead of interpreting this passage as evidence of any inferiority or related fear of emasculation, I maintain that the narrator’s statement creates a dichotomy similar to that witnessed in Chapter I between Blake and the infant, between Manfred and the many supernatural phenomena, and between Byron’s Manfred and his supernatural encounters. The narrator states that Ligeia’s “presence, her readings alone, rendered vividly luminous the many mysteries of the transcendentalism in which we were immersed” (42). Ligeia, then, is a source of transcendental knowledge for the narrator. While she provides him with initial exposure, he also hopes to acquire both the goal, as well as the resources, necessary to acquire the same divine wisdom as the other characters considered here. In my reading, Ligeia becomes the narrator’s source of *duende*—that is, a being whose transient mortal existence enables a temporary connection to a mortal who learns through her assistance and in turn passes that knowledge on to others. While Elbert agrees in essence with such a connection, she places it in a hierarchical construct—Ligeia at the top, the narrator at the bottom. I argue, though, that their relationship has less to do with gender dominance than the narrator’s desire for a transcendental experience that critiques, as do Walpole and Byron, social and religious ideologies. Unfortunately, a contemporary Gothic reading bypasses these rich considerations, choosing instead to focus solely on gender roles and power issues.

While Ligeia possesses the ability to guide mortals, like the narrator, towards transcendental knowledge, her soul also is powerful enough to wrestle with the elemental natural forces that contemporary religious and social structures deify. Such ideologies

disempower humanity and forge manacles that restrain the development and expressivity of the soul as discussed in Chapter I. These constructs artificially hamper the power of the soul in relationship to both supernatural phenomena and, ironically, the human mortal form itself. As the narrator observes, even as her “pale fingers became of the transparent waxen hue of the grave, and the blue veins upon the lofty forehead swelled and sank impetuously with the tides of the most gentle emotion,” her “wild eyes blazed with a too—too glorious effulgence” (43). Poe exploits two common archetypes here. First, eyes commonly signify windows to the soul; thus, the brilliance evident in Ligeia’s eyes, even as her physical form decays, represents the soul’s continuation and increasing strength as the hold of social and religious ideological constructs wanes. Secondly, literature commonly refers to the soul as a bright, amorphous light. Thus, the eyes act as true windows in which the narrator looks past physicality and recognizes the inner supernatural phenomena housed therein and seeking release and freedom. With the body’s decay, the soul becomes empowered in a related and inverted power ratio. From a supernaturalistic perspective, the soul’s empowerment at the time of the decomposed physical form represents the attainment of immortal supernatural status, as well as a damning indictment of the mortal form’s shortcomings. Ligeia’s empowered state through her own demise confirms, yet also deconstructs, Glanvill’s philosophy. His prefatory comment confirms the soul’s brave struggle to preserve the body and recognizes that, even with the body’s eventual death, the soul may continue on to a higher form of existence.

However, Ligeia’s mortal struggle also deconstructs Glanvill’s statement. While he wishes the reader to believe that the soul’s limitations as related to the will result in

the destruction of human life at the hands of the “Great Will,” one should consider the cause of this limitation. If I place Glanvill’s comment and Poe’s consideration within the context of Byron’s *Manfred* and Poe’s *Ligeia*, one sees that human demise is not simply a matter of the supernatural triumphing over mortal flesh. Rather, humans are their own worst enemies in that they create social and ideological systems that purposefully limit the power possessed by the soul. As both *Manfred* and *Ligeia* suggest, the mortal form itself does possess strong supernatural phenomena. The soul and body are prone to weakening due to a feeble will that submits to materialistic concerns at the expense of the soul’s empowerment as well as an imperfection characteristic of mortality, respectively. Consequently, the individual has greater difficulty connecting to the supernatural “Great Will” often represented deistically.

In Chapter I of this study, I related how the poetry of Romantic writers like Blake and Wordsworth represent conduits through which supernatural phenomena communicate with mortal beings. It is interesting to note how such information occurs through the medium of poetry. *Ligeia* communicates information to the narrator as she ends her mortal existence through this channel. A Gothic reading considers the information *Ligeia* provides as exceeding the knowledge that should be available to humans, similar to the Promethean spark discussed in Byron’s *Manfred*. A supernaturalistic reading recognizes that *Ligeia*’s linguistic act communicates to the narrator her awesome discoveries as she nears death, the greatest mystery of humankind. *Ligeia* also demonstrates the deep love she feels towards the author—that is, she wishes to alleviate his fears regarding both of their demises and passage from a mortal to an immortal state.

Though Ligeia's communication with the narrator is private, the knowledge she provides is akin to what Manfred receives from the signs in Walpole's text and what Manfred receives from supernatural phenomena in Byron's drama. Subversive knowledge suggests the role that humanity plays in ordinary life that is devoid of authentic supernatural communication versus the potential humanity has when such communication is operable. Ligeia tells the narrator that unenlightened humans who lack an authentic connection to supernatural phenomena become:

Mimes, in the form of God on high,  
Mutter and mumble low,  
And hither and thither fly—  
Mere puppets they, who come and go  
At bidding of vast formless things  
That shift the scenery to and fro,  
Flapping from out their Condor wings  
Invisible Wo! (44)

Ligeia's insight describes human existence when it is largely devoid of free will, an integral component of Christian theology and its desire for control of one's fate. Ligeia, though, suggests that humanity is not free; rather, we are subjugated puppets when we blindly follow a deity and attempt to live in its image and likeness. These beings use their wings to animate and manipulate the physical surroundings to ensure that others journey down similar paths already predetermined by acceptable supernatural phenomena. While not apparent to the mindless minions who accede, this surrender causes indeterminate woe. Humans commonly seek comfort and assistance both from

others as well as accepted social and religious ideological systems. Yet such assistance disempowers and potentially eliminates the self, thereby creating a weakened soul. For this reason, Ligeia likens human existence to a drama: “the play is the tragedy, ‘Man,’” and the source of man’s consternation is the hero, known as “the Conqueror Worm” (45). This worm is responsible for the destruction of the body, but before taking the body, the soul must be defeated. Therefore, the worm must initially break the will of the individual found in the spirit and, once the body has been vacated, subsequently take possession of it.

A Gothic reading of this poem focuses on supernatural phenomena that snatch the body away from the soul and the stereotypical images of death commonly associated with Gothicism. A supernaturalistic reading moves beyond the hijacked body and recognizes that Ligeia’s purpose is to intimate that right human knowledge of the supernatural realm defeats death and prolongs life in the mortal world. For this reason, Ligeia asks the rhetorical question, “‘O God! O Divine Father!—shall these things be undeviatingly so?—shall this Conqueror be not once conquered? Are we not part and parcel in Thee?,’” and follows with an answer taken from Glanvill himself: “Man doth not yield him to the angels, *nor unto death utterly*, save only through the weakness of his feeble will” (45). Poe is clearly working within the Biblical tradition of Jesus’ defeat of death, yet in a way that, ironically, does not confirm Christian theology. Instead, it reinforces two consistent messages found within texts from Walpole and especially Byron as studied in this chapter. First, humankind possesses both mortal and immortal elements. Second, should the immortal self acquire enough knowledge of the immortal realm, the possibility exists that the immortal self, once it ascends to its supernatural state, may return to the mortal

world by using its newly-obtained supernatural power. Whereas a Gothic reading sees this as evidence of hubris, a supernaturalistic reading contemplates the concept of humanity's potential to defeat death and recognizes the anaesthetizing influence of established religious traditions which use ideology to mute such a quest. Fortunately, full indoctrination of Ligeia's mind never occurs. Though she considers these religious and social ideologues, as evidenced above, her later actions indicate that her soul remains free enough to realize its full power once it becomes a supernatural phenomenon, rather than taking with it to the next world the debilitating ideologies that prevents such a reunion.

Gothic criticism often attempts to invalidate supernatural phenomena by resorting to logical explanations. Poe provides such an opening in *Ligeia*. The character of Ligeia returns at the end of the short story by possessing the mortal form of Lady Rowena, the narrator's new wife. Early on, after the couple had moved into the newlywed abode, strangely described as gothic in fashion, the narrator recalls frequent dreams of Ligeia, where he "reveled in recollection of her purity, of her wisdom, of her lofty, her ethereal nature, of her passionate, her idolatrous love," yet these reflections occurred during the "excitement of . . . opium dreams" (48). The narrator's statement provides the basis of a Gothic scholar's search to discredit supernatural phenomena. Possession of Lady Rowena's body and similar supernatural phenomena that lead up to this possession are perceived as imagined fantasies, the mere product of a mind under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs.

While a supernaturalistic reading also considers the possibility that the narrator's experience is opium-induced, it would still investigate the matter and consider the events that transpire from a different angle. Opium is a substance historically embraced in the



19<sup>th</sup> century—witness Charles Dickens’ *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*—as a substance that facilitates forgetfulness as well as hallucination. Opium’s ability to relax its user and cause forgetfulness weakens the hold of social and religious ideological structures through the anaesthetization of an individual’s inhibitions. In such cases, one is more open to supernatural phenomena and better able to communicate with it. Perhaps the most famous example of this is Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan*. Reading this poem from a supernaturalistic perspective provides an opportunity to experience this locale through the influence of supernatural phenomena that enable his journey through lowered inhibitions. Similarly in Poe’s poem, the narrator witnesses a precursor of Lady Rowena’s possession by Ligeia: “a gentle foot-fall upon the carpet,” followed by his observation of “three or four large drops of a brilliant and ruby colored fluid” that are dropped into the gobblet of wine consumed by Lady Rowena (49). As the narrator relates, shortly after her consumption of this apparently tainted wine, “a rapid change for the worse took place in the disorder of [his] wife; so that, on the third subsequent night, the hands of her menials prepared her for the tomb” (50). With the human form of Lady Rowena now vacated, the supernatural Ligeia can now reanimate Rowena’s flesh and reunite with her lover.

A supernaturalistic reading of the text argues that the narrator’s opiate-induced state opens his senses to the supernatural encounter which he is about to experience. The narrator states that he hears a noise, “however faint,” and subsequently, his “soul was awakened within [him]”—a clear suggestion that the opium has enabled his soul to bypass social and religious ideological constructs that would lead to doubt and perhaps interfere with his ability to connect to Ligeia (50). Once his auditory senses lock onto

Ligeia's approaching supernatural form, his vision detects similar changes in the environment; for instance, he sees a "a slight, very feeble, and barely noticeable tinge of color [that] had flushed up within the cheeks, and along the sunken small veins of the eyelid" (51). At this point, the mortal and immortal struggle between body and soul has commenced. The narrator describes a relapse, wherein "the color disappeared from both eyelid and cheek, leaving a wane even more than that of marble" (51). By late evening, though, the soul of Ligeia successfully reanimates Rowena's corpse, causing it to rise from its funeral bier and "with closed eyes, and with the manner of one bewildered in a dream, the thing that was enshrouded advanced bodily and palpably into the middle of the apartment" (52). As the moments pass, Ligeia's soul changes the very physical form of Rowena's body, whereby it grows taller and shows Ligeia's human form to better advantage. It also changes Rowena's hair into "huge masses of long and disheveled hair [that] *was blacker than the wings of midnight*" (53).

When her eyes finally open, the narrator looks directly into them and says, "can I never be mistaken—these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes—of my lost love—of the lady—of the Lady Ligeia" (53). From a supernaturalistic perspective, Ligeia's soul accomplishes a supernatural act—namely, the reanimation of dead flesh, something that, within Christian theology, can only be accomplished with God's assistance and/or through the miracles of Jesus. To assert that a human soul, recently disconnected from a mortal form through his or her own death, can reanimate and possess the flesh of another is a blasphemous suggestion that hints at the power of the supernatural realm. Of paramount concern, though, to the mortal realm would be its obvious inability to prevent, control, or end such an action. Christianity and similar

religions label such activity as a work of the devil and consequently other those who can reanimate and/or possess the human form. A Gothic reading, considering the horror and terror of this event, uses it as a means to communicate a moral lesson. A supernaturalistic reading, though, takes a different angle. While it recognizes the terror and horror of the event and the limited human capability to prevent such from occurring, it delves into Poe's two messages. First, that the human spirit, as witnessed in Byron's *Manfred*, is a powerful form which, while not greater than a divinely-wrought spirit, does possess similar power. Secondly, love is an emotion that transcends the grave and is powerful enough to inspire a spirit that has passed on to discover a means to reunite with its partner, even if temporarily.

Wolfgang Iser, in his essay, "The Repertoire," argues that a text is viewed "with whatever frame of reference is being applied" (360). The intent of this chapter is not to suggest that a contemporary Gothic frame of reference is invalid. The thousands of books and journal articles published over the years that apply a contemporary Gothic reading and yield a wealth of interpretations have been invaluable. As Iser argues, literature and the combined applied frame of reference "tell us something about reality" (360). What a Gothic criticism provides is important insight into the danger of an overemphasis on the past. The intellectual othering of the past as barbaric, so commonly evident in Gothic criticism and the associated contextualization of supernatural phenomena as superstitious, demonstrates the human quest for evolution, usually manifest in a desire to distance one's self from the past as much as possible. Assessment of a culture's growth often occurs through comparison to past cultures. It would be foolish to assert that such comparisons lack value.

That said, as this chapter demonstrates, my research suggests that Walpole's initial purpose through construction of the Gothic genre was not to other either the past or supernatural phenomena—an assertion that most contemporary Gothic critics advance. Rather, overwhelming textual evidence from his First and Second Preface, *The Castle of Otranto* itself, intertextual relationships between *The Castle of Otranto* and other Walpole writings, and related historical and biographical research indicate that the Gothic form indeed intended to intellectually other supernatural agencies. However, the target was not the past and supernatural phenomena; instead, both became the agents to offer scathing criticism of both social and religious ideological constructs. Walpole's creation of the Gothic critical lens was to position both the past and supernatural phenomena as an embraced, rather than an othered, part of reality. Humankind, under this articulation of Gothicism, stood to learn from errors of the past and to see supernatural phenomena as a source of higher knowledge that could ensure the same progressive and evolutionary desires supported by contemporary Gothic criticism. My analysis of Walpole demonstrates that a supernaturalistic reading captures the essence of Walpole's initial intention. When applied to an analysis of *The Castle of Otranto*, the tragedy of Manfred and his family demonstrates that opposition and an associated attempt to escape from a supernatural plan for humanity can lead to dire consequences, especially when supernatural phenomena go to exorbitant lengths to signal the danger of pursuing unsupported paths.

Walpole uses Gothic criticism to offer both social and religious criticisms that condemn marriage for the purpose of securing or stabilizing social power, which is a point I will detail in the next chapter. *The Castle of Otranto* criticizes established

religious traditions when they serve ideologically programming and social control ends, rather than the means to establish and support meaningful relationships with supernatural phenomena. Walpole attempts to manipulate religion to suit his purpose in a fashion that echoes historical events surrounding King Henry VIII, a monarch and a family history Walpole spent a great deal of time studying. Finally, through intertextual connections to ancient Greek writers like Aristotle and Sophocles, Walpole provides a criticism of humanity itself and its hubris, especially in relationship to the conflict and associated power struggles that have continuously plagued the relationship between mortals and immortals over the ages. As Walpole suggests, this struggle is only intensified through the influence of Enlightenment thinking, specifically through application of the scientific method. In a way, Walpole postulates a theory which the Romantics, Victorians, and Transcendentalists will directly articulate and more ardently argue throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As this study will show in Chapter V, this subject—namely, the relationship between science and the supernatural—influenced contemporary society and, in fact, will more strongly influence our futures as the ideological battles represented through the holy wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> century continue to evolve.

As Gothic critics also deserve credit for noting, Gothic texts continued to be important throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century both in America and Great Britain. Of course, the Gothic form itself experienced updating, with the introduction of a psychological element championed by noted authors like Edgar Allan Poe and Lord Byron. Both authors clearly used the Gothic form in the traditional Walpolean Gothic context to offer strong social and religious criticisms, updated by the influences of both Romantic and Transcendental philosophies popular during the time. Of course, both texts provide new angles: Byron's

Byronic Hero provided a new image of a hero more flawed than Walpole's Manfred with his basic hubris. Instead, Byron's hero is much more complex. One can see the tension the soul encounters as it struggles between the mortal self, as manifest by religious and social ideologies, in contrast to the immortal self, which is driven by desires that are associated with the natural laws and, in the case of Byron's Manfred, with the notion of a soul mate for both mortal and immortal existence. In the end, Byron's Manfred suffers from a blasted existence. While Walpole's Manfred realizes that death provides some comfort, Byron's Manfred not only struggles with the consequences of death through suicide, but he also realizes that death itself may not free him. Instead, it appears that much of the same guilt, which he carries around from his failed relationship with Astarte and from his mortal self as fashioned by mortal ideologies, will haunt him in death as well. Byron offers, then, a chilling drama that, through a critical supernaturalistic interpretive lens, suggests that our mortal failure to foster our immortal self—or soul, if you like—carries with it damning consequences that extend beyond the grave.

Similarly, Poe's *Ligeia* offers additional insight when read in a non-traditional Gothic context. Poe offers some insights congruous to Byron and his deeper psychological study, but his text probes exposure of the individual to supernatural phenomena when he/she is open-minded to the experience. The deep love and admiration Poe's narrator has for Ligeia, aided by the opium that lowers his inhibitions, enables him to interact with her spiritually through her supernatural possession of the inactive body of the narrator's current wife, Rowena. A standard Gothic reading fixates on Ligeia as a symbolic manifestation of the past haunting the narrator during an opium-induced dream when superstitious thoughts stimulate an overactive imagination. A

supernaturalistic reading, on the other hand, sees this short story as Poe's suggestion of how an enlightened though mortal spirit like Ligeia can learn about the supernatural realm through a constant quest for knowledge. Once deceased, this understanding lasts beyond the grave and facilitates a return, even temporarily, to sate a troubled and haunted lover. It is a much more positive accretion to Byron's notion, where he merely suggests that experiences in the mortal domain follow a spirit into the next existence.

Additionally, though, Poe provides what a Gothic reading would consider antithetical. That is, a romanticized notion, informed by transcendental thought, that knowledge of the natural, supernatural, and natural supernatural is highly empowering and desirable to the soul. He also suggests that such knowledge remains beyond death and that love truly is a power that transcends one's demise. Perhaps love, a powerful emotion shared by the mortal and immortal realm, serves as a unifying force when one chooses to believe and possess genuine devotion that mirrors religious conviction. This starkly contrasts to instances of misused and artificial faiths that Walpole and Byron criticize and which I explore in Chapter One and study in much greater detail in Chapter IV. With respect to love itself, though, Poe suggests a concept well articulated in the musical *Les Misérables*: "To love another person is to see the face of God." Poe's text, specifically, suggests this notion, and as I will demonstrate in Chapter III, perchance love is the central emotional state by which one can communicate with immortality during one's mortal existence.

### CHAPTER III

#### PARANORMAL MATCHMAKING: THE ROLE OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN UNITING SOUL MATES IN *THE TWO DESTINIES* AND *JANE EYRE*

This chapter illustrates how the supernatural acts through spectral paranormal phenomena and through human agency to promote subversive human actions in the areas of love, marriage, relationships, and the attendant acquisition of selfhood. These oppositional structures defy corporeal artificial development that knowingly or unknowingly prevent supernatural destinies. Should these human oppositional structures succeed, the targeted individuals experience a profound inhibition which, if successful, hinders full realization of their spiritual potential.

Perhaps the supernatural's most acute agency leads to human autonomy. Resultant individual spaces undermine socially prescribed gender roles and scripts. Men often actualize these domains, whereas women meet greater resistance. As Margaret Fuller states, when women reject traditional feminine gender roles, they are "subject to [male] laws," even when they still "have physical needs, and must somehow earn a living" (11). The supernatural subverts such social obligations. As articulated by feminine transcendentalist Margaret Fuller, "Why should [women] not be at liberty to earn [a living] in any honest and useful calling?" (11). The answer: a woman must resist social programming agents and ideologies. Society labels her subversive, which others her through methods that include linguistic constructs—terms like "spinster," as well as rumors and innuendo. Once assigned, the implicated woman moves to the social periphery or is imprisoned within a domestic environment. If her crime is significant,



society institutionalizes her. In extreme cases, women experience the ultimate othering—death.

Throughout Nineteenth-century romance and/or social novels, supernatural phenomena frequently appear. They mediate independence from the oppressive platonic and romantic relational structures that suppress the individual self. As Thomas Moore argues in *Care of the Soul*, “we know intuitively that soul has to do with genuineness and depth,” which are often dangerous to social ideologies (xi-xii). Revealing the soul’s potential often occurs through “attachment, love, and community, as well as in retreat on behalf of inner communing and intimacy” (xi-xii). With reflection, individuals deviate from socially-accepted roles, responsibilities, and relationships, seeking communion and connection, regardless of social rank or potential individual advantage.

Paranormal agencies and human intermediaries in romance and social novels of the nineteenth century subvert social dynamics to facilitate the union of individuals whose relationships occasion true spiritual growth. Like Puck in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, they ensure the subsequent union of two mortal beings. Unfortunately, supernatural activities do not work unimpeded, nor can they steamroll over human constructs. Instead, human societies frustrate the efforts of the supernatural realm. Society does not look kindly on platonic relationships that help develop the soul, especially if they deny or oppose human constructs. To hamper supernatural intentions, society peripheralizes one or both mortal agents through vilification. Historicization projects supernatural agents themselves or associated mortals as physically-, socially-, and/or psychologically-bereft characters.

Strengthening the human soul occurs through engagement in authentic love relationships that encourage development of the soul. As Thomas Moore argues in *Soul Mates*, it is “clear that the dynamics, dramas, and characters of the individual soul play themselves out in the external world, so that relationship is always a dialectic between inner and outer, a dance between actual people and one’s own life or soul” (24).

Enhanced individuality resists oppressive relationships that enslave one or both individuals. This chapter illustrates how masculine characters develop stronger senses of individuality through amplification of the soul. Wilkie Collins’ *The Two Destinies* offers profound insight into the potential means for masculine spiritual development. A quick look at nineteenth-century social and romance novels reveals that women often experience the greatest suppression of individual identity. Perhaps the greatest illustration of both a social novel and romance is Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, a seminal text that shows how intermediations of supernatural phenomena assist female characters in developing their individuality.

In his chapter titled “Of Property,” William Godwin argues in *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* that marriage is “the primary means of passing on accumulated wealth to perpetuate a class structure” (qtd. In Beaty 112). He views love-based arrangements as “thoughtless and romantic,” wherein one negotiates a relationship based “on several occasions far removed from the realities of everyday life” (Beaty 113). Still, Godwin notes that these naive individuals vow “eternal attachment” to each other (Beaty 113). As these individuals age, “they discover the imprudence of their choices,” but by this point it is too late, for the “inexorable standards of society [force them] to make the best of their unwise selections” (113). This overly scientific mindset relies on

logic and reason, which indirectly discounts emotive responses often inspired by one's impassioned soul.

Romantic authors like William Blake recognize the danger of such cold analytical approaches; consequently, his poetry and prose support legitimizing "a valid union . . . only by love" (Beaty 117). To Frederick L. Beaty, Blake's pastoral and neoclassical poem, "To the Evening Star," "invites the planet Venus to smile upon 'our evening bed' and draw the 'Blue curtains of the sky' so that a state of fulfilled marital quiescence may be achieved" (118). Such poems invite "a blissful, euphoric state of conjugal love," that is full of emotion (118). Such language starkly contrasts to the cold and logical theses on love William Godwin and Thomas Robert Malthus posit (118). The philosophical conflict between love, its outcomes, and its facilitation continues throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as evidenced in many social novels.

The tension between social expectations regarding marriage, personal preference based on love, development of one's self through maturation of the soul, and the concomitant role of the supernatural in all of the above is most evident in Wilkie Collins' 1876 novel, *The Two Destinies*. The opening pages characterize the tension between society's definitions of marriage and love, marriage itself, and one's sense of self. Besides the typical codified tourist locales that are important, the visiting American couple travels to an unknown location that perhaps holds a much more authentic and important cultural treasure. The Germaines spend much of their life oppressed by social gender roles. Yet both resist these forms of typical social interference, though Mary is comparatively weaker. These forces inhibit the union of George and Mary for some time, even as supernatural events bring these two souls together.

Interference in the natural development of George and Mary occurs early in their lives. George's immediate confrontation with social programming occurs in the guise of his family doctor. He instructs George's mother, "'He is growing too fast,' for he 'is getting a great deal too clever for a boy at his age'" (19). The doctor instructs George's mother to "remove him from school . . . for six months; let him run about in the open air at home; and if you find him with a book in his hand, take it away directly" (19). Though young, George's studious lifestyle leads to an intellectual maturation. His apparent unnatural development disconcerts social normalizing agents like the doctor. Unguided study is dangerous because, as Thomas Moore argues in *Soul Mates*, "continuous exposure to the arts is one of the best ways to prepare . . . for [a] relationship" (246). George's exposure to the arts prepares him for a deeply spiritual relationship. Significant intellectual development through engagement with artistic creations subsequently enables independence in spirit, a particularly dangerous act for someone who is young.

George's social transgressions convince the doctor that George will not reassimilate into the dominant masculine gender role. In *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity, and the Gothic at the Fin-De-Siècle*, Andrew Smith asserts that theorists like Max Nordau find art "dangerous, potentially perverse, and possibly [an] infectious version of male effeminacy" (3). Moving George from an academic environment that condones such learning to a natural, pastoral environment encourages him to develop "character and vitality," two elements central to Samuel Smiles's ideal masculine gender script (Smith 18). According to Smiles' theory, forging a perfect masculine gender script occurs "through a balance of physical and intellectual abilities" (18). George violates the masculine gender script with an overstimulated intellectual self and an understimulated

physical self. Nineteenth century critics like Smiles believe over-intellectualization leads to homosexuality in men. As Smiles argues,

Let them see to it that the youth is provided, by free exercise of his bodily powers, with a full stock of physical health; set him fairly on the road of self-culture; carefully train his habits of application and perseverance; and as he grows older, if the right stuff be in him, he will be enabled vigorously and effectively to cultivate himself. (Smith 18)

Theorists like Smiley emphasize the physical over the intellectual in relationship to the masculine script. Consider Oscar Wilde, for instance. In contrast, exposure to nature stimulates a perceived natural predilection towards athletic and physical activity.

Theoretically, this atrophies his effeminate intellectual development. The doctor's social diagnosis comes from a physical examination notably lacking in any psychological analysis beyond his recent behavior.

George's exposure to Mary and to the natural supernatural stimulates his own development. Spiritual maturation enables him to enter a true soul mate relationship with Mary. As George relates, the time he and Mary spend together leads to a mysterious unity "by some kindred association of the spirit in her and the spirit in me, which not only defied discovery by our young selves, but which lay too deep for investigation by far older and far wiser heads than ours" (20). George's sarcastic comment on adult knowledge versus soul knowledge indicates the trouble a youth experiences when a supernatural encounter occurs. As Thomas Moore argues, "the soul wants to be attached, involved, and even stuck, because it is through such intimacy that it is nourished, initiated, and deepened" (11). Unfortunately, this development advances one from

Blakean youthful innocence to aged experience, fostering a skeptical and pessimistic worldview. Supernatural communication requires youthful innocence and ensures sensitivity to supernatural phenomena. Experience along with a socially-charged pessimistic materiality weakens both George's soul and his perception of supernatural phenomena.

Rapid intellectual progression without exposure to supernatural phenomena dulls one's sensitivities. Likewise, without sufficient logical faculties, the individual will see limited progress. Although George is sensitive enough to encourage development of a soulful relationship, his reflective capacity must engage with his heightened natural supernatural sensitivity. As Thomas Moore states, "the soul's intelligence may not arrive through rational analysis but through a long period of rumination, and its goal may not be brilliant understanding and unassailable truth, but rather profound insight and abiding wisdom" (5). A lack of formal schooling stunts development of George's logical analytical faculties. While his soul channels an unconscious and subconscious relational awareness, interference with his overall intellectual development prevents an accurate understanding of his relationship with Mary.

To illustrate the abstruse nature of humankind's limited supernatural knowledge, Collins draws on popular nineteenth-century perceptions of the supernatural, thereby exposing the subversive tendency of authentic supernatural agency towards dominant ideological constructs. Collins communicates much of these ideas early in the form of Dame Dermody's perspective on the supernatural, connected to "the mystical doctrines of Emanuel Swedenborg" (23). Lars Berquist's research in *Swedenborg's Secrets* finds a spiritualized period wherein dreams and visions enabled direct interactions with God.

Free transit between Earth, heaven, and hell allowed Swedenborg to engage with angels, demons, and spirits (15-16). Much of his scholarship corrects the wrongs of established faiths, such as Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. His interactions with supernatural phenomena during dream-like states placed him in a prophetic role, which forced him to share his acquired knowledge with others (Berquist 209). Similarly, Dermody advocates “proselytizing expeditions to the households of her humble neighbors, far and near” (23). Dame Dermody objectifies the popular social archetype of the misled cult zealots. Their subversive content could mislead others into following superstitious beliefs. Dermody undermines the popular social schemes through her perspectives on romantic relationships and supernatural predestination. Needless to say, these teachings compromise the popular religious and social arrangements of the period; in fact, her sermons indirectly critique Christian faith by insisting that George and Mary comply with alternative theologies modeled after Swedenborg’s system.

Though Dame Dermody implores the alternative divine providences of George and Mary’s association, the mainstream ideological systems would not allow it. Instead, these established systems preach that marriage unites husband and wife for social mobility and wealth. Development of the soul and the individual is of secondary importance, since the good is to protect established social and religious ideological systems, as well as dominant class structures. Mary and George’s evolution as two independent souls threatens the ability of the social system to suppress them. As Thomas Moore states in *Soul Mates*, soul is “responsible for our most profound sense of individuality and uniqueness,” yet it also “allows us to make intimate connections and so create a community. These two—community and individuality—go together” (233).

One's soul mate satisfies an individual's primordial social and individual needs. Since complete individuals find solace in each other, social constructs consider such needs and relationships as threatening, even dangerous.

In addition to mortals, supernatural phenomena also operate through the subconscious and unconscious minds of lovers. These realms, which typically oppose ideological suggestions, question the spirit and its relationship to human physiology. Does the mind, as a concept, represent the seat of the human soul? On the other hand, is the human soul merely an a priori mythological concept of a chemical reaction, explainable today through psychobiological analyses? Collins' text contemplates this question, appropriate given the emergent belief that science can explain all mysteries, including those of the soul. Collins' treatment of the soul in *The Two Destinies* suggests a general suspicion of psychology, since ideology influences the perceptual markers used to understand the supernatural realm. Alternately, supernatural phenomena counter typical social structures through alternative psychology-based communication strategies that suggest their positive rather than their negative potential.

Even with some Pre-Freudian tendencies, Collins criticizes many ideas that become central tenets of Freudian philosophy. Specifically, he questions the accuracy of physiology-influenced assertions concerning dreams. Freud finds that aberrations of the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious minds lead to condensation, displacement, and associated repressions that alter the dream itself. These scattered stories consist of unrelated memory flashes without a formal narrative construction marked by causality. The dream sequences in *The Two Destinies*, though, suggest that George's dreams are not the false productions of a sequestered mind. If Freud were correct, the dreamer's mind



would produce a scattered dream isolated from supernatural phenomena. George does not experience fractured dreams, though; instead, there are clear individuals present in the dreams and memories significant to George and Mary's relationship. This would not satisfy Freud's statement that a dream sometimes represents a "fulfilled wish" (167). If that were so, Mary's image in George's dreams would encourage him through assurances of instant gratification. These dreams would reinforce the imminent satisfaction of his desired reunion. Instead, Collins suggests dreams as an appropriate venue where our conscious minds witness the subordination of socially-prescribed inhibitions. The trick, of course, is to convince the human to take the dream experience seriously.

As an extension of psychological supernatural influence, dreams can facilitate supernatural interactions with mortals. Sigmund Freud asserts that dreams and the unconscious, as well as the subconscious, are places where repressed elements of the self manifest. When social and religious ideologies harmonize with ideas and memories, there is "free access to consciousness" (165). When ideas and memories lack congruence, censorship in the conscious mind only allows "What is agreeable to pass through," subsequently holding "back everything else" (165). For Freud, "what is rejected by censorship is in a state of repression" (166). Inhibited memories and ideas do not disappear, though. Instead, "under certain conditions, of which the state of sleep is one, the relation between the strength of the two agencies is modified in such a way that what is repressed can no longer be held back" (166). Freud states that this "probably occurs owing to a relaxation of the censorship" (166). At this point, the subconscious and unconscious minds manifest these repressed dreams and ideas. Freud says, "When this happens, it becomes possible for what has hitherto been repressed to make a path for

itself to consciousness” (166). The constant influence of socialization agents construct in George’s mind a censoring mechanism that limits George’s intellectual pursuits when his interests focus on othered knowledge.

A pure Freudian explanation cannot account, however, for Mary’s testifying to identical dreams at identical times. There appears more to the mind than mere physiology since the more abstract soul is an important contributor to one’s sense of self-identity. At times, the source of dreams is the structures that Freud and others assert, at others the source can be unnatural or supernatural. Within this context, Collins questions psychology’s explanatory powers. Collins agrees with the power which society wields over individuals, as well as its associated affect on questions of metaphysical and epistemological perceptual constructs. The scene at the end of Chapter III witnesses both strong physical and ideological attacks upon George, which significantly repress his love interest and development of his individual soul. This intense repression forces George to think about Mary. At these moments, a struggle ensues to control his conscious perceptual constructs.

George’s dreams emerge from externalized immaterial spaces where supernatural phenomena attempt to reinvigorate his soul rather than the subconscious and/or unconscious. George states, “I saw Mary—as Dame Dermody said I should see her—in dreams” (41). During these events, “Sometimes she came to me with the green flag in her hand, and repeated her farewell words, ‘Don’t forget Mary!’” (41). At other times, Mary appears in George’s dream and leads him to their “well-remembered corner in the cottage parlor,” where she opens “the paper on which her grandmother had written [their] prayers” (41). Supernatural phenomena alleviate George’s anxiety to pursue Mary with

entreaties to George that “We must wait, dear; our time has not come yet” (41). She advises him, “Live patiently, live innocently, George, for my sake” (41). These sequences are particularly interesting in relationship to Freud’s criticism of dreams. At the beginning of *On Dreams*, Freud argues, “During the epoch which may be described as pre-scientific, men had no difficulty in finding an explanation of dreams” (143). When a person “remembered a dream after waking up, they regarded it as either a favourable or a hostile manifestation by higher powers, daemonic and divine” (143). While Freud did not deliver his perspective until 1909—roughly thirty-three years afterwards—Collins’ Pre-Freudian assertions anticipate scientific application of a priori and empirical philosophies to other supernatural phenomena through intellectualized means.

Social and religious ideologies also weaken the effectiveness of these dream sequences as they gain strength over mortal consciousness. A stark possibility is that the human will ignore these dreams. When this occurs, as Freud relates,

a psychical agency has come into being, which, taught by experience of life, exercises a dominating and inhibiting influence upon mental impulses and maintains that influence with jealous severity, and which, owing to its relation to consciousness and to voluntary movement, is armed with the strongest instruments of psychical power. (167)

Agencies eliminate the dream world as a useful communicative mechanism for supernatural phenomena when an individual passes from innocence to experience. Dreams disappear when one loses hope and faith in the possibility that they are indeed true.

Psychology's scientific explanations of supernatural phenomena indicates a larger philosophical challenge to selfhood that two main tenets of Western Metaphysics pose—that is, empiricism and a priori philosophies. As John Locke questions in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, from where has “all the materials of reason and knowledge” come? (65). He answers that the source is

experience; in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation, employed either about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. (65)

The Empiricist mindset controls humankind's relationship with supernatural phenomena. Per Locke, our senses are “conversant about particular sensible objects” that provide the mind with “several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them” (65). In such circumstances, the human mind understands “yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, and all those which we call sensible qualities” (65). Yet there must be substantial credence to the possible realness of the experience (65). Subsequent epistemological and metaphysical arguments assess the legitimacy of supernatural phenomena through phenomenological contexts. In Chapter XI, Locke argues, “The existence of a God, reason clearly makes known to us” (71). While this is a distinct possibility, Locke later states that we obtain “knowledge of the existence of any other thing . . . by sensation” (71). This asserts that “no particular man can know the existence of any other being but only when, by actual operating upon him, it makes itself perceived by him” (71). We know of an object's existence through

the subject's affect upon our senses. The empiricist's ruminations about the supernatural realm become most apparent during the nineteenth century. The rise of science and evolution of past philosophies legitimize the rational and empiricist mindsets. Depending on one's philosophical bent and associated perceptual matrix, the supernatural becomes an interesting subject for contemplation, especially by its potential state of true existence.

Empiricism is of particular interest to Wilkie Collins in *The Two Destinies*. The debate between empiricism and rationalism during the period directly influences the discursive threads in the text, as well as the popularity of one specific theorist—John Stuart Mill. Social and religious indoctrination prevent supernatural influence when the soul conflicts with established value and perceptual systems. A.N. Wilson argues in *The Victorians* that Mill was someone educated within strictures I find similar to those impressed on George. Wilson states, “James Mill had been the most ardent disciple of Jeremy Bentham, the most relentless of the philosophical radicals, the fiercest of the Gradgrinds” (109). Heavy emphasis on factual learning reliant on logical thinking eliminates empirical perspectives. As Wilson relates, John Stuart Mill's “extraordinary boyhood has passed into legend—the absence of any play or playmates, the relentless learning, the accumulation of fact, fact, fact, leading, when he was aged twenty, to the ‘crisis’ in which he appeared to reject his father's Benthamism” (109). These authority figures rebut learning from sources outside selected curriculums. Still, George and Mill reject the preferred learning of their parents and the mainstream social system.

Mill and George, then, secure individuality by rejecting parental ideology in favor of alternative perspectives that align with their worldviews. Mill's unique metaphysical pursuits became a lifelong endeavor. His philosophies contradict much of the teachings

selected by his father. George, meanwhile, sporadically compromises his rejection of parental teachings due to intense social pressure. Still, Mill's theoretical construct within the Lockean tradition relies on empiricism rather than the a priori. George practices this approach to establish a relationship with the supernatural realm and with Mary. Wilson states that in contrast to the fact-based learning endorsed by his father, John Stuart Mill's study of Wordsworth led to his discovery of empirical-based metaphysical and epistemological contemplation. Wilson says, "By reading Wordsworth [Mill] discovered to his indescribable joy that he was capable of feeling" (109). This is the basis for his experimentalist theories. Mill's epistemological shift to an empiricist model expanded his contemplation of illogical phenomena that still stimulate one's senses. This is perhaps a most fitting way to describe supernatural forces. In addition, this alternative metaphysical and epistemological perceptual structure validates George's supernatural encounters.

Still, Collins' conservative text conforms to John Stuart Mill's thoughts on individual development versus social dominance, as well as the advisability of a gradual shift versus a more radical which other writers of the period advocate. Mill argues, "If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind" (20). This reciprocity preserves the social fabric by limiting the extent to which a dominant social system compels an individual. Equilibrium maintains one's individuality while the social ideological and perceptual systems remain intact. Mill argues, "Human beings should be free to form opinions, and to express their opinions without reserve" (64). However, freedom does

have limitations. Social agents may “rightfully exercise [power] over any member of a civilized community, against his will . . . to prevent harm to others” (12). Determining the proper extent of social interference depends upon whether subversive ideologies represent a credible threat to other human beings. This, again, is where perception plays a significant role. Mill argues that knowledge “is only the perception of the agreement or disagreement of our own ideas” (71). If multiple individuals discern the situation from alternative standpoints, there is significant possibility for difference with an associated othering of *différance*. This highly subjective thinking is dangerous, though, since it lays the seeds for relativism. Its later permutations will wreak havoc upon modernist intellectual constructs in the latter half of the twentieth century and into the new millennium.

*Différance*’s importance in relationship to objective, individual-focused structural integrity is most apparent in Collins’ novel. George is unique in his perception of love and marriage as the union of two soul mates, yet he still respects the importance of social sustainability. His ideas diverge from the social ideological sphere, wherein religion is the union of two people for social and/or financial advancement. Still, these competing concepts bear one important similarity, which is a social union between two individuals. Perhaps more suitable, then, is a focus on *différance* rather than difference, since *différance* invokes a “temporal process of deferring or postponing” (Leitch, Cain, et al. 1818). This is a more objective contemplation of the supernatural forces that reconstruct marriage through similarities and dissimilarities. As Derrida asserts, the value of *différance* lies in its ability to contemplate

the mark of a past element [that] lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to what is called the past, and it constitutes what is called the present by this very relation to what it is not; but the interval that constitutes it in the present must also, and by the same token, divide the present in itself, thus dividing, along with the present, everything that can be conceived on its basis, that is, every being—in particular, for our metaphysical language, the substance of subject.

(394)

An objective study of marriage from its social definition versus the supernatural concept provides figurative contemplative space to expand the word's definition. Humanity might then better align such relationships with the supernatural purpose. Implementing these conceptual changes to the practice of marriage moves it closer to the ideal. Two individuals would support each other and full individual self-realization rather than subjugate one or both individuals in the marriage.

*The Two Destinies* exhibits the value of Mill's empiricist mindset by considering alternative explanations for truths—a necessary mental state to interact with supernatural phenomena. Mill uses Newtonian philosophy as an example, for if it “were not permitted to be questioned, mankind could not feel as complete assurance of its truth as they now do” (26). Further examination invalidates knowledge formally considered accurate. As a result, there should be “a standing invitation to the whole world to prove [these supposed truths] unfounded” (26). This mindset would not necessarily produce certainty; rather, it encourages consideration that “we have done the best that the existing state of human reason admits of” (26). Allotted intellectual space for new ideas would foster attentiveness to what “could give the truth a chance of reaching us” (26).



Experimentalism encourages a candidness whereby, “if there be a better truth, it will be found when the human mind is capable of receiving it” (26). A flexible perceptual framework is open to new thoughts that challenge those long accepted as accurate. Unfortunately, significant skepticism towards othered supernatural phenomena inhibits this potential intellectual maturation.

Interestingly, Collins finds skepticism in the same experimentalist/empiricist mindset that simultaneously confirms and denies supernatural phenomena. Disabling the soul makes it impossible to duplicate the event for others. Without sensory stimulation, the same empiricist mindset invalidates these phenomena. Mill fears a myopia where “unless the reasons are good for an extreme case, they are not good for any case” (26). Supernatural phenomena represent a state of being outside of the finite extremes of human existence. Human metaphysical understanding is limited when it comes to finite and infinite forms. Collins uses *The Two Destinies* to explore an interesting empirical dynamic which he recognizes can both support and invalidate supernatural phenomena.

The evolution of supernatural experiences in *The Two Destinies* corresponds to Mill’s fears of exclusively scientific explanations of the world’s mysteries. Science’s experimentalism produces ideas counter to endorsed social and religious ideologies. Concurrently, society uses identical experimental systems to invalidate equivalent revolutionary ideas. To an open-minded person, this lack of certainty excites further investigation. Yet modernist intellectual paradigms insist on certainty to limit individual enquiry. This creates a dangerous intellectual atmosphere, for Mill states,

In the present age—which has been described as “destitute of faith, but terrified at skepticism”—in which people feel sure, not so much that their opinions are true,

as that they should not know what to do without them—the claims of an opinion to be protected from public attack are rested not so much on its truth, as on its importance to society. (26)

These nineteenth-century conflicts sow a postmodern thought, which will, in time, undermine truth, making it a relative term. With the deconstruction of long accepted beliefs, Mill recognizes the inherent detriment created by these polarities. Promoting and disabling this emergent trend has serious supernatural and cognitive consequences.

Extremism is just as dangerous as a lack of postmodernist deconstructive analyses since it endangers objective contemplation of supernatural demands. In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Lyotard asserts, “progresses in the sciences” leads to an “obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation” (260). This “crisis of metaphysical philosophy” sees society fall “less within the province of a Newtonian anthropology (such as structuralism or systems theory) than a pragmatics of language particles” (260). This encourages “many different language games” to evolve, which produce heterogeneity of elements that give “rise to institutions in patches—local determinism” (260). Absolute truths emerge through relative assertions. Truth changes depending on whether it supports or refutes dominant accepted ideologies. Should George’s experiences with apparitions carry a religious undertone congruent with Christianity, perhaps society would accept his interactions. However, his experiences involve a woman deemed inappropriate for marriage by social agents earlier in the novel. Her appearances invalidate rather than validate dominant ideologues. For Mill, straightforward integration of this experimentalist mindset is an effective intellectual perceptual system to study the world, especially since it helps one navigate the pitfalls of

both a social modernist and individual postmodernist mentality. This dynamic threatens selfhood by demanding universal recognizable verifiability.

Unfortunately, pure application of the empiricist method problematizes individual ideological constructs in the discovery of new philosophical concepts. Collins is aware of this dilemma. While he uses *The Two Destinies* to support empiricism, Collins also expresses his concerns over its misapplication. He understands how it interferes with the supernatural realm and the faith of humanity in a world increasingly influenced by the scientific method. George says, “In religion and morals I adopted the views of a materialist companion of my studies—a worn out man of more than double my age. I believed in nothing but what I could see, or taste, or feel” (43). George temporarily loses his association with the supernatural realm and with Mary through an accession to traditional ideologues. Adoption of a materialist mindset exacerbates this separation. To facilitate a reconnection, the supernatural must communicate through conductive experiential epistemological and metaphysical paradigms that are empirically compatible.

Apparitions become the primary means to confirm the legitimacy of supernatural phenomena via empiricist/experimentalist philosophies. Such forms begin to appear in *The Two Destinies* after Mary and George relate the impact of the dominant social and religious ideologies. After some time when George and Mary do not see each other, Mary appears as an apparition in the middle of a bright day, which denies any explanation of the experience as a product of night shadows or dreaming. George’s historicization confirms the empiricist philosophies of John Stuart Mill and David Hume. As Hume argues, experience provides the opportunity for one to “learn the qualities of natural objects, by observing the effects which result from them” (129). For George,

there is a multitude of effects in his experience with Mary's apparition. First, he experiences activation of three of his five senses in this scene. He sees Mary's form with her eyes, he hears her voice and movement of the writing implement upon the paper, and he feels her touch physically upon him. More abstractly, there is an additional and less tangible feeling that exists outside the five senses upon which one relies from an empiricist perspective. This additional sensory activation occurs through Mary's touch. Though more difficult to justify since the responses are abstract, they nevertheless play upon George's psychology.

While George's experiential encounter represents a significant contradiction of his epistemological system, he nevertheless reconnects with Mary and the supernatural realm. To do so, though, George must move beyond what Foucault calls the general politics of truth. This involves "mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; [and] the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true" (252). George confronts a seminal moment in his personal history. While he can see Mary, his mother cannot. George can assert the authenticity of experience and deal with the potential consequences. Alternatively, he could choose to deny or ignore Mary altogether and subsequently protect himself from social stigmatization. His mother represents a socializing agent influenced by the same general politics of truth, which earlier in the novel sever George's ability to see Mary in his dreams and to communicate with the supernatural realm.

In addition to the challenges faced by masculine individuals, Collins' text also details the identity struggles of women during the nineteenth century and the relationship between such challenges and supernatural agency. This makes for a markedly new interpretation of Collins' fiction. Most scholarship posits, "He never took an active political interest in the issue of woman's rights" (Beene 67). Most scholars present this argument since "he upheld the ideal of marriage in his stories" (Beene 67). He may never have campaigned for women's rights, but Collins' *The Two Destinies* criticizes the treatment of women.

As social critic, Collins studies marriage and its discrimination "against women in matters of divorce and inheritance . . . by living out of wedlock" (Beene 67). However, they do not consider him as pro-feminist. These readings undervalue Collins' criticism of feminine gender roles and scripts, especially when these arrangements are for social convenience and/or profit. His idealized notion of marriage conforms to the ideals set forth by Thomas Moore: both partners "respect soul [and] acknowledge the mystery that is inescapably contained in the soulful life, and . . . [treasures the] very unpredictability" in a fluid world where both it and the "individual soul is prone to change" (235). The soulful relationship does not seek to control; rather, it appreciates uniqueness by providing space for individual maturation. In *The Two Destinies*, Mary struggles with social and religious perspectives of her relationship with the supernatural. She ultimately avoids limiting feminine gender scripts. While supernatural phenomena provide even greater assistance to Mary, she does not gain an equally empowered soul and sense of self. Disproportionate concentrations, with less stellar results, indicate the severity of female repression during the period. *Differance* chronicles the limitations which the

supernatural endures in a structured nineteenth century society that enslaves women through the scripts of wives, mothers, and socialites.

During the nineteenth century, both British and American texts project female characters into one of two dualistic extremes. As Alice A. Jardine argues, these “teleologies” involve a representative female characterized as “monster and/or angel,” who is subsequently “condemned to death” (562). Actual execution comes through “sexual mutilation or disappearance” and/or a figurative happily “ever. . . after marriage” (562). Mary realizes a happy marriage to George even though she is the victim of consistent torture by the social realm. Still, she is a Job-like, tormented angel who never actuates her true individual potential. Mary appears to society as a subversive witch bent on destroying the dominant gender roles and associated scripts. Collins, in short, represents the inconsistent gendered opportunities for one’s individual development.

*The Two Destinies*, a feminist text, offers a strongly subversive philosophical perspective on the role that women play in nineteenth century society. Specifically, the historical record of George Germaine reinforces Alice Jardine’s concept of *gynema*. Fictional texts focused on a female character inform the reader about the feminine, which she says is “a ‘space’ of some kind, over which the narrative has lost control, a space coded as feminine” (564). Jardine’s process of loss, referred to as *gynesis*, involves “the putting into discourse of ‘woman’ as that process beyond the Cartesian Subject, the Dialectics of Representation, or Man’s truth” (564). She further asserts that this “is a reading effect, a woman-in-effect, never stable, without identity” (564). When feminine characters appear, they “seem magically to reappear within the discourse”—a difficult feat to manage especially for the masculine writer. In such instances, the text offers “a

regenderization of the space where alterity is to be re-explored in language” (565). This “space ‘outside of’ the conscious subject has always connoted the feminine in Western thought—and any movement into alterity is a movement into that female space” (565). Collins struggles to articulate Mary’s suffering—hence, her narrative contribution is so minute. He cannot demonstrate the complexities associated with such strong feminine repression, perhaps due to his own unavoidable masculine shortsightedness.

Limited feminine erudition suggests a deliberate figurative burial of the feminine self. This dynamic reflects Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s seminal text, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*. In the chapter, “The Parables of the Cave,” Gilbert and Gubar argue that a cave is a “female place, a womb-shaped enclosure, a house of earth, secret and often sacred” (93). Throughout *The Two Destinies*, society entombs Mary within two figurative prisons. The first is the multiple residences that she inhabits throughout the text. Various masculine figures place her within restrictive spaces with enough latitude to customize the space similar to Nora in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. There are boundaries, though. To leave these domestic spheres, she would no longer comply with social expectations regarding her role as domestic goddess. Nora’s decision to abandon her husband Torvald and her children moves her into a similar sphere. The self-development she experiences through this act places her on the social periphery.

Mary’s second prison is the body which her soul occupies. Ironically, her body should prepare her soul for existence in the intangible. Existing within the feminine form, her internal and external selves become the target of objectification. Her physical form achieves value while society devalues her spiritual self. She cannot purchase rights

with the strength of her mind, so she seeks stability through her feminine wiles. This dynamic represses “the voice of darkness, the wisdom of inwardness” that Gilbert and Gubar reference (93). Both the physical body and domestic space incarcerate the self in a figurative jail of powerful repressive ideologies. To Gilbert and Gubar, “In this prison the slave is immured, the virgin sacrificed, the priestess abandoned” (93). They continue, “the plight of the woman in patriarchal culture, the woman whose cave shaped anatomy, is her destiny” (94). A woman becomes “prisoner of her own nature, a prisoner in the ‘grace cave’ of immanence which she transforms into a vaporous Cave of Spleen” (94). Thus, it is the “traditional female activities—cooking, nursing, needling, knotting—which ought to have given [women] life as they themselves give life to men” (94).

Obedience to social feminine gender role expectations provides Mary a certain degree of autonomy, which she later uses as the basis of her platonic interaction with George (94). As Margaret Fuller in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* states, the nineteenth century perceived that “it is a woman’s business to obey her husband, keep his home tidy, and nourish and train his children” (11). Unfortunately, the weight of these scripts projects “immanence with no hope of transcendence, nature seduced and betrayed by culture, enclosure without any possibility of escape” (94). These social and religious ideologies place diminishing emphasis on Mary’s education as she ages, hoping that her intellectual spark ebbs and eventually disappears.

The gender construct of Gilbert and Gubar explains society’s insignificant concern for Mary. Her station as a servant does not make her an attractive marital target. Margaret Fuller argues that women are “under [masculine] care,” wherein he functions as “an elder” (170). Unfortunately, the masculine gender role has “misunderstood and



abused his advantage” (170). Men function as a “temporal master instead of . . . spiritual sire” to the feminine (170). Specifically, feminine educational initiatives “educated Woman more as a servant than a daughter” (170). In most social novels of the nineteenth century, the masculine gender role is “a king without a queen,” wherein stunted development of the feminine gender role allows for the purposeful exploitation of the feminine soul (170). Typically, women during the period are legless angels, a term coined by George Orwell to describe the shallow and unreal women often found in Charles Dickens’ novels. Mary takes on similar characteristics in *The Two Destinies* of Little Nell, Agnes Wickfield, Esther Summerson and other Dickensian characters. The research of LynnDianne Beene suggests that the similarities between the feminine characters in Dickens’ texts and Mary are most appropriate, since Dickens heavily influences the writing of Wilkie Collins. As Beene states, “Dickens went over the younger writer’s work meticulously, critiqued his story lines, and kept his attention focused on fiction rather than drama or other literary forms” (63). This Dickensian influence leads Collins to a social criticism of disempowered women that matches or at least approximates Fuller’s feminist philosophies.

Without full female empowerment, the masculine agency suffers from unrealized potential as well. As Margaret Fuller states, equal sanction corrects masculine “habits and . . . will corrupted by the past,” where the masculine gender role “did not clearly see that Woman was half himself; that her interests were identical with his” (171). The heavy impress of socialization agents significantly impairs Mary’s full maturation, which also affects George. When the feminine gender role fails to evolve, the masculine gender role can “never reach his true proportions while she remain[s] in any wise shorn of hers”

(171). More importantly, Collins offers strategies for feminine empowerment. While not substantial long-term solutions for permanent empowerment, there is enough latitude for Mary to achieve the individual development needed to escape oppressive ideologies and marry George, an act which also empowers his character as well.

Mary's partial realization of her soul's abilities is fraught with substantial challenges in a pattern reminiscent of Shakespeare's Ophelia. R.S. White argues in *Ophelia's Sisters* that Ophelia early in the drama "is a figure of unrealized potential, and the dismaying events depicted in the play push her, willy-nilly, over the shadow line of adolescence into the shadow itself of a tragic confrontation with adult experience" (96). Adulthood challenges Ophelia and Mary more so than Hamlet or George because society ill-prepares women for their chronological and natural psychological development. Mary's experiences as she moves from adolescence to adulthood mirror this pattern. Such repressive encroachments ensure female domestication, which likewise assures masculine agents of permanent control in nearly every realm of available agency. Early on, she demonstrates potential equal to that of George. The dismissal of her father from his position in George's family separates her from her intended soul mate, which parallels Ophelia's separation from Hamlet. King Hamlet's death and the younger Hamlet's response to his loss through feigned insanity lead to Ophelia and Hamlet's separation, which causes her later to destroy herself.

Like Ophelia, social expectations force a harsh life upon Mary through her femininity and servant class status. R.S. White cites Anna Jameson, a critic of the 1830s who considers Ophelia "as a 'dove caught in a tempest'" (96). This characterization as a peaceful, powerless, and innocent dove is a product of several factors. She states,

Ophelia is “so young, that neither her mind nor her person have attained maturity: she is not aware of the nature of her own feelings; they are prematurely developed in their full force before she has strength to bear them” (96). Both George and Mary mature intellectually and spiritually at a rate considered normal to supernatural phenomena but not to the larger social sphere. Separation does not stunt their supernatural sensitivities for some time—a testament to their growth and the supernatural phenomena’s seditiousness. They continue to live with a tremendous sensitivity and attendant learning for some time. Unfortunately, their interrupted maturation wears away the momentum of their earlier progress. Society arrests improvement of mechanisms that enable control, comprehension, analysis, and subsequent learning from these natural supernatural sensitivities. Both eventually rely in varying degrees on social forms instead.

Through *The Two Destinies*, Collins demonstrates the true power of supernatural subversion from the perspective of mortal ideological constructs. These supernatural agents confirm the limitless power of the supernatural realm. These acts ensure that George saves Mary, which the supernatural realm intends. As she prepares to throw herself over the bridge, George receives a sixth-sense stimulation: “There was silence again. A nameless fear crept over me, as I looked out on the bridge” (57). George’s greater sensitivity observes the precise moment Mary leaps into the river—a critical revelation since, without it, Mary could easily die by drowning or through exposure. When George leaps into the river, the true supernatural influence over his sense of self is apparent: “The instant I was in the water my composure came back to me—I felt like myself again” (57). This cognitive disassociation represents a necessary tangible separation between George’s spirit and body. As Wright and Osborne assert, such

moments “occur when there are difficulties integrating information from multiple sources, including experiences, memories, emotions, bodily sensations, and actions” (104). Some common readings find this as a baptism to wash away his old life. His emergence represents the initiation of a new state of existence. I find, though, that George’s conscious self undergoes a unique inversion through a cognitive paralysis caused by intellectual and sensory congestion. His spirit subordinates his flesh, which seizes primary control over the self and blocks self-preservation mechanisms like physical sensations. This temporary shift results from earlier training when he temporarily blocked the physical self from its primary functional control.

Later in the novel, Collins articulates the typical damage inflicted upon the female spirit through feminine servitude. Mary lacks the spiritual strength to break free from subjugation. She has enough individuality, though, to be aware of the significant damage inflicted upon her, demonstrated in her statement to George, “Tell me the true meaning of that story of sorrow which I read on your face while you were asleep? I have just enough of the woman left in me to be the victim of curiosity” (137). Mary is aware of the relationship between curiosity and selfhood. Children, though lacking in self-awareness, wield the greatest capacity for self-development and self-expression. Curiosity, on the other hand, is a key attribute that facilitates a relationship with the supernatural realm, in the form of a ghost or another human being’s spirit. Devoid of curiosity, specifically intellectual curiosity, humankind reduces itself to a bestial status and an inability to learn beyond rote memorization, conditioned responses to stimuli, and blind obedience to instinct. Curiosity cultivates a distinctive soul. When unchecked, the soul reaches its full potential. Mill’s own experimentalist philosophy articulates the positives and the

negatives of an unchecked spirit. Such an idyllic world asserts minimal influence over the soul. There are only enough naturally embedded controls to ensure that the empowered self does not threaten the same growth in other souls.

The inability of society to adhere to supernatural edicts prevents full enforcement of natural mechanisms that ordinarily protect other souls from intended or unintended persuasion. The disempowerment of Mary's soul is so significant that it nearly erases the natural, innate definition of womanhood as defined by Margaret Fuller. Such surety is a prerequisite to the creativity that leads to full individual selfhood. Mary Pipher argues in *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* that "most preadolescent girls are marvelous company because they are interested in everything" (18). In this developmental phase, androgyny empowers the individual through an "ability to act adaptively in any situation regardless of gender role constraints" (18). In *The Two Destinies*, Mary is a pliable nineteenth-century tomboy early in the text. She is a more individualistic character since she grows up in a servant-class family without the same social strictures.

Mary changes, though, as marriage becomes central to her survival later in life. Pipher continues, "Research has shown that, since [androgynous people] are free to act without worrying if their behavior is feminine or masculine, androgynous adults are the most well adjusted" (18). Similarly, Jardine argues for a "reconceptualization of difference" that throws "both sexes into a metonymic confusion of gender" (566). Collins asks a critical question in his text: why purposefully provide gender codes to individuals as they mature into adulthood if the absence of such identifiers can ennoble the soul? The answer is simple, supplied in Collins' characterization of the larger

functions of socialization machines throughout the text. The lack of gender identifiers contribute substantially to the “demise of the Cartesian Ego” (566). Considering what is “beyond the Father [subverts] the dialectics of representation” critical to most social power structures (566). Gendered extremes ensure a disempowerment of the individual souls of women and men alike. These associative oppressive gender role ideologies provide limited special definitions within which individuals function independent of traditional norms. This is the greatest sin often of those who live authentic spiritualized lives in a secular and nonsecular sense, as well as those who demonstrate an artistic temperament. They accede to a socially subversive higher authority, thereby preventing significant deviations from norms established to maintain control.

Limiting the available space to empower an individual soul is among the primary responsibilities of gender identifiers. The feminine gender role appears more oppressed. In fact, the text suggests that what Virginia Woolf refers to as a “room of one’s own” is nearly impossible. Should one succeed in its establishment, this separate space is untranslatable outside of its boundaries. Similarly, even after marrying George, Mary never achieves a fully developed soul, despite the committed space George provides. To Pipher, Mary’s struggles relate to a dramatic turn of events as girls mature through early adolescence, where they “crash and burn in a social and developmental Bermuda Triangle” (19). Evidence lies in studies that prove “IQ scores drop and . . . math and science scores plummet” (19). Although Mary does not demonstrate her disempowerment through tangible educational assessments, there is a consistent attenuation of her character from the beginning to the end of the text. The assertive and

charismatic character at the novel's beginning experiences a gradual downward spiral towards anonymity.

The novel's narrative structure further signifies female disempowerment. George's journal primarily relates much of the entire novel. Mary's earlier testimony to the American couple suggests that she has as much insight to provide as George. The novel defends George and Mary's relationship, with a primary emphasis on proving that Mary does not deserve the harsh treatment she receives. From this vantage point, Mary's limited contributions grow even more curious. The text is a manifest signifier of the insignificant role the female voice plays, even when relating its personal life history. For Pipher, women lose a sense of self without "resiliency and optimism" (19). In turn, there is an acute loss of inquisitiveness and willingness to take risks. Mary states (as noted earlier), "I have just enough of the woman left in me to be the victim of curiosity" (137).

At one point, Mary demonstrates curiosity and fearlessness. Assuming the feminine gender role, Mary loses what Pipher defines as a typical archetype resistant to female engenderment—namely, an "assertive, energetic, and 'tomboyish'" personality (19). Matured women who replace these one-time vibrant girls are "more deferential, self-critical, and depressed" (19). Those who remain aware of their former selves seek ways to escape. Pipher sees this struggle through a "split into true and false selves" (22). Mary demonstrates this dilemma through an invariable schizophrenic oscillation between free expressivity and guarded secrecy. She evidences this in written and face-to-face interactions with George. As Pipher states, social pressures insist that women "put aside their authentic selves . . . to display only a small portion of their gifts" (22). Mary would rather exit from the world than project a false image predetermined by socially-defined

scripts. Ophelia escapes through suicide, perhaps the only way the soul springs from its material-based, tyrannical prison. Mary tries to escape through the same means, yet George squelches her attempt. George mounts an ironic, failed attempt to enable Mary's complete freedom from these injurious gender roles, scripts, and social expectations.

Collins does provide some more constructive means by which women can survive in such repressive nineteenth-century environments. As many scholars of the nineteenth century assert, letter writing was one of the most popular female pastimes of the period. Beyond filling moments in a day, though, the feminine epistolary impulse constituted an important form of personal reflective and metacognitive thought. In these stolen moments, the female soul capitalizes on non-judgmental space for self-expression free of socialized feminine gender roles. Mary's particular form resembles the lyrical verses of authors like Emily Dickinson. These particular patterns of expression provide significant individual freedom to express subjective thoughts on the world without concern for patriarchal objectivist evaluations. These localized spaces see Mary specifically, as well as women in general, preserve and even cultivate the mangled remnants of a badly blasted soul. To Alice Jardine, a "woman must be released from her metaphysical bondage and it is writing, as the locus of the 'feminine question,' that can and does subvert the . . . metaphysics," as well as the epistemology, that leads to the "inevitable trauma of doing away with 'woman' as man's symptom" (569). This categorical imperative avoids "the social order, the order of language" (569). A patriarchal application of language so badly deconstructs feminized expressivity that eradication of the essential signifier-signified relationship results. With this, one loses the fundamental



communicative purpose of language. Instead, masculinized signification replaces the feminized parole through objectification.

Though patriarchal language subordinates the feminine gender role, a reconstruction of feminized language can occur through an alternative structural model that enables spiritual development. To Jardine, full feminine expressivity through language can occur, but it necessitates “an operation that will eventually put an end to all metaphysical oppositions, including that of men/women, and move towards a generalized feminine *jouissance*” (569). Some may argue that this approximates the same fearful deconstructive act articulated earlier. On a deeper level, though, this seemingly deconstructive operation is actually a linguistic reconfiguration, designed to sustain the current patriarchal structure. In essence, both masculine and feminine languages exist along a parallel dynamic. The sender chooses the specific means of expression, while the receiver ensures appropriate channeling. Simultaneously, though, this action creates a separate, yet interconnected feminine space that enables what H       Cixous defines as *l’  criture f  minine*” (569). In *The Two Destinies*, Collins literally reserves space in the text for Mary through the epistolary interludes found between George’s narrations.

Mary's archived letters also express a female's struggle with the feminine gender role within a highly masculine and structured textual space. These letters have less structure and a far less authoritative voice. To compensate, Mary adopts a masculine language to microcast *l'écriture féminine* within a master text of primarily masculine scripts. Ingeniously, Collins scatters these moments throughout the text. The authentic feminine voice speaks through a stark contrast with the largely dominant masculine voice of the novel. The careless reader passes over these instances, avoiding the textualized

authentic feminine voice. The careful reader, though, detects these shifts. Those sensitive to such textual acts are largely artistic by nature and usually more liberal. They find satisfaction in these effeminate utterances as a treasured moment of true feminine authenticity.

Measured expressivity controls Mary's emotions while still expressing herself in a cold forensic way. The logical, masculinized voice she assumes is reminiscent of mimicry. She states, for instance, "I have a temper which feels even the smallest slights and injuries very keenly" (93). Although her soul seeks an unreserved expression of her emotions, she must nevertheless demonstrate reserve in discussing her attempted suicide. Mary fluctuates between oppressive language and rhetorical strategies, which ironically positions herself as a lesser female even as it empowers her to express particularly feminine ideas. This masculine form projects an emotional callousness about her tribulations. Specifically, her rhetoric suggests separation while the particular language she uses offers a cold forensic analysis of her prior emotional state. She writes, "if I could only have burst out crying. No tears came to me. A dull, stunned feeling took hold like a vise on my head and on my heart. I walked straight to the river. I said to myself, quite calmly, as I went along, *There* is the end of it, and the sooner the better" (94). Mary deserves credit for narrating these experiences so articulately. Yet the personal and social implications of this account make it difficult to maintain an even emotional keel throughout the letter. Instead, these fragmented short declarative sentences belie acutely painful experiences. Unfortunately, these emotions remain mostly interred. Expressions that are more emotive would compromise whatever credibility Mary reestablishes. Even

if she were to express these feelings, the patriarchal language would doubtless palliate any authentic communication.

Unfortunately, though, Mary's second epistle indicates inhibitions that are more substantial. Though she speaks highly of George, she is inconstant to her better impulses. Feminine expectations restrain the unfettered empowerment of her soul, which asks the questions, "Is there really such a thing, I wonder, as a former state of existence? And were we once constant companions in some other sphere, thousands of years since?" (194). Yet her regulated rational self moves her from less sure interrogative musings to assertive declarations that such thoughts "are idle guesses" (194). These airy ruminations appear in strikingly effeminate language, while her latter proposition reflects instilled, masculine-based conditioning. The struggle between her soul and the socialized gender role is so significant that the univocality of the letter disappears. Instead, her textualized voice takes on a fragmented, largely ineffective bivocal dialectic. These utterances inhere from two different sources—her soul and her feminized self. This externalized internal dialecticism does not maximize the exchange of ideas, though. Instead, this bivocalism is a textualized struggle in a running mimicry where both selves assert dominance. The jumbled garble inhibits understanding by the reader, the writer, and even the internal self as these two subselves speak at instead of with one another.

Critics also characterize *The Two Destinies* as a romance. I would counter though that the realism in the novel dominates and is manifest through a pessimistic perspective on idealistic freedoms of the sort writers like Margaret Fuller and John Stuart Mill articulate. To reconsider the text's pessimistic quality from a positive perspective, perhaps Collins envisions a divisive methodology wherein the empowered male soul

liberates the female soul. Should this occur, then the idealism of Fuller and Mill, as well as others, is possible. Still, empowerment of the male soul needs help from supernatural agents. The individual soul itself, the seat of the supernatural within each person, possesses great latent power. As Collins demonstrates, children are in the best position to maximize this potentiality. Unfortunately, society exposes them to self-repressive ideologies through enforced gender roles and scripts, gradually weakening their individual souls. Should one find his/her soul mate, there may be enough self-discovery to regenerate dormant supernatural inertia and re-engage its development. This romanticism parallels Collins' realistic strand. Soul mates do exist, and they can augment rediscovery of the self as long as there is enough strength to initiate one's spiritual potential.

While Collins provides a valid social criticism of nineteenth century society, Charlotte Brontë's seminal novel, *Jane Eyre*, shows how the supernatural facilitates romantic relationships that empower women to possess a strong soul. Jane's greater comparative independence mirrors the idealism of writers like Margaret Fuller, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Virginia Woolf. Of course, the path is not easy. She functions on the periphery of society as an orphan and governess, and she experiences a painful separation from her beloved. Jane nearly succumbs to several masculine power agents who almost destroy her unique individuality. Yet Jane achieves full empowerment.

More specifically, Charles Taylor asserts in *Source of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* the appropriateness of the Platonic notion that "mastery of self through reason brings with it three fruits: unity with oneself, calm, and collected self-possession" (116). Evidence early in *Jane Eyre* shows that Jane lacks these qualities. One cannot

question the power of Jane's soul, yet one can criticize her relative self-knowledge. Bronte, Collins, and others signify that strength of soul is a common characteristic among youth. However, there is an important distinction between a regulated soul and an inhibited, infantilized soul. In the former case, one channels the soul's passions through logical analytical structures to enable self-awareness through rational control over irrationalities. Imbalanced individuals like Creon, Oedipus Rex, and Walpole's Manfred act compulsively due to individual affectations that society may stymie, yet not to encourage individual evolvment. Rather, these strictures condition a more compliant, less engaged self without the rational capabilities necessary for an engaged awareness and associated level of self-control. For Taylor, reason enables a soul to create an appropriate balance among one's soul-driven instinct, self-driven logic, and socially-driven ideological constructions—this point explains Jane's disempowered status at the beginning of the novel. Her attitude is more counteractive than the masculine agents who push traditional feminine gender roles and scripts.

Similarly, Mill declares a fully independent self when adequate personal space supports the resistance of ideological pressures. While Jane is initially free, her independence does not manifest through exposure to others or the surrounding natural environment alone. Instead, two locales represent her free space. Physically, Jane realizes Woolf's concept of a room apart from harsh patriarchal strictures. Rather than a room with four walls, it is the "folds of scarlet drapery [that] shut in [her] view to the right hand," while on her left were "clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating [her] from the drear November day" (10). This convenient window allows for spiritual empowerment. As Taylor argues, logic's role establishes a heightened self-awareness in

which we “are reflective and self-collected” (119-20). With “rational reflection,” the individual “understand[s] and can thus survey all others” (119-20). This particular location allows “all thoughts and feelings [to come] under purview” (119-20). Such metacognitive self-awareness encourages a “rational hegemony” where “the soul is de jure, in principle, one; it is a single locus” (120). For Taylor, “the soul *must* be one if we are to reach our highest in the self-collected understanding of reason, which brings about the harmony and concord of the whole person” (120). Jane’s experiences in the window chair evidence the importance of this single locus of the soul, where the world of books align her developing logical faculties with her soul.

Jane’s ingenious responses to her readings evidence her burgeoning selfhood. She describes Bewick’s *History of British Birds*, where she contemplates the “death-white realms” (11). While there is an abstract awareness of a figurative buried life, she lacks mental stamina to negotiate the heavy lifting necessary for deeper philosophical thought. She identifies this in reflection, where she characterizes her budding conceptual thinking as “shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children’s brains, but strangely impressive” (11). As investigated in Chapter II from the perspective of Lorca, the soul is the seat of one’s creativity. Without a mature logical interface, though, there are only random and vivid thoughts. Unfortunately, they tend to be fractured and incomplete. Until one incorporates a rational analytical or evaluative mechanism, contemplation and associated meanings are nearly impossible to discover. This process-related requirement explains Jane’s vagaries. She talks about how “Each picture [tells] a story,” yet she struggles with analyzing narratives which are “mysterious . . . to my undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings” (11). These vagaries

remain “profoundly interesting” (11). Her soul understands the inherent importance of these narratives, though her logical self struggles with analytical, evaluative, and synthetic thinking. She fixates on points of interest in a real or imagined reality. Without developed logical faculties, the child admires the image’s aestheticism but cannot delve any deeper into its mysteries.

Bronte captures an important notion about adolescent development of the child and its soul. Jane argues that “Children can feel, but they cannot analyse their feelings; and if the analysis is partially effected in thought, they know not how to express the result of the process in words” (28-9). Likewise, Taylor says, “at these points the individual encounters an ontological order” wherein one recognizes that he/she is “part of the order of beings, each with its own nature” (125). The soul evolves when its surroundings enable a reach for perfection that “fulfills its nature” (125). Some argue for the precedence of instinct over logic as one’s guiding principle. Taylor counters that a quest for perfection enables participation “in the same rational order which they can also contemplate and admire in science” (125). While Jane lacks a soul mate early on, the surrounding texts empower Jane through a pattern indicative of Taylor’s suggestions. In solitude, this preferential role matures her logical faculties to interpret and analyze images.

Taylor’s structure for development of the soul, intellectual engagement through reflection to develop the individual soul, sounds simple. However, one’s mortal self often interferes. Concern shifts to power dominance of what I define as a temporal existential plane. Jane’s youth shows how quickly the untrained individual moves from a contemplative focus to issues of power, especially about immediate physical space that

seems more important given its tangibility. When John Reed pulls back the curtain, he negates the physical boundary erected by Jane between her temporal existential plane and reality. This act prompts a most natural response—anger. An interruption forces her into a much larger public sphere where she no longer controls her experiential state. Jane says, “I came out immediately; for I trembled at the idea of being dragged forth by the said Jack” (12). John’s interference forces re-entry into the social plane of tangibility, a contradictory space which offers little respect for one’s spirituality.

Besides the necessary physical space for the soul’s evolution, Bronte shows the importance of instincts in development of the soul. She cautions that instinct alone relegates humankind to a position equal to animals. Without logical faculties, we become nothing more than animals. As Taylor argues, humans have the “same sensuous impulses as animals” (137). In place of Jane’s rudimentary logical faculties, her instinctual nature dominates. Jane suffers from a momentary loss of logical control through a physical threat. She subsequently fixates psychologically on the blows John issues. She says, “When I saw him lift and poise the book and stand in act to hurl it, I instinctively started aside with a cry of alarm” (13). When her terror recedes, another set of emotions surfaces. Rather than launch an immediate physical retaliation, Jane counters with an attack strategy that mirrors the one exacted upon her. She says, “Wicked and cruel boy! . . . You are like a murderer—you are like a slave-driver—you are like the Roman emperors!” (14). Jane’s retort provides an interesting historicized context of Master Reed. She argues for the unjust nature of Master Reed’s actions through a feminized perception to counter the masculine system which condemns her. From this view, punishing Jane is not an option but a requirement.



Master Reed's words and actions intend to wound her on both a physical and a psychological level. Still, Jane evolves intellectually through a neo-historical analysis of masculinized textual acts about past murderers, slave-drivers, and emperors. She sees Master Reed's actions as similar to the immoral actions of ancient archetypes. Rather than a typical angry prepubescent response, her criticism is an atypical sophisticated intellectualism stoked in historical and political knowledge. Jane understands the sociopolitical system within which she lives, where the masculine gender role enslaves the feminine. Aware of the system's dominance over the feminine at an early age, Jane's coping mechanisms inoculate her soul from vicious masculine attacks, evident in her response to John's second physical attack. Though she loses rational control, she is self-aware enough to know "very well know what [she] did with [her] hands" (14). Bronte avoids directly stating the location of her attack. One can infer, though, that her retaliation strikes Jack at the locus of masculine power—his groin. This interpretation explains his exhortations of "Rat! Rat!," which he "bellow[s] out aloud" (14). Her incursion also shows a much more important capability—that is, her passionate retort comes from an efficient analysis of her aggressor manifest through an effective linguistic and physical retaliation. Jane's physical and linguistic strikes against Master Reed efficiently emasculate him, evident in his loud high-pitched retort.

Bronte also demonstrates the importance of the individual will in one's spiritual development. To Taylor, Stoic thinkers provide "a central place to the human capacity to give or withhold assent, or to choose" (137). The individual soul functions in an independent, efficient fashion through the dynamic facilitation of logical and instinctual faculties. For Jane, this starts during her banishment in the red room. The mirror

presents an apparently distorted vision which she “involuntarily explore[s],” searching “the depth it reveal[s]” (18). She describes this image as “colder and darker . . . than in reality; and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, [which] had the effect of a real spirit” (18). This self-confrontation through dual reflexivity enhances Lacan’s concept of the mirror stage by showing the active role of supernatural phenomena. Consider Lacan’s perspective that humankind has the intellectual potential to “overcome, in a flutter of jubilant activity, the obstructions of . . . support” wherein fixing one’s “attitude in a slightly leaning forward position” can hold one’s gaze, which will bring “back an instantaneous aspect of the image” (178). In this significant moment of self-development, one realizes the necessary objective faculties to recognize in the reflective image the common features of the self. The person looks at the image rationally, which enables an objective contemplation of the physical image that appears.

Metaphorically, this type of reflective schema is the requisite intellectual development which Charles Taylor deems critical. When the intellectual, rational self generates greater epistemological understanding and a greater sense of self, one achieves a unique Lacanian sense of “identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term” (179). This independent self-recognition formulates a post-reflective definition in “the dialectic of identification with the other” (179). For Jane, her dual reflexivity recognizes the value of an authentic soul unimpeded by traditional social intrusions. The reversed image of the individual soul is in the reflection of the individual itself. This separation facilitates a sense of extricated sameness. Jane sees where her flesh ends and her spirit begins. This does not lead to a fractured self, though. Instead, there is an

incredibly rare extra-self experience. Self and soul assert interrelated independent-dependent logical faculties, which sustain an intertwined contemplative analysis in the form of a double helix. The interconnected tangents between these two parallel sets of intellectual engagements lead to a better recognition of Jane's defining two selves. In this reflective objectification, Jane recognizes the crimes perpetrated by the Reed family upon both her physical and her spiritual selves. This occurs immediately after Mrs. Reed and others in the household scorn her conduct towards the patriarchal family and social agent, Jack Reed.

Dual reflexive self-awareness makes Jane particularly alert. Though she does indeed turn "against [John] to avert farther irrational violence, [she is afterward haunted] . . . with general opprobrium" (19). A different form of haunting emerges, wherein an artificial, human gender-based construct produces a belief that her actions violate some natural law. The depth of this social encoding makes it difficult for Jane to distinguish if the law she violates is natural or manmade. Yet these intertwined spiritual and mortal selves find a rare moment of elevated self-awareness. When her fundamental essence blends with her existential nature, Jane can contemplate deceptive human constructs. In this safe location, Jane realizes the source of her shame, an artificial construct rather than some natural law. Jane's physical rebuff of Master Reed does not violate any higher Law; rather, her actions accord with it. Any physical and/or intellectual act that protects the fundamental essence of one's self from physical and/or mental violence is a justified retort. Consequently, Jane does not censure herself. Instead, she narrates,

"Unjust!—unjust!" said [her] reason, forced by the agonizing stimulus into precocious though transitory power; and Resolve, equally wrought up, instigated

some strange expedient to achieve escape from unsupportable oppression—as running away, or, if that could not be effected, never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die (19).

Jane's self recognizes the ultimate unjustness of her punishment. She identifies how escape from this space prevents further harm to her spiritual and/or physical self. If she cannot achieve independence, then Jane needs strategies that are more aggressive. Suicide would help shed her physical self to free her spiritual self. Like Mary, Jane confronts the reality of an Ophelian suicide as a means of self-preservation.

Jane's striking contrast to both society and to the Reed family illustrates childhood pliancy to the introduction of indoctrinators. This critical suggestion by Bronte illustrates that one's best opportunity for true uniqueness comes during the suppleness of youth. As we age, our selves become more rigid and/or comfort-allured. Rejection of these strictures then becomes far more difficult. As Jane says,

I know that had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child—though equally dependent and friendless—Mrs. Reed would have endured my presence more complacently; her children would have entertained for me more of the cordiality of fellow-feeling; the servants would have been less prone to make me the scapegoat of the nursery. (20)

If Jane had acted more like a typically content child, the Reed family and society would have been more likely to accept her. Yet her atypical behavior undermines the Reed family's initial tolerance. Jane's strong, internal, supernatural presence and logical faculties threaten the dominant social matrices. These counteract the usual socialization instruments like dolls and other feminine frills that produce a typical, submissive female.

Her strong intellectual bent ennobles her spiritual self, which subsequently leads to a highly spirited individual.

Perhaps no setting in *Jane Eyre* receives greater scholarly attention than the red room at Thornfield Hall. Many offer interesting psychological and feminist interpretations of this space. Yet I examine it as a particular locale where Jane visits an authentic external supernatural agent. Some read this section as a figment of Jane's overstimulated imagination as she considers how Uncle Reed would disapprove of her treatment. I assert, though, that substantial textual evidence indicates the supernatural presence is Jane's Uncle Reed. Jane's consideration of her uncle unconsciously issues a supernatural lifeline to her uncle.

Shortly after her reflections begin, a globular light form appears, matching many of the typical perceptions of ethereal spirits in the nineteenth century. Jane's spirit mulls over her uncle and the general idea that when dead men are "troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes," they are prone to revisit "the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed" (20). For some, these reflections stimulate a false perceptual construct, prompting a shift towards a deductive methodology that incorrectly interprets sensory stimulation. In this case, Jane sees "a light [that] gleam[s] on the wall" (21). While interesting, the preponderance of evidence supports an alternative reading that authenticates this supernatural encounter. Rationally, Jane is aware that there is moonlight at the hour of her confinement. Yet this light does not remain stationary. Instead, "it glide[s] up to the ceiling and quiver[s] over [her] head" (21). At this moment, the supernatural phenomena stimulate a second, auditory sense and a third, intangible tactile sense of space. While the moonlight may signify temporary lunacy, I counter that

Bronte deconstructs this typical symbol. The bright room represents an alternative but equally powerful means towards spiritual enlightenment. In fact, the moon may be superior due to its alterity.

These three stimuli combine to support a genuine supernatural experience rather than an artificial encounter associated with her imagination alone. These three senses provide a structured experience difficult to deconstruct. She says “a sound filled my ears, which [she] deem[s] the rushing of wings,” then she feels that “something seem[s] near [her]” (21). The presence should comfort her at a moment of great need. However, social influences cause her to react fearfully. Rather than engage the spirit, she feels “oppressed, suffocated” (21). As these feelings increase in intensity, her “endurance [breaks] down” and she tries to escape (21). Jane rationalizes this supernatural event away as a “gleam from a lantern, carried by someone across the lawn” (21). However, her vivid description suggests a deep-seated disbelief in this supposedly logical explanation.

Servants later confirm the genuineness of this event as well. They testify that “‘Something passes her, all dressed in white, and vanished’—‘A great black dog behind him’—‘Three loud raps on the chamber door’—‘A light in the church-yard just over his grave’” (24). These accounts are far too coincidental. Such testimonials point to the temporary resurrection of John Reed’s spirit from the grave in support of Jane. Shortly thereafter, Jane’s spirit recognizes the legitimacy of this event. As this fundamental understanding evolves, a deeper consideration proposes a reason for the spirit’s return: John Reed ascends temporarily from the grave to encourage an evolving recognition of Jane’s innocence. Her imprisonment is a product of her subversive actions towards the

artificial rather than the natural law. Banishment of Jane to the red room should punish her and make her docile. Typically, the subversive supernatural realm deconstructs the intention of this space. In this case, though, it reengineers a supportive environment of quasi-rustication where Jane contemplates recent events, considers her next course of action, and achieves some physical and spiritual rest.

While Jane's time with the Reed family exposes her to strong social pressures, her assignment to Lowood subjects her to religious ideology of a similar vein. Much like Gateshead, Jane's assignment to Lowood is by no means coincidental. While she successfully resists the typical ideologies that ordinarily initiate the indoctrination process of young girls, Jane must endure further hardships to fire her spiritual mettle. This requires an equally powerful agency, which Bronte manifests in another double helix: this time, Jane encounters two agencies who operate along parallel structures yet which complement each other in a pattern typical during the nineteenth-century. That is, religion and education work in unison to condition Jane. Once again, Jane resists, this time showing her ability by opposing two forces rather than one. In this case, though, Jane cannot do this alone. She needs help, which she finds through a platonic relationship with Helen Burns. Helen specifically provides an alternative educational and religious agency tied heavily to individualism and Gnosticism. Her instruction helps Jane to understand the necessary logical balance between her mortal and immortal halves.

Helen Burns in particular is central to Jane's development. The appearance of her unique character is timely considering the heavily oppressive environment Jane enters. Gilbert and Gubar find that Helen is a "different but equally impossible ideal to Jane" (345). In this idyllic model, "defined by Goethe's Makarie," the female defines herself

through “self-renunciation of all-consuming (and consumptive) spirituality” (346). This concept of the airy, highly-spiritualized feminine is a common concept to many Victorian writers, especially the Dickensian legless angels referenced earlier. Even though Helen demonstrates a strong, resistant soul, Gilbert and Gubar consider her a “pathetic” character; I would argue otherwise, though (344). Spurning the carnal pleasures of life may seem dubious. However, an intense focus on the immortal self does not make Helen weak. Instead, I find her an important spiritual role model. Jane desperately needs her support and guidance as a spiritual mentor to continue the development started in the red room at Gateshead Hall.

Perhaps the greatest demonstration of Helen’s supernatural prowess comes in her resistance to the surrounding oppressive religious and educational rhetoric of the schoolhouse. Rather than risk some form of subconscious and/or unconscious infiltration by paying attention to the mimetic droll of her lessons, Helen relies upon her power to daydream in class. The class lessons at Lowood educate young women enough to make them marriageable. Some may consider this tendency to daydream as an indicator of a weak intellect. I maintain the textual evidence suggests otherwise. Conversations with Jane prove that Helen's lapses are not because she lacks control over her vast imagination. Rather, these purposeful allowances let her mind drift into a

sort of dream. Sometimes I think I am in Northumberland, and that the noises I hear round me are the bubbling of a little brook which runs through Deepden, near our house;—then, when it comes to my turn to reply, I have to be awakened; and, having heard nothing of what was real for listening to the visionary brook, I have no answer ready. (67)



Such idyllic, natural scenes stimulate spiritual development through a Romanticized engagement. She evidences strength, not weakness, by allocating mental space free from ideological and associative physical barriers and threats. Within this psychological space, Helen's spirit grows. With the passage of time, she can associatively construct stronger figurative barriers, protecting her sense of self from ideologues that usually weaken the supernatural essence.

One may argue that Helen's fantasy world disables development of the logical faculties that develop the self. Perhaps it is here that Gilbert and Gubar find Helen's weakness. Yet as I discuss in Chapter I, fantasy stimulates one's relationship with the supernatural realm. Such musings develop one's logical, critical faculties more efficiently than the firmer traditional curriculum in Lowood's classrooms. For instance, when Jane compliments Helen for a response in class regarding Charles I, Helen proves the strength of her mind by spurning rote memorization. Her advanced critical faculties are similar to those Jane uses in her window seat and later in the red room. Helen says, "instead of dreaming of Deepden, I was wondering how a man who wished to do right could act so unjustly and unwisely" (67). She also contemplates "what a pity it was that, with his integrity and conscientiousness, he could see no farther than the prerogatives of the crown. If he had but been able to look to a distance, and see how what they call the spirit of the age was tending!" (67). Helen's physical form is pathetic, but I find Gilbert and Gubar's criticism of her intellectuality an ironic assertion. The focus should shift from objectifying Helen's physical state, with attention on her intellectual capacity. Doing so reveals a rare mental toughness on Helen's part amongst women during the nineteenth century. Though Jane is tough, she does not possess the same intellectual

stamina and strength as Helen at this point. Jane has the potential to equal or exceed Helen's capacity, but it will take Jane longer, and she will need to face significant additional challenges. Helen is an impressive wunderkind, since she possesses enormous spiritual strength at a very young age without experiencing the same spiritual challenges that Jane will endure to realize her potential.

Helen Burn's soul as a foil to Helen's physical self serves as an exemplar for Jane's spiritual development. Helen's criticism of Charles I moves beyond didactic analyses that place members of the aristocracy into a position of irreproachable superiority. Instead, she evaluates him as another human being. Helen recognizes Charles I's own cognitive failings through conciliating the spiritual self to one's social position. Helen recognizes Charles I's passion. Yet from her vantage point, he misdirects this power. Helen later demonstrates the same critical capacity of Jane. She is a confidant for Jane in the classical Aristotelian sense. Jane consigns a great deal to Helen, but likewise issues harsh, objective criticisms similar in form to that Helen levels against Charles I when Jane most needs such reprimands or at most opportune moments.

Helen is a perfect spiritual archetype for Jane. Helen shows how one's soul and rational abilities can complement one another. Spiritual archetypes like Helen, as with Poe's ethereal Ligeia, look beyond one's appearance and can gaze directly into the soul. Upon a specific examination of Jane, she finds too great a focus in Jane on "the love of human beings; [she is] too impulsive, too vehement: the sovereign hand that created [her] frame, and put life into it, has provided [her] with other resources than [her] feeble self, or than creatures feeble as [her]" (81). Helen recognizes the source of Jane's difficulties: her spiritual self conflicts with a material existence that craves revenge for prior mortal

transgressions, some of which haunt Jane's subconscious and unconscious. Rather than respond with animalistic impulses, Helen advises Jane to focus on her spiritual self and her associated logical capabilities.

Helen provides a much deeper philosophical vision of the world, which explains how these internal feelings develop the soul. Under no circumstances should Jane ignore emotions, yet she must learn to temper and interpret them through her logical capabilities. Helen's comments add further validity to Jane's supernatural encounter in the red room and the importance of rationalism. Helen says,

Besides this earth, and besides the race of men, there is an invisible world and a kingdom of spirits: that world is round us, for it is everywhere; and those spirits watch us, for they are commissioned to guard us; and if we were dying in pain and shame, if scorn smote us on all sides, and hatred crushes us, angels see our tortures, recognise our innocence . . . and God waits only the separation of spirit from flesh to crown us with a full reward. (81)

Helen validates Jane's earlier notion of Mr. Reed's visit in the red room. Social ideological constructs generate her fearful response. Additionally, Helen's lesson instructs Jane to move beyond her physical focus on life. She needs to empower her soul, but she also must actualize her logical faculties. These abilities will allow application of her own deep spiritual analytic nature in respect to herself and the world around her.

Steeped heavily in Christian rhetoric, Helen's dialogue does not parrot Mr. Brocklehurst or similar religious ideological agents. Rather, Helen educates Jane through an ardent agnosticism. Helen's analysis of Jane, independent of Mr. Brocklehurst's Christian theism, contradicts his interpretations of Jane's soul. Parenthetical comments

during her philosophical discussion show belief in Jane's innocence. She says, "I know you are [innocent] of this charge which Mr. Brocklehurst has weakly and pompously repeated at second hand from Mrs. Reed; for I read a sincere nature in your ardent eyes and on your clear front" (81). By parenthesizing this additional analysis, Bronte applies Helen's theoretical concept through an objectified analysis of Jane's character. In doing so, Bronte deconstructs the typical symbology of the parentheses. Helen's comments are not tangential but important additional details. The parentheses set off Helen's comment, emphasizing rather than de-emphasizing these comments. This same discussion shows enough alternative evidence that Brocklehurst's argument is weak and pompous. Mrs. Reed's own perspectives color his interpretation of Jane. He knows enough of her raw empowered self to recognize that she is not evil but a threat to the religious and social ideologies he promulgates within the school. Brocklehurst stigmatizes Jane as a representative typology which the other young women should avoid to remain marriageable. In truth, his deeper purpose, like Master Reed before, is to retain absolute authority.

Helen's advice to and exoneration of Jane from Brocklehurst's charges promote the accelerated development of her rational abilities. From this point forward, Jane

Set to work afresh, resolved to pioneer my way through every difficulty; I toiled hard, and my success was proportionate to my efforts; my memory, not naturally tenacious, improved with practice; exercise sharpened my wits; in a few weeks I was promoted to a higher class; in less than two months I was allowed to commence French and drawing. (87)

Jane's educational development testifies to her rational abilities. With a firm epistemological foundation, her study of French and drawing can begin. Of course, the choice of these two subjects is also emblematic. Her new academic vigor suppresses her carnal desires, such as hunger. Instead, a new spiritual craving supplants her physical desire, whereby she feasts instead on the "spectacle of ideal drawings" and expressivity through imagistic and linguistic mediums (87). This enhanced development of her soul leads to new internal musings. Similar to Helen, Jane uses these mechanisms to purge and share her thoughts and prior experiences with other individuals. Her social networks subsequently expand, which provides critical support until the next transition necessitates her departure from Lowood and her pursuit of a new dynamic to continue her self-development.

Thornfield Hall is the next step of Jane's spiritual development as defined by the supernatural. Her appointment as Adele's governess is not arbitrary but part of a larger cosmological design. In this new space, Jane learns to temper her passionate spirit, and she meets her soul mate, Rochester. While they are perfect for each other, it is important to realize they are imperfect characters. Their personality flaws are typical, but both of their souls suffer from serious defects caused by the social sphere's influence. For Rochester, his coldness emerges from a hard life highlighted by his marriage to a woman who eventually loses her sanity. He subsequently becomes a wandering spirit, traveling aimlessly among his international holdings. These journeys seem a natural product of his social position. Whether a product of his conscious/unconscious self, these excursions are really an excuse to search for a kindred spirit. Like Helen, society moderates Rochester's powerful atypical spirit, which serves as a wonderful counterbalance to Jane.

When he finds Bertha, Rochester believes he discovers his kindred spirit—a point Jean Rhys argues in her novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Perhaps she was; Rhys's novel suggests that her mental depravity results from her surroundings and Rochester's infidelity, which subsequently affect their relationship. Brontë offers little information on this subject, though. Even with her insanity, Rochester holds to his social contract by caring for Bertha. Still, he needs a spiritual complement, which, I allege, explains his traveling ways.

While Jane and Rochester reveal their emotions as they spend additional time together at Thornfield, the culminating event occurs on a perfect midsummer evening straight out of Shakespeare's eponymous comedy. This particular seasonal setting feeds into the traditional notion of the midsummer festival, when individuals can discard their masks. Authentic individuality emerges, and relationships that society usually deems inappropriate evolve without the usual strictures. Jane and Rochester's discussion in the garden complements this atmosphere, while accentuating the Garden of Eden archetype. As they discuss Jane's departure with news of Rochester's marriage to Blanche Ingram, he reveals emotions previously concealed from Jane. He says, "I sometimes have a queer feeling with regard to you—especially when you are near me, as now: it is as if I had a string somewhere under my left rib, tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar string situated in the corresponding quarter of your little frame" (297). This rich emotional response spiritually acknowledges the supernatural connection between their souls.

Rochester's statement draws upon an intertextual connection to Christian religious tradition found in the Old Testament's *Book of Genesis*. In Chapter II, God observes the necessity of a mate for Adam. Consequently, he cast "a deep sleep on the

man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The Lord God then built up into woman the rib that he had taken from the man” (Genesis 2:21-2). When God presents Eve to Adam, he comments that “This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called ‘woman,’ for out of ‘her man’ this one has been taken” (Genesis 2:23). The passage concludes, “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body” (Genesis 2:24). This figurative string is more than a metaphoric reference to one’s heartstring, connecting one individual to another and offering a supernatural union between both individuals. This tie is not a finite physical sinew, yet it is more substantial than an abstract metaphor. However, it lacks the tangibility of a concrete linkage. Try as it might, the naked human eye cannot detect the supernatural union between these spiritual essences.

Rochester supports this particular interpretation later in the same chapter when he speaks of Jane’s unearthly nature: “I love you as my own flesh” (300). As two beings from the same source, it is natural for Rochester to feel a deep devotion to Jane. They seem to be cut from the same spiritual substance. Both must be together since they counterbalance each other. As in the Garden of Eden, this relationship carries substantial risk: they may rely so much upon each other that they are without a need for God, religion, or society. Instead, they protect their counterpart as Arnold argues in *Dover Beach*. An insular environment will preserve them from the ignorant armies who clash by night. Yet again, if not for the midsummer night’s atmosphere, perhaps Jane and Rochester would not gain a temporarily isolated space that immures them from oppressive social influences. When Richard Mason intercedes in the marriage rites of

Jane and Rochester by revealing Rochester's colored history with Bertha, Mason destroys this temporal protective space. With its destruction, both Jane and Rochester see an impermanent secession of their relationship and an extended physical separation. Yet this distance facilitates a maturation that ensures a permanent reunion of evolved and stabilized spiritual identities.

Though Gilbert and Gubar argue for a strong verisimilitude between Jane and Bertha, I only agree that both endure similar social pressures. With their specific characters, Jane is far more powerful spiritually and much less of a typical socialite, if at all. Still, Gilbert and Gubar argue for a striking mirror-like quality between Jane and Bertha.

Every one of Bertha's appearances—or, more accurately, her manifestations—has been associated with an experience (or repression) of anger on Jane's part. Jane's feelings of "hunger, rebellion, and rage" on the battlements, for instance, were accompanied by Bertha's "low, slow ha! ha!" and 'eccentric murmurs.'" Jane's apparently secure response to Rochester's apparently egalitarian sexual confidences was followed by Bertha's attempt to incinerate the master in his bed. Jane's unexpressed resentment at Rochester's manipulative gypsy-masquerade found expression in Bertha's attempt to incinerate the master in his bed. (360)

Jane and Bertha clearly complement each other in their responses to masculine peripheralization. However, Bertha lacks the logical capabilities to cultivate an impaired soul. When she lashes out at Rochester, Bertha only directs a portion of her anger directly at him. He is the lightning rod for the dominant masculine gender role—a point



evident in Bertha's near-fatal attack on her brother, Richard Mason, who she also blames for her fallen state.

Gilbert and Gubar also contend that Jane's growth in the red room and by Helen Burns is merely superficial. Specifically, she only appears to be "a disciplined and subdued character" (362). Beneath this cool facade lies a repressed rage that will not be "exorcised until the literal and symbolic death of Bertha frees her from the furies that torment her and makes possible a marriage of equality—makes possible, that is, wholeness within herself" (362). I agree that Jane must free herself from the rages that torment her. Yet I disagree with Gilbert and Gubar in two other respects. First, Jane has much greater control over both her rage and her soul. She does a superb job throughout the Thornfield Hall section of the novel in controlling her passions, especially with the arrival of Blanche Ingram. Secondly, I do not believe that Jane needs to exorcise these emotions. In fact, doing so would kill a primary driver of the "original . . . vigorous . . . expanded mind" which Rochester so greatly admires (297). Jane must control rather than suppress her emotions and her soul through maturation of her rational abilities. In this way, she would learn to channel these emotions—a much more complex operation than merely suppressing them as Gilbert and Gubar prefer.

While Rochester associates their connection through Judeo-Christian imagery, Jane abandons this traditional religious construct for obvious reasons. Both faiths tend toward masculine domination of the feminine spirit through marginalization of the sacred feminine. Consequently, Jane applies a Spiritualist construct based upon egalitarian Gnostic principles. She tells Rochester that "I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh: it is my spirit that

addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal—as we are!” (298). Jane's openness represents free communication between two spirits established through a controlled emotional purgation. She learns how this particular method facilitates a meaningful deep relationship based upon trust. By eschewing Garden of Eden imagery, she criticizes a traditional religious perception that one needs a masculine spiritual master, especially if the supplicant is female. This constructs a new relational script outside traditional Judeo-Christian structures. The two new archetypes conform to a supernatural definition of soul mates. Two beings can use this conjoined personal space for emotional professions without fear of social reprisal.

While Jane and Rochester assert human control over their fate, the supernatural signals that this is not the appropriate time for their union. On the same night that Rochester declares his love for Jane, they observe the old chestnut tree, which “writhed and groaned; while wind roared in the laurel-walk, and came sweeping over us” (302). Rochester correctly observes that he and Jane must re-enter Thornfield Hall, for “the weather changes” (302). He also shares with Jane that he “could have sat with” her until morning (302). Just as Jane is about to respond, “a livid spark [leaps] out of a cloud at which [she] was looking, and there was a crack, a crash, and a close rattling peal” (303). The quick onset of this storm appears coincidental. Yet these supernatural occurrences warn Rochester and Jane of an oncoming storm that will temporarily split the two from each other. The invisible connection will continue between them, though, even as significant slack develops between them.

As is typical with supernatural attempts at providing guidance, Jane and Rochester are not able to interpret the initial storm's purposeful warning. Jane spends the

next few chapters struggling with her impending marriage to Rochester through a troubling foreboding. She considers the future of their relationship and the potential cooling of their emotions. The simple procedure of attaching nameplates with her new name, “Jane Rochester,” to the bags also disturbs her. A second, more violent supernatural storm strikes the identical spot where Rochester proposes to Jane—a supposed mathematical impossibility. Before the storm and Jane’s subsequent visit to the spot, she describes “a strange and anxious thought,” produced by something “which [she] could not comprehend” (325). While the incident seems innocuous enough, the storm damages the same chestnut tree that shelters Rochester and Jane on the night of their proposal. She describes it as

black and riven: the trunk, split down each other, for the firm base and strong roots kept them unsundered below; though community of vitality was destroyed—the sap could flow no more: their great boughs on each side were dead, and next winter’s tempests would be sure to fell one or both to earth: as yet, however, they might be said to form one tree—a ruin; but an entire ruin. (326)

Though the strike splits the tree into two apparently dead halves, they remain connected at the base in their dilapidated state. The subsequent fire splits and chars the strong trunk, which foreshadows the coming split of Jane and Rochester and the multiple literal and figurative fires both experience. These conflagrations predict knowledge of Bertha, Jane’s subsequent departure, and Rochester’s injuries during Thornfield’s destruction.

With Jane’s self-imposed exile from Rochester, Bronte demonstrates how a significant rapid shift temporarily weakens the soul. Awareness of Bertha shocks Jane so profoundly that her soul is temporarily, but significantly, weakened. She experiences

new doubts concerning her soul's ability to guide, which indicts the supernatural as well. Logic without the soul's complement will disconnect one from the supernatural realm. People manifest this new epistemology through a faithlessness that demands proof before belief. In Jane's case, the peacefulness of Thornfield Hall yields to disquietude. As a result, she seeks a new supernatural relationship, this time through the same traditional religious structures she repudiates during her time with Brocklehurst. Though society embraces the system which both religious men advocate, theirs is an artificial supernatural construct. If Jane conforms, she risks permanent damage to prior supernatural connections that have strengthened her soul.

After her departure from Rochester and Thornfield Hall, Jane must confront one final challenge in her quest for full spiritual empowerment, St. John. Gilbert and Gubar state, "Jane must symbolically, if not literally, behead the abstract principles of this man before she can finally achieve her true independence" (365). St. John knows that Jane's extraordinarily powerful soul is an ill-fit for the role of a minister's wife. He observes accurately that Jane is, indeed, "original . . . and not timid," for there is "something brave in [her] spirit, as well as penetrating in [her] eye" (444). Jane's strong perceptual ability comes from the rapid development of her individual self through careful attention to her soul's logic. St. Jean would rather break Jane's spirit than cultivate this originality. As Gilbert and Gubar argue, St. John has an

almost blatantly patriarchal name, one which recalls both the masculine abstraction of the gospel according to St. John ("in the beginning was the *Word*") and the disguised misogyny of St. John the Baptist, whose patristic and

evangelical contempt for the flesh manifested itself most powerfully in a profound contempt for the *female*. (365)

St. John's marriage proposal and associated religious fervency are final tests of Jane's spiritual mettle. He offers many of the amenities Jane desires—a true family, a husband who doubles as a brother, and two sisters. Jane would gain permanent stability, which she mostly lacks throughout the novel.

During Jane's moments of spiritual weakness, St. John's power over Jane becomes most pronounced. When she sees him as a true confidante, Jane is ironically less willing to discuss her opinions openly. Instead, she notices "a certain influence over [her] that [takes] away [her] liberty of mind: his praise and notice were more restraining than his indifference" (470). This constant attention and acceptance necessitates that she "disown half [her] nature, stifle half [her] faculties, wrest [her] tastes from their original bent, force [her]self to the adoption of pursuits for which I had no natural vocation" (471). St. John's power bleeds a slow submission to the traditional patriarchal gender role pattern that has some heavy Reverse Oedipal Complex implications.

As Jane weakens, St. John becomes the mortal manifestation of a masculine deity, whether religious or social. St. John's initial proposal occurs with a traditional social and religious construct. He calls her to do the work of the ideological structure's deity. Rather than solidify St. John as Jane's religious and social idol, though, his proposal de-glorifies him. When this occurs, Jane realizes that her individual self should not be the object of domination. She says, "I was no apostle—I could not behold the herald,—I could not receive his call" (475). Jane's spirit realizes full empowerment through complete activation of her logical faculties. Rather than respond in some overemotional

exclamation, her soul and rational analytical sagacity combine to provide a moment of total individual clarity, even an epiphany.

Jane deserves credit for her resistance and rejection of St. John's multiple proposals. I agree with Gilbert and Gubar that marriage to St. John appears a healthy option from a social perspective. They state, "St. John seems to propose a life of principle, a path of thorns (with no concealed roses), and a marriage of spirituality" (365). While this path of thorns may not sound particularly attractive, Jane would seem to have a principled and spiritual marital life. She could find full soulful development through religious devotions and associated missionary activities. Without literal roses, the path of thorns would test her. In theory, these figurative intrinsic rewards provide a spiritual fortitude devoid of distractive mortal pleasures.

In reality, though, marrying St. John would defeat Jane through a permanent containment of her soul in a figurative bell jar similar to the one Sylvia Plath considers nearly a century later. Gilbert and Gubar argue that a deeper examination of the relationship St. John anticipates would be "even more unequal than that proposed by Rochester" (366). The reason is quite simple: her marriage to St. John would once again reflect "her absolute exclusion from the life of wholeness toward which her pilgrimage has been directed" (366). St. John's proposal is truly an attempt to imprison the "resolute wild free thing" (366). Her unfettered soul requires regulation through reasoning faculties rather than a domineering traditional relationship largely defined through a typical religious structure (366). St. John seeks a device powerful enough to crush Jane's soul within "the ultimate cell," which is the "'iron shroud' of principle" (366). Interestingly, Rochester and St. John's attraction to Jane is similar. While Rochester

wishes to nurture her uniqueness, St. John ironically seeks to destroy that which initially attracts him or change it at such a fundamental level that it becomes a shell of its former nature.

Jane's romantic interest in Rochester and quasi-romantic interest in St. John clouds the fatalistic mentality of a supernaturalistic interpretation. While Rochester and St. John offer Jane unique benefits through marriage, Rochester and St. John's offers are imperfect and fraught with risk. For Gilbert and Gubar, though Jane "loves Rochester the man, [she] has doubts about Rochester the husband even before she learns about Bertha" (356). Her own internal senses suggest that "even the equality of love between true minds leads to the inequalities and minor despotisms of marriage" (356). This is a clever reconsideration of the popular Shakespearean sonnet regarding marriage, which suggests the marriage of true minds leads to equality through constancy (356). Bronte contradicts this notion, arguing that imperfections lead to the question, how can one determine the true identity of one's soul mate, and vice versa? She complies with other Shakespearean texts like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in her interrogation of true love's nature in conjunction to freedom from a realistic versus an idealistic context. Bronte's response is evident during Jane's time with St. John. Jane admits that her teaching experience found her with a heart that "far oftener swelled with thankfulness than sunk with dejection" (356). Utter dejection and depression alone does not fill this period in her life. This is an important sign of psychological healthfulness on Jane's part since it avoids frequent idyllic reflections on the past, which would leave a yearning to recapture a past equally destructive and constructive.

Though Jane continues to dream of Rochester, St. John mercilessly bombards Jane with rhetoric to change her mind. This constant barrage accumulates so St. John can make one final calculated attack. He references a Biblical passage that tells “how God would come to dwell with men, how he would wipe away all tears from their eyes, and [promise] that there should be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain, because the former things were passed away” (492). St. John selects Chapter 21 from *The Book of Revelation*, a Biblical text that is a traditional source of comfort for believers. For non-believers, though, its fire and brimstone nature induces fear. St. John uses this verse to make clear to Jane only the Christian path of righteousness will save her at the end of days, whereas Non-Christian means will lead to eternal damnation. This passage can be a strong socialization agent to disable one’s sense of individuality manifested through choice. St. John uses it to convince Jane that a missionary’s life is God’s intended path for her, along with a marriage which permanently disables her strong feminine sense of self.

St. John’s scheme succeeds initially. Jane states that the words “thrilled me strangely as he spoke them” (493). St. John’s reading of the text from *Revelation* leaves her with the impression that St. John “believe[s] his name [is] already written in the Lamb’s book of life, and he yearn[s] after the hour which should admit him to the city to which the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour” (492). Jane feels “veneration for St. John—veneration so strong that its impetus thrust me at once to the point I had so long shunned” (494). St. John capitalizes on a moment where Jane’s logic becomes temporarily frozen by an ardent passion which his cleverly selected readings inspire. Jane is self-aware enough to recognize that “all was changing utterly, with a sudden



sweep” (494). Now Christian religious ideology temporarily overruns Jane’s sense of self. She becomes emotionally charged by traditional religious rhetoric and its associated symbols: “Religion called—Angels beckoned—God commanded—life rolled together like a scroll—death’s gates opening, shewed eternity beyond” (494). Jane’s experiences do not represent an authentic supernatural experience within the common dictates of a traditional religious structure.

Though Jane finds interest in St. John for a time, he fails to position himself permanently as her mortal idol. Instead, she eventually turns to the supernatural of her own spiritual volition, and she does so ironically through the same Christian rhetoric that St. John uses to subjugate her. She entreats of Heaven, “Show me—show me the path!” (495). Once again, the supernatural realizes Jane’s precarious position. Her soul, too, understands how full empowerment protects its current state and improves its future state. Jane’s significant temporary spiritual revitalization fully actuates her sensory abilities and logical faculties. The first effected is her sense of hearing, as she describes a sudden awareness that her “heart beat fast and thick,” because she could hear “its throb” (495). Rapidly, her sense of touch heightens, which she realizes through a sudden awareness of an “inexpressible feeling that thrilled through, and passed at once to my head and extremities” (495). Jane describes this overall effect “as quite hard, as strange, as startling” (495). The previous activity of her senses had “been but torpor; from which they were now summoned, and forced to wake” (495). Full actualization sees an expectant awareness, where her “eye and ear wait[s], while the flesh quiver[s]” (495). At this moment, Bronte masterfully characterizes a rapid empowerment of Jane through her senses. In contrast, an associative concurrent rapid disempowerment of St. John occurs

through an emergent spiritual inertia. An ideological rhetoric forces a spiritual lethargy upon Jane just moments before. This contrasts to an animated St. John, who spouts powerful Christian scripture with its attendant premises.

Bronte illustrates through a linguistic shift in St. John's rhetoric from declarative to interrogative utterances full female empowerment through the usurpation of masculine control. He questions Jane, "What have you heard? What do you see?" (495). These questions are typical when a character is struck deaf and blind due to a lack of genuine spiritual development. With a soul authentically activated, Jane hears Rochester's voice with acute senses. This voice does not "come out of the air—nor from under the earth—nor from overhead" (495). Instead, it emerges "where, or whence, for ever impossible to know!" (495). The voice speaks to Jane "in pain and woe wildly, eerily, urgently" (495). Jane verifies this incident through a heightened sense of sight. In this construct, the natural supernatural reveals the truth. Though we do not hear the supernatural agent, Jane articulates, "The hills beyond Marsh-Glen [send] the answer faintly back" (495). This is the zenith of Jane's spiritual empowerment, which activates and intertwines both her logic and her spiritual selves. Jane states, "My powers were in play, and in force" (497). She recognizes her full empowerment, St. John's full disempowerment, and a permanent reliable communicative structure between her soul and the supernatural (497). More importantly, Jane knows that Rochester needs her, which occasions a supernaturally-sanctioned reunion of both individuals since both have traveled through their own *Infernos*, *Purgatorios*, and *Paradisos*. Enduring these journey motifs leaves them stronger spiritualized individuals, even if, in Rochester's case, there is significant

physical injury. Jane and Rochester can make no further progress, though, until they are permanently reunited.

When Jane returns to Rochester at Ferndean, her empowerment in mind and spirit “make [her] an equal of the world Rochester represents” (Gilbert and Gubar 368). Gilbert and Gubar cite Richard Chase, who asserts that Rochester’s injuries are a “symbolic castration,” performed as punishment for his earlier “profligacy” (368). To some, this disempowerment appears to equalize Jane and Rochester’s power over each other in a heavily patriarchal social dynamic by removing dominance within the relationship. I would posit this is not the case, though. Instead, Jane assumes a dominant position in the relationship. She comes to Rochester in a stable, fully-developed state spiritually, mentally, and physically. Rochester, however, is in a highly unstable position in all three areas. Jane confidently declares upon her return: “It is time someone undertook to rehumanise you” (516). Rochester’s injuries in the Thornfield Hall fire disable him physically, which combine with deep spiritual infirmities to disable Rochester’s faculties profoundly, albeit temporarily. As Jane narrates towards the end, for the first two years of their marriage, Jane “was then his vision,” and she continues to be “his right hand” (535). During this period Jane is literally and figuratively Rochester’s means of sensory discrimination. She says, “He [sees] nature—he [sees] books through me” (535). He relies on Jane for visual input, and she becomes his source of intellectual sustenance. This is not a relationship of equality; Jane has dominance over Rochester, even if just physical.

Rochester’s physical disability does offer some spiritual benefits, though, before and after Jane’s return. I concur with Gilbert and Gubar that Rochester “is paradoxically

stronger than he was when he ruled Thornfield, for now, like Jane, he draws his powers from within himself, rather than from inequity, disguise, and deception,” which are dominant masculine gender role traits (369). Gilbert and Gubar also find that his reinvigoration happens immediately and that he heals only partially with Jane’s assistance. I would assert otherwise. When Jane returns, Rochester is a weak and pathetic character who can do nothing for himself. In fact, he seems to prefer death to life until Jane convinces him otherwise.

In contrast, Jane arrives after her greatest show of spiritual power to date in the novel. After she has been with Rochester some time, Jane describes him as “green and vigorous” (526). This revival only occurs when Rochester rediscovers the full potential of his soul—an impossibility without Jane’s assistance. She completes him by compensating for the earlier physical, spiritual, and emotional castration he suffers from Jane’s departure, their prolonged separation, and the Thornfield Hall fire. His actions during the Thornfield Hall fire specifically are brave, yet they are also the catalyst for Jane’s return. Jane’s return restores his potency and vitality through the contribution of her feminine spirituality. With Jane’s assistance, “plants . . . grow about [his] roots, whether [he] ask[s for] them or not, because they take delight in [his] bountiful shadow; and as they grow they will lean towards [him], and wind round [him], because [his] strength offers them so safe a prop” (526). Yet Jane provides the seeds for this future, not Rochester. In doing so, Brontë inverts the usual human procreative process of female impregnation by the male. Jane, not Rochester, first demonstrates this phallic rigidity. She is the invisible force who buttresses his previously flaccid spiritual self and his

physical detumescent self. In this ingenious deconstruction, Jane impregnates Rochester with the necessary support and sustenance to realize his full spiritual potential.

Bronte further inverts the traditional patriarchal structure through the introduction of a matriarchal complex. Rochester becomes the effeminate nurturer, where his vitality and potency, available through his spirituality, balance his physical injuries. This leaves him a far more powerful individual than he ever could realize when he was bodily whole. Though he suffers from a broken body, Rochester now delights ironically in a fully empowered soul. His strength provides the necessary support and protection for the later evolution of other weakened selves. He becomes, then, both a role model and a protective parental figure. Bronte suggests that true spiritual strength lies not in physical prowess, and that, ironically, impotence is then, potency. In fact, she suggests that one compromises physical potency to secure spiritual growth by transcending the limits which social and religious ideologies enforce.

Interestingly, Bronte suggests that the feminine human best sustains a strong body and a strong soul, perhaps due to female predilections toward natural and supernatural connectivity given their spiritual and physical potentialities. The masculine human, perhaps due to his own spiritual inequities enforced through particular masculine scripts, and a natural inherent weakness cannot realize both spiritual and physical strength. Instead, the male must choose between physical or spiritual prowess. Jane and Rochester's union cannot consummate until his full physical disempowerment establishes the opportunity for complete spiritual invigoration. Contrastingly, Jane must achieve a natural spiritual and physical vigor to support herself and Rochester. This is perhaps the

key feminist point that realizes the idealism of Margaret Fuller. The feminine realizes full potentiality when the masculine is so feeble that both can co-exist on an equal plane.

In characterizing Rochester's spiritual recovery, Bronte combines the seclusion of Thornfield and injects an Edenic-like quality into Ferndean. The name itself suggests the contrast of this pastoral near-utopia with the harsh, challenging nature of Thornfield—a locale cast with thorns aplenty. By introducing this archetype, Bronte does not simply reinforce the Biblical story, though. Instead, she deconstructs the traditional religious structure by casting a neo-Adam and a neo-Eve, that is Jane and Rochester, who are equal to each other—a condition that contradicts the traditional Biblical plot and associated archetypes. Bronte does not undermine the whole structure, though. Instead, the text does adhere in one crucial way: their realized self-awareness casts Adam and Eve out of Eden. Similarly, Jane and Rochester become social castaways as they realize full spiritual awareness. By separating socially, Ferndean remarkably fuses them together supernaturally with the absence of obstructive communal influences.

Gilbert and Gubar are correct that “Ferndean is notably stripped and asocial, so that the physical isolation of the lovers suggests their spiritual isolation in a world where such egalitarian marriages as theirs are rare, if not impossible” (369). This interpretation, heavily steeped in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, confirms Gilbert and Gubar's observation of Charlotte Bronte's message at the end of *Jane Eyre*. The Shakespearean marriage of true minds can only occur when the lovers “withdraw into a remote forest, a wilderness even, in order to circumvent the strictures of a hierarchical society” (369). Gilbert and Gubar's focused, gender-based reading does ignore one crucial additional point, though—that is, withdrawal from these strictures leads to the realization of more

than true minds. Rather, we also witness the union of true spirits through the intermingling of two intended soul mates. To extend the Shakespearean intertextual connection, spirit is equally important to flesh—an idea *A Midsummer Night's Dream* enforces through the green world of the forest where mortal and immortal comeingle in an Ardenesque space virtually free of discrimination.

Humanity's complexity craves individuality yet desires relationships that range from platonic to romantic. While these have a social function, constructs ultimately control members through shared hierarchical structures. Critics like Margaret Fuller point out that relationships should support individual growth and empowerment. As this chapter demonstrates, this is not always the case. Human machinations interfere, and relationships form out of the potential financial and/or social benefits of these relationships. In these unions, usual individual disempowerment ultimately disables the soul. Allocating space separate from social ideologies and associated structures preserve and grow one's individual self. The masculine spirit typically finds it easier to create such space, since the social agents are not as oppressive. Yet these texts also chronicle the spiritual challenges of the self as it navigates through the masculine gender role or the feminine gender role, respectively. George's soul grows even without steady access to his soul mate and with constant social pressure manifest through masculine gender pressures. Mary shows more intense social domination over the feminine spirit. The nineteenth-century in particular constricted, if not eliminated, evolutionary feminine space. Marriage to George provides an abnormally large space to grow her spiritual self, yet the improvement is negligible. The surrounding social urban environment reminds her that every moment she spends with George violates social mores, even if it conforms

to supernatural intentions. The consequence places them outside society's graces, yet her rejection of the defined feminine gender role affects her most acutely.

Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is a great companion text to *The Two Destinies*. Jane's early orphan status places her on the social periphery and prepares her for the difficult road that she traverses to achieve full individual spiritual development. Jane does seek companionship in kindred spirits that treat her kindly, but she appears much more comfortable with her spiritual self. Even so, Jane struggles to control the passionate emotional responses that emanate from her potent spirit. Individual space develops her logical faculties, which channel her spirit efficiently. Jane does encounter masculine socialization agents like Brocklehurst, St. John, and Jack Reed as well as feminine socialization agents like Mrs. Reed. They attempt to inculcate Jane through various guilt tactics, physical and psychological tortures, social systems, and religious systems. She struggles and nearly suffers defeat at several points. Her retreats from the masculine-dominated spaces culminate in self-preservation through reassertion of her sturdy soul. When the text concludes, Jane and Rochester see full individual development of both spirits through consummation of a relationship which the supernatural sanctions. Jane becomes whole, and while Rochester remains somewhat physically impaired even after his improvement, he becomes a more complete individual self.

For the supernatural, soul mate connections should culminate in platonic and romantic relationships. Supernatural phenomena recognize the incredible pressures that prevent full mortal realization of the human immortal potential. Relationships endorsed by the supernatural support kindred spirits who facilitate full individual self-development. Partners do not need social and religious structures to empower associated



agents. Thus, the supernatural is truly a subversive influence. Society counteracts these tendencies through textualization and historicization practices that vilify the supernatural, often through a priori and/or empirical cognitive philosophies. Social and religious agents further discount authentic supernatural phenomena through individual relational constructs to implant masculine and feminine gender scripts. Acquiescence allows for reacceptance into popular social systems. Yet the individual souls suffer from temporary impairment leading to permanent damage if not remedied.

One may ask, what is the purpose for these romantic and platonic soul mate relationships beyond spiritual assistance and support? So far, this dissertation has studied the rationale for supernatural othering, where textualization and historicization acts lead to intellectual stigmatization. This chapter articulates how supernaturally sanctioned relationships ultimately lead to individual self-development. In Chapter IV, I offer reasons for social and religious fear of supernatural phenomena and their associated messages. I also show how ideologies de-legitimize supernatural phenomena. Ultimately for humanity, knowledge is power, since it provides answers to fundamental existential questions. Unfortunately, this type of individual empowerment threatens dominant social and religious orders. In Chapter IV, I review how various supernatural lessons profoundly threaten social and religious fabrics. This is a critical analysis since these systems tend to empower certain groups and disenfranchise others.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SOCIAL SUBVERSIVE NATURE OF SUPERNATURAL SENTIENCE: STIMULATING ARTISTIC SENSITIVITY IN THE DISCOVERY OF TRUTH IN *THE LAND OF MIST, THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*, THE POETRY OF ARNOLD AND SHELLEY, AND THE WRITINGS OF EDMUND BURKE

This chapter explores two fundamental questions. What is humankind's purpose for existence and what meaning does this provide for humankind's existence? A survey of history predictably finds answers in religion, philosophy, and science. In this chapter, I evaluate how political, scientific, and religious ideologies in nineteenth-century texts project particular roles for the supernatural in the discovery of truth. I also explore how the supernatural aids in discovering deeper states of existence that conflict with established political, scientific, and religious responses. Finally, I show how the supernatural uses various manifestations to communicate Truth.

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl states that humans look for "the primary motivation in . . . life and not a 'secondary rationalization' of instinctual drives" (121). Individuals search for motivations that drive human behavior. Common attempts in the Nineteenth-century and today use physiological causes to explain human actions. These are inadequate, though, no matter how much research suggests otherwise. In a similar vein, Karl Marx asserts that human obsessions with commodities are a dominant stimulus for human action. Both explanations offer causalities based around choice. Marx finds ends tend toward a physical object, whereas Frankl finds less tangible reasons based on choice. Frankl's perspective provides one

additional wrinkle—a spiritual motivation that religions seek to fill. To Marx, commodities are “the productions of the human brain” (271). These spiritual-based motives seem superior because they “appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race” (271). These relationships lead to a fetishism that “attaches itself to the products of labor, as soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities” (271). As the nineteenth-century evolves from the Romanticism of Great Britain and Transcendentalism of America to the Victorian era and fin de siècle, a significant tension emerges between the spiritually-based idealism of Frankl and the commodity-based realism of Marx.

The nineteenth-century authors I discuss provide instances of supernatural engagement with a distinctive concern for the influence of traditional religions, the Industrial Revolution, the rise of science, and their impact on humankind’s relationship with the supernatural. Nineteenth-century authors are aware of what Frankl refers to as Logotherapy, which “focuses on the future, that is to say, on the meanings to be fulfilled . . . in [the] future” (120). These statements prove accurate when one considers popular movies and television shows which suggest the power of a sixth-sense clairvoyance. We find examples in television shows like *Medium* and in Stephanie Myer’s recent *Twilight* series. Concern for the future without learning from the past plays a seminal role in nineteenth-century ideology. Alfred Cobban asserts that we expend significant intellectual energy in the nineteenth-century to undermine “much that the eighteenth century believed in profoundly” (133). From Frankl’s logotherapeutic perspective, this common critical mind-set “defocuses all the vicious-circle formations and feedback

mechanisms which play such a great role in the development of neuroses. Thus, the typical self-centeredness of the neurotic is broken up instead of being continually fostered and reinforced” (120). Revolutionary thinkers at the dawn of the nineteenth-century project a shared criticism through new structures. These important breaks with the past enable human growth. Nineteenth-century academics evidence concern for humankind’s progress due to a loss of spirituality. Deviations from our intended purposes subsequently arrest our development.

Thinkers of the Nineteenth-century do not suggest a retraction from scientific and social advances in areas like business and law. These intellectuals know that such areas help us meet our material requirements. Yet allocating a disproportionate amount of energy towards these worldly concerns interferes with profound interconnectedness with the supernatural, the natural, and the self. Instead, we must maintain the power of perceptual flexibility. Focal adjustments retain the past as an important source for learning. We look at subjects from different directions, even those we stigmatize as subversive. This is the importance of supernatural texts in the nineteenth century.

Throughout the century, a myriad of works consider new paths of discovery, such as Darwin’s *Origins of Species*. However, I focus primarily on the supernatural text. As my analyses will demonstrate, nineteenth-century writers do not offer a wholesale rejection of the past. Instead, they offer a critical recognition that past religious constructs function as agents of ideological indoctrination. They provide sources of meaning and guidance towards higher Truths when used properly. If misused, these truths entrap rather than empower individuals.

There is important value in information discovery and production through technological advancements. The nineteenth-century's Industrial Revolution and evolution of modern science represent two of the most salient examples. Both assume to answer man's fundamental purpose for existence. A utopia would be a balanced world where the world's population engages in philosophical examinations, commodity-based technology development, and religious theology. Each sphere would have equal influence over worldwide policy. Unfortunately, we never realize such distribution, since we often default to one extreme or the other. Only in temporary moments of balance as the swinging pendulum is midway on its progression to its opposite extreme do we have moments of clairvoyance.

Supernatural texts, especially, articulate concern over traditional and contemporary theories that discount supernaturalism in favor of readily acceptable concepts that stunt the continued edification of humanity. To these authors, the ultimate purpose of human learning is, in the words of Tennyson's *Ulysses*, "To follow knowledge like a sinking star, / Beyond the utmost bound of human thought" (31-32). Unfortunately, Tennyson does not define what knowledge, though. We should not provide superior and inferior labels to the various exploits that define knowledge, whether they are intellectual exploits tied to philosophy, business, medicine, or vocations. Instead, we should view the entire enterprise holistically. Given equal focus, importance, and resources, each contributes to human evolution.

Yet evidence of unequal distribution litters human history. We may progress technologically, but how useful are such advances when we cannot maximize these new discoveries? Imagine a world where technology does not compete against but enables

and even encourages exploration of the arts and humanities as well as the preservation of knowledge. The current unequal appropriation of funds in all realms of education towards the arts and humanities indicates how poorly we function in such utopian potentials. Similar trends exist throughout human history, the Nineteenth-century serving as a microcosm of this tendency. The idealism of the Romantics and Transcendentalists eventually cedes to the realism of the Victorians and the decadence of the fin de siècle. Our energies shift from philosophical machinations at the beginning of the Nineteenth-century to science and technical practicalities that we clearly commodify.

One could trace the start of Truth's demise to Ancient Greece. In *The Closing of the Western Mind*, Charles Freeman asserts that Western culture devolves intellectually over the 2,000-plus years since the Ancient Greeks. Their intellectual tradition recognized the inherent difficulties in discovering Truth. The modern period addresses such difficulties through blind theological and later philosophical reliance on Christianity and science, respectively. As the first to "distinguish, assess, and use the distinct branch of intellectual activity we know as reasoning," the Greeks looked at their surrounding environment to establish means that confirm stated premises through investigation (Freeman XV). These investigative approaches relied on one of two basic precepts: one, the deductive proof, where the Greeks made "complex and irrefutable mathematical proofs" (Freeman XV). The second, inductive reasoning, formulates "'truths' from empirical evidence" (Freeman XV). A marked difference between Greek knowledge and productions of later period's concerns established truths and field experts.

As Freeman points out, truths were "always provisional" in Ancient Greece (Freeman XVI). Without certainty, we rely on powerful assumptions. The resultant

incontrovertible certainties suppress our natural human curiosity that examines and re-examines our lives according to Socrates' famous mantra, "the unexamined life is not worth living." Freeman states that if "truth is to be effectively advanced, any finding must be open to challenge, and this means that even the greatest thinkers must never be made into figures of authority" (Freeman XVI). Secondly, "if a tradition of rational thought is to make progress, it is essential that it builds in tolerance" (Freeman XVI). From this perspective, "no authority can dictate in advance what can or cannot be believed, or there is no possibility of progress" (Freeman XVI). Within this cognitive framework, citizens will study already accumulated data and search for errors or new data to create and/or revise theories. They should not parrot such information through rote memorization. Instead, students should constantly uncover new research that confirms, denies, or questions previously acquired knowledge.

From a psychological perspective, unchallenged social heuristics remain in place until introducing new knowledge. Limiting the acquisition of new data through physical and intellectual forms has profound implications. Modified sensitivities enable discovery of knowledge beyond the perceived limits of mortality. Supernatural phenomena are not necessarily qualifiable or quantifiable through scientific measurement techniques. Connections to such phenomena, though, enable a mortal to gather information through established means of communication. The mortal then converts this knowledge into detectable forms. From a Platonic perspective, the supernatural enables one to comprehend "the eternal and unchanging," which we only grasp after "an arduous intellectual journey" (Freeman XVII). Credible individual connections with supernatural

phenomena are possible. Where such contact occurs, supernatural figures communicate information that a mortal is unable to acquire independently.

The early intellectual tradition of the Greeks establishes an efficient system rooted in authentic supernatural contact. Yet this form of knowledge acquisition wanes with the rise of Sophism. The resultant schism, which profoundly separates the supernatural from knowledge, creates two categories of human knowledge—one of divine knowledge, the other of man-made. Logically, divine knowledge trumps man-made knowledge. Yet the trial of Socrates is a critical moment in Western history, since it signals the rise of a new Sophist tradition that suppresses divine knowledge. The ruling elite seize power through a political ploy that suppresses subversive supernatural ideology. Later cultures institutionalize this process through similar religious structures wherein a small ruling elite interpret religious texts and provide firm catechisms to compel countless members of the human race. Socrates' trial, captured in Plato's *The Apology*, witnesses a chilling precursor to the worst offender of this institutionalized suppression of the supernatural, Christianity. Christianity uses Sophist techniques to ward off threatening alternative theologies and philosophies that threaten its elevated position as the Roman state religion under Constantine.

With the influence of Sophist thought through religion and/or social ideology, the original Greek intellectual tradition no longer acts as the locus of the Western epistemological tradition. There are several reasons for marginalizing the Greek intellectual tradition—an event Freeman refers to as the closing of the Western mind. These include “the attack on Greek philosophy by Paul, the adoption of Platonism by Christian theologians and the enforcement of orthodoxy by emperors desperate to keep



good order” (Freeman XVIII). Such orthodoxy stifles “any form of independent reasoning” (Freeman XVIII). Freeman cites Pope Gregory the Great’s warning to those “with a rational turn of mind”: those who look “for cause and effect in the natural world [ignore] the cause of all things, the will of God” (XVIII-XIX). This particularly damning statement about intellectualism represents a “vital shift of perspective,” since it leads, “in effect, [to] a denial of the impressive intellectual advances made by the Greek philosophers,” which Socrates recognizes in the knowledge supernatural phenomena made available to humanity (Freeman XIX). This especially damages intellectual considerations. People only accept notions that support Christian ideological constructs. Not incorporating Christian language or ideology labels the author’s work as a myth, legend, or fable. This entraps humanity within a repetitive loop that ensures continuity but inhibits future intellectual growth.

The Nineteenth-century serves as an important moment in the struggle for Truth. Artists of the period see a transition into a brave new world where religious dominance submits to a rising scientific epistemology. In extreme cases, full submission to science’s potential labels even long-established theisms as superstitions with newer fringe systems. Science eventually replaces the influence of Christianity as the primary perceptual mechanism to discover knowledge. The transition from religion to science carries specific dangers to human’s pursuit of Truths. For instance, while an undergraduate at Oxford, Percy Bysshe Shelley opines that the rise of science would “give humankind a power it had never possessed before, a power to command the elements in even the remotest parts of the globe” (qtd. in Fulford et al 1).

Likewise, Victorian era physicist John Tyndall declares that science represents humanity's desire to follow "the truth as it is nature," which ensures individuals rightly sacrifice "interests which are usually potent in this world" (Cosslett 13). These subjective emotions distort "the picture and obscure the truth," a warning that Tyndall echoes in his statement, "We must be careful of projecting into external nature that which belongs to ourselves" (14). The core logic of scientific inquiry provides an important contribution to humankind's communication with the supernatural realm when we include instincts and passions of the soul. Eliminating emotional responses to stimuli that come from supernatural phenomena ultimately fractures the individual self. I would argue that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Land of Mist* demonstrates this common nineteenth-century concern over eliminating emotional responses to one's search for truth by relying on scientific schemata. Doyle's novel provides a broad overview of the fringe occult movements during the nineteenth century and the investigative benefits of these factions.

Doyle's text provides an alternative historical account in a fictional context of these Nineteenth-century intellectual and spiritual tensions. He expresses concern for the influence of science and traditional mainstream religious practices. Doyle manifests this anxiety through a family feud between Professor Challenger and his daughter Enid. Her lover, Malone, plays a role as well. These three primary characters represent modern archetypal manifestations of the diverse mindsets regarding supernaturalism and its importance to human existence. Professor Challenger signifies the cool logocentric and empirical-based rationalism of the evolving scientific mindset. As Cosslett asserts in *The "Scientific Movement" and Victorian Literature*, the Challenger mindset emphasizes a world "governed by the natural law which Reason can recognise" (25). This emphasis

downplays the ability of “supernatural intervention” (25). Superstitious syllogistic sophistry are “dreamt up by [an] Imagination” that relies too greatly upon “subjective feelings to achieve an objective picture of the hard truth” (25). This scientific attitude asserts the superiority of externalized objectivity over an internalized subjectivity to discover the “real facts of Nature” (25). Enid, on the other hand, in signifying the binary opposite, dissents strongly with the new scientific mindset, as well as social and religious ideologies that ignore alternative metaphysical constructs.

What I call the Enid attitude represents a common nineteenth-century worldview that sees science as essentially “ordered, limited, and coherent” (30). John Cottingham declares, “Scientific knowledge is confined to the phenomenal world, and any attempt to step outside that world takes us beyond the domain of what can be known or established by reason” (72). These characteristics carry a certain admiration. Science’s analytical systems promote a commendable research methodology that relies on lucidity and transparency. However, the Enid attitude recognizes science’s “inevitable contradictions and tensions, which provide loop-holes for complexity, ambiguity, and even ‘supernaturalism’ to creep back in” (30). Enid asserts the same othering upon science and traditional religious structures. She recognizes science and religion’s tendencies toward oversimplification through its classification and division strategies. She finds blind obedience to either system’s ideological structure a selfsame ignorance. Both fear alternative, supernatural-based metaphysics that promote different epistemologies and cognitive structures.

What I call the Malone attitude lies between these two binaries. His attitude represents an apprehensiveness of supernatural phenomena common during the period.

Cults at this time afford the same cognitive limitations as traditional religious systems like Christianity. Malone knows of science's potential for tremendous knowledge in the future. Yet he doubts that Challenger's scientific mindset is a true panacea for complete human control over the natural world, just as he doubts that religious structures can provide the same universality. Instead, Malone recognizes the importance of both, and he envisions a future utopia where each carries equal weight.

*The Land of Mist* explores Spiritualism in significant detail by opposing this Challenger mindset. Doyle's perspective is especially relevant given the emergent dominance of science. A.N. Wilson notes in *The Victorians*, this system offers "proofs" that validate supernatural phenomena (439). These include photographs of actual supernatural phenomena, "usually ghosts hovering in smudgy form" (439). This experiential evidence through technological advances should provide valid scientific proofs to refute the Challenger mindset. Yet as Wilson points out, popular skepticism questions the genuineness of the prints. In contrast, believers see these photographs as proof to support their unique form of spirituality.

Employing science to prove the existence of supernatural phenomena represents a consistent characteristic of the age. Individuals "attempt to confirm one type of belief by means of an essentially alien mental process" (439). This circumstance enlists science to "verify the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting," which A.N. Wilson asserts is just as inappropriate as "appointing mystics to a chair of physics" (439). The predilection towards science to corroborate metaphysical cognition is incongruent with the nature of the supernatural realm. It also represents basic human arrogance and a latent fear of new ideologies that may nullify popular systems. While applying such

mindsets to verify traditional religious ideologies does not occur as frequently during the nineteenth-century, skeptics and believers of traditional faiths use science to attack contemporary conceptions of humankind's relationship with the supernatural. An emergent Spiritualist movement during the fin de siècle becomes the primary enemy of the Challenger mindset. These cults emerge naturally in response to threats from science and traditional religions against alternative supernatural systems.

Biased critical analyses represent hubris towards unexplained phenomena, generally, but supernatural phenomena, specifically. Ultimately, natural or artificial cognitive efforts to verify beings and knowledge discriminate against dimensions beyond those of our narrow structures. Expressing this critical concept towards the end of the novel, Doyle identifies the limited perceptual capabilities of the human body. Colors are only visible if they fit within "our two-inch spectrum of color" (277). Likewise, we only accept sounds if they exist within "our four octaves" (277). Doyle then considers, "How many others, outside those narrow limitations, may have added their presence and their blessing" if humankind enhances natural or artificial perceptual abilities? (277). Unfortunately, humankind does not recognize these extra-perceptual structures unless epistemologically verifiable. This attitude unduly restricts how our cognitive and metacognitive functionalities facilitate maturation of the general human psyche through new knowledge.

A principal reason for supernatural suspicion of science is its reliance on materialism. As any quick consideration of the supernatural shows, these beings rarely appear in quantifiable or qualifiable physical forms. Instead, they exist in forms incoherent to our dominant perceptual systems. Mailey knows the world would be

grander “if it would only realise its own limitations” (57). As with the foundation of Western Philosophy, science’s reliance on two principle epistemological means limits the potential for future human discoveries. A priori may be the more suitable method for supernatural contemplation, since it enables logical processes to discover new knowledge even without tangible evidence. Balance occurs when we combine the a priori potential of the human mind with the soul. Of course a priori may not be able to contemplate the supernatural if the event stretches the boundaries of what logic considers possible. In these cases, the a priori uses oversimplistic theories like Occam’s razor to prove the supernatural does not exist since logic cannot validate the event horizon. With our limited powers of reason, the supernatural may remain a mystery until we adapt other devices which are sensitive to alternative modes of being. A priori helps us explore human potentiality through supernatural contemplation. A fertile environment forms with space to reflect on the knowledge which supernatural agents communicate and their implications to human functionality.

Though comparably limited, Empiricism does enable human cognition of supernatural phenomena. It relies upon naked or assisted activation of one or more of the five senses. The skeptical mortal works to invalidate the event when supernatural phenomena activate our senses. One may verify the existence of the supernatural through an altered natural perceptual state or artificial means, such as a machine of some sort. Immediately though the a priori reconsiders these experiences as figments of an altered state or mechanical dysfunction. Activating one or more senses, empiricism instantly asserts that the supernatural agent without is not real. Science relies more on empiricism for confirmation and a priori for theoretical and hypothetical considerations. These two

structures do work efficiently in tandem, though our inability to incorporate any additional methodology limits our cognitive, metacognitive, and rational abilities. The empirical mindset is the default mechanism over any other, including one's instincts.

The human predilection towards materialism verifies metaphysical truths in ways that make humans comfortable. Yet Mailey counters in *The Land of Mist* that science has "usually been a curse to us, for it has called itself progress and given us a false impression that we are making progress" (57). Instead, spiritual evidence suggests, "we are really drifting very steadily backwards" (57). Interestingly, Doyle suggests a realignment of traditional Gothic criticism with this statement that agrees with Horace Walpole's initial vision of gothic philosophy. We prefer the past to a contemporary present and future that inhibits rather than encourages human progress. One cannot deny the great technological advances of the nineteenth century. Even more remarkable is the relatively short period of time that govern discoveries which provide creature comforts to an unprecedented amount of the population, especially in nations that embrace industrialization.

Humankind pays a substantial price, though. Mailey opines, "You look at all these bustling, complacent people, and you marvel to think how little they know of the possibilities of life" (75). If one were to question these ignorant individuals, "they would think [an inquisitive being is] a liar or a lunatic" (75). Mailey recognizes that humankind negates the complex spiritual development of the Romantic and Transcendental disciplines in the earlier portion of the nineteenth century. We sacrifice advances won by the "Spirit of the Age" for a scientific mindset, thereby promoting what I call an unprecedented "New Human Arrogance." The subsequent imbalance inhibits equal

development of the intellect and the spirit. The resultant rift between mortal and immortal realms still manifests itself in a present-day dulling of our supernatural awareness.

Malone identifies the extent of this spirit-body schism towards the end of the novel when he states, “The most dangerous condition for a man or a nation is when his intellectual side is more developed than his spiritual” (279). Earlier in the novel, Mailey believes that our epistemological systems suffer a critical inversion to our inherent archetypal inductive and deductive rational processes. Our native inductivity is the source of creative methods which science verifies through experimentation. When this fact-finding operation concludes, the human mind applies that theory—now a fact—to a regular perceptual system structuring one’s experience in accord with the surrounding environment. Science therefore promotes a new form of human arrogance, ultimately subjugating our natural inductive thinking skills through a dominant deductive methodology that materialism confirms. Mailey observes that, “Up to now we have fitted the facts to our theories,” but this new scientific egotism causes us to “fit our theories to the facts” (73). We cannot escape past perceptual matrices that facilitate discovery of new dimensions external to the comfortable space we construct from prior learning.

R.L. Stevenson extends the unnatural potentialities of science Doyle discusses in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The novel considers the extent of this critical spiritual-intellectual rift that Mailey and Malone identify. Latently, the intellectual and spiritual aspects of the human psyche provide a natural complement to one another. Ideally, these elements lead to an analogous development for equality in the mortal and immortal parts of each individual. This occurs in different disciplines that range from philosophical



considerations to materialistic erudition. Yet it limits spiritual improvement. The immortal element of the general human individual evolves through contemplation of the supernatural realm, a location the human spirit populates once it leaves the temporal body after its inevitable demise. Although we cannot avoid the eventual separation of the spirit from the body, yet these two must function as a holistic unit during our lifetime. As John Cottingham claims, full articulation of the self

involves nothing less than a radical transformation of the self, a kind of re-birthing or re-education process, where the harsh imperatives of the superego on one side, and the raw urgency of our instinctual impulses on the other, are systematically scrutinized, and brought together into an integrated whole where they lose their threatening and destructive character. (76)

This synergy empowers the self through full integration of its various parts that I call sub-selves. These are individual units containing the essential foundations of one's essence—a personality DNA, if you will. Another sub-self cannot replicate these sub-selves. Each strand is critically unique. If the spirit distances itself from the flesh, such disregard leads to an early physical demise. We see this in Poe's *Ligeia*, for instance. Were the mortal self to repress knowingly or unknowingly the spirit, the soul suffers a terrible degeneration that endangers the individual's mortal and immortal existence. Consider the tired Lamia in Keats' famous poem. Careful attention to spiritual and intellectual potential is equally important to the immortal and mortal part of one's individuality.

While imbalanced development is dangerous, even more damning is a purposeful attempt through human machinations to cause a material separation. In popular readings of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the successful division of Dr. Jekyll leads to Mr. Hyde's

creation through a figurative externalization, separating the primitive self from the logical self. I propose that Stevenson's text, published in 1886, represents a fear which Doyle's 1926 *The Land of Mist* realizes. Rather than involve a vertical division between instinctual and rational, a horizontal division emerges between spiritual and intellectual. I do not find a simple vertical binary wherein the spiritual equates to the eloquent Dr. Jekyll and the intellectual to the violent Mr. Hyde, or vice versa. Because both spiritual and intellectual divide along this deconstructive horizontal axis, Jekyll and Hyde resultantly exist simultaneously in a layered space of one shared human mortal form. The dominant personality modifies this space to externalize specific dominances, but this controlling self shifts throughout the course of the novella. Contrary to popular analysis, Jekyll and Hyde possess a spiritual and an intellectual sub-self, hence the reason I argue for a split along a bisecting rather than a parallel axis. Typically, people perceive Jekyll as pure intellect and Hyde as pure instinct, but if this were true, neither character could function.

A multifarious horizontal split manifests the conflict between the spiritual and intellectual selves as they fight for ultimate control over a previously shared human form. The recent Broadway adaptation of the novella, *Jekyll and Hyde*, illustrates this through on-stage dialogues between these two sub-selves. The actor who plays Jekyll and Hyde shifts his body from right to left as each self fights for dominance. Yet this vertical oscillation represents a horizontal division much more than the vertical division of prior analyses. Instead, this dramatic effort evidences intellect and passion in both characters. At the start of the novella, Hyde is a complete person. Yet his unnatural action through science inhibits equal development of spiritual and intellectual sub-selves. Segmentation

feeds into empiricist and a priori systems that characterize an emergent nineteenth-century scientific mindset. Anesthetization of the spirit leaves a fractured person, no matter how the intellectual division develops.

Jekyll indicates science's error in accounting for the supernatural when he mistakenly believes that humankind's essential division is between the moral and intellectual. This is analogous to a dualistic argument where "the mind and its contents are radically nonphysical, that is, that they are neither themselves physical, nor the logical product of anything physical, nor, except causally or nomologically, dependent on anything physical" (Foster 455). Jekyll states, "With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to . . . truth" (98). Recognition of the "thorough and primitive duality of man" shows him that, "of the two natures that contended in the field of [his] consciousness . . . I was radically both" (99). At first blush, Jekyll believes that the primitive and evolved sub-selves exist simultaneously in both beings. A deeper analysis of Jekyll, though, suggests that his is not a vertical division between the moral and intellectual. Rather, a horizontal division ensures that morality and intellectuality exist in Jekyll and Hyde. Jekyll assumes that the moral sub-self possesses the necessary analytical skills to exist independently.

These characters are not identical twins, though, due to one fundamental difference. Society and traditional religious structures inform the intellectuality and the morality of Jekyll. Hyde possesses intellectuality and morality, but the same social and religious operations do not inform both sub-selves. Hyde's virgin birth prevents a normal socialization process, similar to the monster Victor Frankenstein created in the Mary Shelley novel. In both instances, the masculine characters bring to life new forms of

being without involving a female character. A virgin birth involving a female seems unnatural enough apart from possible supernatural involvement akin to Mary's conception in Christian theology. In the case of both novels, each writer accentuates the unnaturalness of science's primary role by making the prime mover, so to speak, a masculine character who uses human knowledge of biology and chemistry to construct a new form of being without any feminine involvement. Hyde's values latently exist within each human, just as Jekyll's do. Society actualizes these concepts through an indoctrination that suppresses recalcitrant ideals. Jekyll and Hyde take on radically different human forms—a supernatural event that demonstrates the potential duality and divisions of the human spirit.

To become complete, Jekyll and Hyde must embrace their latent contradictions which they possess naturally—something all humans ought to understand if they are to explore the true complexity of the psyche. Hyde must embrace the good he possesses. Jekyll has to assume rather than reject the evil that lurks within him. With the former, Hyde is capable of such acceptance. Yet Jekyll's creation of Hyde comes through his own rejection and subsequent desire to eliminate this evil nature. Jekyll will not embrace this evil, which connects to Stevenson's fundamental lesson. While our goodness can become our evil, our evil can become our goodness if either rejects and then attempts to eliminate its rival. For balance, humans must allow both to exist. This tension ultimately ensures a balanced and whole self. Jekyll's own historicization reinforces Stevenson's perspective. Most of the work tries to convince the reader of Edward Hyde's evil, Jekyll's goodness, and Jekyll's victimization by a monstrous creature. A similar application of Gothicism appears in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Victor labels his

creation a monster through his own convenient historical act while on his deathbed. As both texts show, the creator is just as evil as his creation, and the monster is just as capable of goodness as his creator. Both texts invert this relationship by deconstructing archetypal good and evil characters.

Doyle extends Stevenson's argument through *The Land of Mist*. He uses *The Land of Mist* as a platform to show the human creative potential which science enables as well as its potential dangers. Challenger, the archetypal nineteenth-century scientist, responds to his daughter's findings that "soul-talk is the Animism of savages. It is a superstition, a myth" (19). Challenger intends to prove his point as a physiologist by producing "crime or virtue by vascular control or cerebral stimulation" (19). He then provides an intertextual connection, stating that he will "turn a Jekyll into a Hyde by a surgical operation" (19). Challenger concludes his point through the new science of psychology, stating that "another can do it by a psychological suggestion," perhaps through alcohol or drugs (19). These texts suggest that Henry Jekyll, Victor Frankenstein, and Dr. Challenger, specifically, and humankind, generally, are the true monsters. Stevenson, Shelley, and Doyle invert the traditional gothic structure by othering human artificial machinations. Ironically, this action invalidates their work in the eyes of society.

Whether literal or figurative, these texts describe naturally good characters whose antithetical actions resist naturally evil characters. Unfortunately, society can construct artificial systems that reverse these natural labels, a process which leaves inherently good characters ostracized. Their actions, though they support the natural law, conflict with the artificial. Humankind shortsightedly others these positive creatures, choosing instead

to support naturally evil characters whose actions oppose the supernatural but confirm the continued empowerment of traditional thought. We other Hyde and Frankenstein's creation but we simultaneously perceive Jekyll and Victor in a positive light as victims of their creators. In truth, they are the negative characters, while Hyde and Frankenstein's creation are positive characters through their unrealized potential as positive contributors to human exploration.

Stevenson uses Jekyll to exhibit the potential human ego that science promotes just as Doyle uses Challenger. Both characters question ontological perfection in the supernatural realm. Challenger claims supreme power in introducing a dangerous creature to society. He perceives himself as an omnipotent being akin to God. In his 1741 sermon *Sinner in the Hands of an Angry God*, Jonathan Edwards asserts how easy it would be for God to eliminate humanity given His omnipotent power. Approximately one hundred years later authors like Stevenson and Doyle recognize how humankind's acquisition of similar power through science could provide a similar ability, perhaps on an equivalent scale. In this Nineteenth-century reconsideration, humanity uses science to create and to destroy as God does in Edwards' famous sermon. My purpose is not to suggest that Stevenson offers a parable that supports Christian ideology. Rather, Stevenson provides a sharp criticism of humanity's application of science. He fears how our limited perceptual abilities disable a future where our actions effectively destroy connections to the supernatural realm through arrogance. Worse yet, we could use science to destroy ourselves without a clear understanding of the powers with which we meddle. Stevenson's inspired text demonstrates the potential prophetic power of literature itself. Wittgenstein writes, "People nowadays think that the scientists are there

to instruct them, the poets and musicians etc. to entertain them. *That the latter have something to teach them* never occurs to them” (Cottingham 79).

As the nineteenth century cedes to the twentieth century, many of Stevenson’s fears become reality. Consider, for instance, the impact of identity theory. This is a physiologic theory born out of the nineteenth century that explains the human non-material soul through “physiochemical mechanisms” (Smart 410). Humankind uses this application of science to explain “the behavior of man himself” in terms where the body “is a vast arrangement of physical particles” (Smart 410). If this theory prevails, humankind will suffer an unimaginable spiritual crisis, destroying our communion with the supernatural realm. It would be the ultimate act of intellectual othering, where we invalidate the phenomenological through empirical scientific evidence that voids superstitions. This would permanently inhibit our ability to discover Truth. It would trap us within an epistemological space which scientific principles of the nineteenth century define as essential to humankind’s escape from the primitive superstitions of the ancients. In these instances, the gothic works in a traditional sense. Society others our abnormal subversive tendencies for a disabling normalizing stability. To critics like Stevenson and Doyle, these superstitions may possess greater Truth than the apparent empirical truths the scientific method provides, even if they are seditious.

Doyle’s *The Land of Mist* shows how spiritualism’s rise is a natural response to science-based functions of the period. Spiritualism works against thinking that pushes humankind towards its demise. Doyle states that science is problematic since it obscures “the vital thing—the object of life” (58). From his perspective humanity’s prime purpose is not to “go fifty miles an hour in a motor-car, or cross the Atlantic in an airship, or send

messages either with or without wires” (58). These modern scientific accomplishments are “mere trimmings and fringes of life” (58). Someone aware of living a soulful life knows that such distractions are unimportant. Yet Doyle blames “men of science,” who have so “riveted our attention on these fringes that we forget the central object” of life—that is, “to prepare ourselves for the next phase” (58). This holistic mental and spiritual attitude encourages us to become “better men and women, more unselfish, more broad-minded, more genial and tolerant” (58). A scientific promotion of materialism distracts humanity from the spiritual and mental betterment that ensures success beyond the grave.

At the end of the novel, Doyle indicates, “The most dangerous condition for a man or a nation is when his intellectual side is more developed than his spiritual,” a phenomenon which describes the average modern person (279). I would add that science’s fundamental nature of analysis through division and classification operates antithetically to the holistic blending methodology that supernaturalism generally promotes. Spiritualism promulgates this fringe movement in the nineteenth century in response to the rise of science. Doyle champions Stevenson’s warnings through a natural extension as society separates its Jekyll and its Hyde natures. Doyle perceives an afterlife of unprepared humans who cannot cleanly separate from the mortal realm and move into the immortal. I would argue that Jacob Marley in *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens manifests this fear succinctly. Jacob cannot progress spiritually from his prior mortal state due to material transgressions that fail to respect his nobler spiritual aspirations. Doyle’s novel comes after Dickens’; both express similar fears through different characters and in different contexts. Science and associative methodologies like



materialism rob humanity of any wholeness in the next life through the gradual fracture of mortal and immortal sub-selves.

A similar condemnation of traditional religious structures in general, but Roman Catholicism specifically, also exists. Among the benefits of alternative fringe systems of belief is their propensity to “put the thing before the people as clearly” as possible without attempting to “convert [the] audience” (56). He suspects sudden alterations are “shallow, superficial things” (56). Like other alternative religious structures, the spiritualist methodology provides the audience with “the truth and why we know it is the truth” (56). The individual then makes a final decision without ideological programming agents that impress the potential believer.

Gnostic spiritual ideals carry potential positive influence since they do not necessarily catechize the listener. Instead, they promote autonomous critical evaluations whereby the individual negotiates his/her own perspective. Followers learn of belief systems that promote Truth. Charles Freeman cites Aristotle, who asserts, “no one is able to attain the truth adequately” (7). Experts usually operate alone when they consider their learning complete. As Freeman says, they ultimately contribute “little or nothing to the truth” (7). However, empowering others recognizes their potential to provide truth “about the nature of things” (7). Formative religious systems like spiritualism employ constructivist epistemological models that promote plurality.

Freeman provides an example when he cites St. Paul, who provides a mystical consideration of human duality. He identifies the existence of a “spiritual body which survives and functions upon an etheric plane” (138). St. Paul’s research does not necessarily contradict the theoretical underpinnings of Roman Catholicism. His agnostic

vision of the human mortal recognizes how mortal and immortal sub-selves within the incarnate and ethereal characteristics function within the typical human body. St. Paul's research occurs before the complete establishment of the Roman Catholic catechism, which means he can make such statements without fear of reprisal. Later theologians, though, do not have the same benefit. I would argue that Doyle recognizes that non-codified religious structures provide an effervescent intellectual space to prepare the way for future discovery. He knows learning is a process that never ends, though authority figures argue otherwise. These reasons attract Enid to fringe religions and leave Malone curious.

Without codified languages that religious systems approve, individual practitioners develop their own truth-seeking structures through the supernatural realm. Doyle posits, "a great medium is a great artist and is to be judged by the same standards" (201). These individuals act as informational conduits for the supernatural. Emerson states that the proper use of language conveys "natural facts," which he defines as "symbols of particular spiritual facts" (20). Great artists convert "an outward phenomenon" into an object of tremendous affective power (22). For Emerson, an artist's greatness exists in the facility to find in material objects "the substantial thoughts of the Creator, which must always preserve an exact relation to their first origin; in other words, visible nature [has] a spiritual and moral side" (25). Doyle and Emerson agree that a great artist affects humanity through the inspired manipulation of symbols within a particular medium.

The artist's connection to the supernatural suggests that greatness does not take existent structures and recombine them ingeniously. The artist's quality relies upon a

connection to the supernatural realm. The dilemma is whether the artist uses prior linguistic constructs or creates fresh structures. To John Cottingham, these systems are substantially less effective at communicating knowledge acquired from the supernatural realm for a fundamental reason. There is “an infinite, self-subsistent being beyond the grasp of our normal literal and scientific language, and thus reasonably suppose that it can be glimpsed, if at all, only via intimations, or symbolic or other figurative modes of discourse that we must create to express” (90-1). With its predilection towards literal technical language, science does not possess the critical capacity to reveal supernatural knowledge. In contrast, art and literature construct multi-layered textual products that convey the true complexity of information from supernatural phenomena, whether it is through linguistic or imagistic works.

Sharing new supernatural communication contact through existing ideologies is dangerous. Weaving prior tangential systems into the social fabric moves them from agents of resistance into agents of influence. These great works then exert what Harold Bloom calls the “Anxiety of Influence” over future artists who consciously, subconsciously, or unconsciously mirror these forms of expression rather than create their own. Bloom states in *The Anxiety of Influence* that “authentic, high literature relies upon troping, a turning away not only from the literal but from prior tropes” (xix). He believes that “great writing is always at work strongly (or weakly) misreading previous writing” (xix). The act of creation occurs within constructs which past artists create. When influences are too predominant, the resultant anxiety restricts the space available for new concepts. These constructs limit braver individuals from progressing beyond already defined spaces. Bloom later suggests in *Genius* that the selfsame concept “invokes the

transcendental and the extraordinary, because it is fully conscious of them” (12). True geniuses have a specific self-awareness: the individual “goes beyond the highest order of consciousness that we are capable of knowing” (12). True geniuses connect to the supernatural spirits that exist within them; moreover, they broadcast an authenticity of self through genuine forms of expression.

To Doyle both religion and science problematize selfhood and genius. Persons construct defined spaces through tools that discover new information. A great artist connects with the supernatural realm and perhaps escapes this anxiety of influence. Yet this individual will eventually attempt to share this information with others. Often, the artist communicates through already established structures, which could obfuscate newly acquired knowledge. An ingenious new constitution would define an entirely new space, but the individual then risks othering. This lowers the chance that an average person would pay attention.

Established religions empower upper classes through middle-to-lower class enslavement, which puts the proletariat in a difficult position. They recognize how the system enslaves them. However, powerful social influences believe these faiths exclusively provide an opportunity for upward mobility. This conundrum leaves them less connected to the potential empowerment that authentic religious experiences provide. Yet for the sake of acceptance, these faiths comply with artificial suppressive schemes. Doyle observes that this misuse of religion leads the proletariat to subvert the bourgeoisies through alternative agnostic faith structures. The game becomes a constant cycle of one faith system rising while another copes with the untoward aristocratic influences to ensure continued control over their particular dominion. Cottingham asserts

that general spiritualism reflects this oppositional arrangement. Its finite practice in the nineteenth-century puts a “premium on certain kinds of intensely focused moral and aesthetic response[s], or on the search for deeper reflective awareness of the meaning of our lives and of our relationship to others and to the natural world” (3). These activities “fill the creative and meditative space left over when science and technology have satisfied our material needs” (3). Unfortunately, we leave our spiritual self wanting, even as socialization agents argue these systems provide necessary religious experiences that deliver us from “evils” to avoid. Idealistically, praxis provides “structured timings, the organized programmes of readings, contemplation, meditation, prayer, and reflection, interspersed with the daily rhythms of eating and sleeping” (Cottingham 4). Sensibly, these do not enable spiritual wholeness but ensure individual impoverishment through an associated intellectual enslavement.

Specifically, marginalized groups cannot realize a holistic self. In the Doyle text, Malone notes that the spiritualist rallies find “small trades-folk, male and female shopwalkers, better class artisans, lower middle-class women worn with household cares, occasional young folk in search of sensation” (25). Christianity itself once labored under such conditions. As Doyle notes, this faith system initially attracts “slaves and underlings until it gradually extended upwards” (41). These same groups control the faith until those in positions of political and/or financial power make it their own. Once the upper classes seize control, they codify the faith. Consider the miracle, morality, and mystery plays of the medieval period as an example of the scope religion has in people’s everyday lives. These secular acts of worship or interactions with socialization agents communicate morals and the roles marginalized citizens are to fulfill. Lower classes look

to alternative means for individual empowerment with greater self-control and less interference. This dynamic explains the emergent popularity today of other world religions when Christianity hemorrhages membership, sees a significant downturn in ordained men and women, and faces a significant crisis of faith.

One can find instances of social and political leaders controlling the masses through religion which date back to the ancient Greco-Roman period. Doyle identifies this within *The Land of Mist* specifically about Christianity: “[it] was never the same from the time that villain Constantine laid his hand on it” (245). Freeman notes after Constantine’s conversion, his “first task [ended] the persecutions by ensuring toleration for Christians” (159). Positively, his actions enabled the public to practice an emergent resonant faith. Yet this development became dubious the moment he involved himself as a political leader. The religion shifted from a means to encourage human individual growth through supernatural contemplation to an ideological superstructure of social control. Christianity emerged as a new form of state power over members of society deemed dangerous—that is, the overworked marginalized members. To ensure that priests delivered a consistent message, Constantine codified the Christian faith. As Freeman states, Constantine called “a council of bishops at which he could enforce an agreed definition of Christian doctrine to be backed by the state. So was initiated the process by which church doctrine was decided” (167). During these meetings, synoptic documents became church doctrine. Some brilliant theologians provided unique and perhaps accurate definitions of Christianity aligned with Christ’s original vision. Yet members of the council labeled these documents as earthly rather than divinely-inspired. Roman Catholic catechism subsequently removed these texts from consideration.

Freeman finds, and I concur, that Christianity's state role cause short-term and long-term damage to the pursuit of Truth, which harms our relationship with supernatural phenomena. From this point forward, Western Civilization shifts from the Greek intellectual tradition, which downplays the infallibility of experts, definitive knowledge, and permanent epistemological structures, to the modernist viewpoint whereas experts use reliable and established techniques to promote what they define as incontrovertible truths. This development significantly impairs human evolution for centuries. Doyle, Stevenson, and others accurately detect an emergent new danger with the effort to mainstream science as a primary means of cognitive and epistemological processes. Science later uses the same dynamic to limit the extent of human intellectual capital that may undermine dominant social authorities.

As this chapter suggests, the fundamental purpose for humankind's existence addresses Frankl's comment about the importance of an overall motivating factor. Substantial evidence from the nineteenth-century suggests that humanity's primary purpose is to acquire knowledge through its relationship with the supernatural and natural. This prepares the self for a higher form of existence to which one ascends after death. While science provides a means of discovery, it often solves mundane problems that improve and even unnaturally lengthen our mortal existence. Still it fails to discover information on more important fundamental questions that involve our spiritual existence, especially cosmological roles and our relationship to the universe.

John Henry Cardinal Newman states in Discourse V from *The Idea of the University*, true knowledge involves "something intellectual, something which grasps what it perceives through the senses; something which takes a view of things which sees

more than the senses convey; which reasons upon what it sees, and while it sees; which invests it with an idea” (113). Education’s fundamental purpose expands humankind’s perceptual framework. Science can encourage growth, but it should not become the sole basis for intellectual contemplation. Rather, it should function as one of many potential perceptual matrices whereby greater cosmological views de-center humanity. We could then overcome our hubris, which marks many of my discussions in this dissertation. Too often, the vast human potential does not become a motivating factor to activate our search for Truth. Instead, it is a primary vehicle to validate our own alleged superiority over and beyond the natural world.

Likewise, history—especially alternative historical records—shows that we often use religion to confirm our preferred place in relationship to our Creator. Yet these theisms do not maximize our spiritual development. Instead, religion becomes a tool to perpetuate certain perceptual constructs. These ultimately rob youngsters especially of their ability to move beyond the extraordinarily limited epistemological and metaphysical potentials that lie outside our accepted systems. Research by Christian mystics demonstrates this perspective. Though they remain inside the Christian ideological superstructure through close readings of the Bible, the mystic does not glean information that confirms accepted truths. Instead, these scholars “penetrate to the living source of the biblical message, that is, to the Divine Word who speaks in and through human words and texts” (McGinn 3). These studies do not confine themselves to tenets that prior scholars endorse. Rather, these researchers often gloss over Truths that invalidate long-held theological doctrine. Mystics succeed in escaping from such established ideologues.



They conduct objective readings where the potential discoveries of Truths contradict what catechists share with established believers and neophytes.

Specifically, Gnostic dualism sees “the world as evil, the creation of an evil creator, but the human soul as good and imprisoned in it” (Freeman 75). Gnostics believe in enlightening the soul through a “teacher [who facilitates a reunion] with God” (75). Though antithetical, Gnosticism and Christianity share in common human enlightenment through interaction with a divine presence. The fundamental differences between these two theologies allow the individual to escape from the more limited scope of Christianity. Through the prism of Gnosticism, such followers discover additional higher Truths from the supernatural realm. Transitioning into the next section of this chapter, I share some of the higher Truths which nineteenth century authors acquire through their artistic geniuses. To Bloom, supernatural phenomena use these moments to inspire transcendence in these authors. To provide an accurate historical record, these authors include microcosms of their supernatural encounters throughout the text. Additionally, these authors exit from popular religious and/or social ideologies of the period to discover these new Truths.

Matthew Arnold’s ability to penetrate beneath the superficiality of existence is among the most significant Truths that nineteenth century artistic geniuses reveal. His poem *The Buried Life* provides a central Gnostic foundation upon which other Truths rely. Philip Davis states that “the literary man in the nineteenth century was increasingly likely to have to try to preserve a sense of the spirit of mind as opposed to the conception of mind as determined by physical laws and external circumstances” (xxxviii). Terms like “spirit” recognize how the well-chronicled nineteenth century “Spirit of the Age” is

more than a shared consciousness of poetic discontent. Davis recognizes the collective concern between both Romantic and Victorian artists regarding the emergent influence of science. This threatens the intimate potentiality of humanity's relationship with the supernatural.

Davis continues that artists see in the Age of Machinery a troublesome new worldview as a "vast, albeit complicated, machine" (xxxviii). On a microcosmic level, the human mind itself is "only a complex mechanism of a similar kind" (xxxviii). This would ultimately de-spiritualize the human consciousness. Under this notion, one alters the consciousness by finding the malfunctioning part, fixing it, replacing it, or providing some other physical substance that changes the part. Arnold and other artists of the century counter this mechanistic mindset with an alternative duality—that is, we simultaneously lead a mortal and immortal existence. This state is easy for humanity to accept since it equally and naturally complements a priori and empirical epistemological methodologies. Beneath the surface, this deeper existence is more difficult to quantify or qualify. Here, the supernatural realm itself exists—a state of existence within our own mortal frames which we find in all living beings.

To keep with Bloom's misprision, it is important to consider Arnold's precursor, someone who obviously influences his art. Davis finds that Arnold sees himself as a "self-confessed heir to Wordsworth" (29). Before I begin a close reading of Arnold's *The Buried Life*, I bring in the source of Arnold's influence. Wordsworth argues in his parable, *Simonides and the Sage*, "We respect the corporeal frame of Man, not merely because it is the habitation of a rational, but of an immortal Soul" (121). One could

question the importance of a mortal life when it appears the immortal life carries greater significance.

In response, Wordsworth states in *Simonides and the Sage*, that the mortal life is an important complement to the spiritual. In “travelling in the direction of mortality,” the individual advances “to the country of everlasting life” (121). The soul “explore[s] those cheerful tracts” known as the supernatural realm in contemplation of what is to come (121). Yet there is an opportunity to return to “the land of transitory things—of sorrow and tears” (121). Travelling between the mortal and immortal realms is important to the evolving soul. Total immersion without a fully developed soul presents an overwhelming white noise where the finite senses cannot discriminate the limitless data one confronts. An unadulterated focus on the mortal realm dampens development of the immortal aspect in every human being. Their living existence would be extraordinary, but their mortal death would be absolute. This is one of the central purposes for Arnold’s poem. He channels an important Wordsworthian supernatural concept—that is, each individual must be aware of his dual existence to care for both mortal and immortal sub-selves.

Within *The Buried Life*, Arnold informs the reader that much of our supernatural sensitivity exists within our less tangible capabilities. He states in line three, “I feel a nameless sadness o’er me roll.” Among the most difficult elements of supernatural sensitivity are the vague feelings that lie beyond one’s linguistic powers. This limits how one communicates supernatural interactions, or in this case, emotional responses to the soul’s presence. Arnold knows what ennobles the spiritual sub-self. As he says, such “light words bring no rest, / And thy gay smiles no anodyne” (7-8). Instead, the soul

seeks in its surroundings and in its interactions with other human beings the supernatural that exists inside. Our buried lives carry important and unique insights.

Like other Romantic and Victorian artists, Arnold identifies love as one of the most effective triggers for supernatural recognition and contemplation. He questions in *The Buried Life* if love is “too weak / To unlock the heart, and let it speak?” (12-3). In truth, the question is not whether love can indeed activate our sensitivities. Rather, the true inquiry centers on the form of love. If it is the social type in Chapter III, there is cause for concern, since this form lacks the deep spiritual connectivity that actualizes our supernatural presence. Arnold questions whether “even lovers [are] powerless to reveal / To one another what indeed they feel?” (13-4). The answer, of course, depends on the relationship. Arnold knows that superficially-based relationships lack the deep individual union that empowers people to move beyond socially-prescribed ideologies, which place deep spiritual openness in a dangerous category that encourages avoidance. As Arnold responds to his rhetorical question, humans evade such sharing since they could meet “blank indifference, or with blame [be] reproved” (18-9).

Conversely, true spirituality realizes a significant comfort between both mates, where neither individual feels threatened. In fact, the individual sees an unguarded relationship as a necessity versus a luxury. Without such an individual, the self lacks the necessary touchstone to facilitate personal growth through introspection and connection with the supernatural. As this study shows, supernatural phenomena do resort to extraordinary means. However, these instances are uncommon. If they were, socialized individuals would struggle aggressively against the existence of the supernatural realm.

Usually, human interactions with the supernatural occur through soul mate relationships. For spiritually-limited individuals, their existences are much more pitiable, since they must cope with living as an unspiritual being. This lessens the potential quality of their mortal life, plus, it also significantly weakens their soul through a lack of spiritual interconnectivity, leading to considerable difficulties in the afterlife. Arnold would not even consider such a state as living. As Davis argues, life is equal to love, where one witnesses the “creation of a secular God and a religion of the emotions” (139). This extra-social and religious perspective echoes Greek philosophers and further damns the misused influence of established religions like Christianity. As “the apostle of high culture,” he trumpets the “lives of the Ancients [as] bigger and more essential [than] the lives of modern men” (139). Arnold sees how established ideological systems not only distract from deep soulful love but from the essential metaphysical and epistemological journeys of spiritual fulfillment.

In stanza 5, Arnold’s poem explains how a soul mate saves its kith from these oppressive arrangements. Arnold discusses how a “beloved hand” empowers one “jaded with the rush and glare / of the interminable hours” (78, 80-81). Revitalized faculties clearly read “another’s eyes” and hear “the tones of a loved voice caressed” (83). The soul mate provides emotional and intellectual support to restart the entombed life through a bolt “shot back somewhere in our breast,” triggering “a lost pulse of feeling” that begins to stir again (84-85). A physiological metaphor likens this influence to a life-saving shock which an external defibrillator delivers. Arnold indicates that the soul mate affords a figurative resuscitation: the formerly debilitated soul re-enters a reflective state

where “The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain” (86). This is the same as Wordsworth’s inner eye, which is the bliss of solitude.

Lightning is also important. The Romantics in particular show a fascination for it as one of the supernatural’s weapons that are more potent. We see this in works like Arnold’s as well as later works like Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Lightning’s inspirational, life-giving, and life-ending power represents a source of human attraction and fear, much as we see in the raw power of Blake’s tyger. In Arnold’s case, the soul mate channels the power of the supernatural to re-animate the spirit through a figurative lightning strike. Yet Shelley’s haunting text indicates how the scientific application of electricity re-animates flesh as well. Shelley serves as an interesting counterbalance to Arnold. She articulates the danger of a scientific methodology that enlivens the flesh but cannot repopulate it with a soul, which truly indicates the limitations of human potential. We can create the flesh, but we cannot generate a soul.

Arnold suggests that humans can only restore a soul, not construct a replacement. Our contemplative ability enables us to consider that “what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know” (87). Through assistance from our soul mate, we recapture the ability to objectify our surrounding environment. We then discover the supernatural on a level previously unknown due to a social praxis which others supernatural phenomena through textual and historical acts. Greenblatt asserts that social agencies establish control through “a single, monolithic ideological structure” with apparent superficial differences, alienating “us from our own imaginations by oscillating fantasies in a private apolitical realm” (153). The soul mate and supernatural phenomena move the formerly enslaved individual beyond these oppressive structures. This essentially provides a

renewed awareness of “life’s flow,” where we can hear “its winding murmur . . . and [see] / The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze” (88-90). Socialization agents conceal these natural supernatural forms from the individual before the soul’s reanimation. When these ideologies lose power, the self re-actualizes. Reality pours upon refreshed literal and figurative senses that permit contemplation of the essential natural world.

The individual contemplates the interconnected roles that we play as a part of the grander natural and supernatural schemas. The buried life is generic and applicable to all of creation. Yet Arnold applies it to the microcosm that is the individual self. Perhaps the extreme is that each individual sub-self recognizes its place within the larger, more general macrocosmic self. From a panoramic perspective, Arnold intends for each individual spiritual development to cull a much larger social development. The individual recognizes individuality through an idyllic culture; furthermore, each individual self has a responsibility to protect the unique individualism of others.

Arnold’s frequent praise of Goethe recognizes that an infinite respect for the finite self does not occur when we expect the social level to reach the finite individual. Establishing supportive personal space requires a grass-roots effort where “man must live from within outwards” (Davis 391). To Arnold, poets are supernatural change agents within a social realm where “the artist must work from within outwards” (Davis 391). For this to occur, the artist performs a delicate series of individual contortions, bringing “to light his own individuality” (Davis 391). This artistic act, to quote Whitman’s *Song of Myself*, must not be “a bit tamed,” for in the individual’s potential untranslatability, he may “sound [his] barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world” (52: 3-4). Strong

expostulatory utterances represent the selfhood that forms through the combined efforts of separate sub-selves. This projection introduces the self's uniqueness to the world through interactions with the supernatural realm.

An empty signifier from a superficial perspective, a deeper examination of Whitman's artistic theory of the yawp reveals what the artist gleans through his/her maturation. Further rumination contextualizes the yawp into a more discernible format. Arnold knows, like Wordsworth, that if the world is too much with them, lovers and artists become subject to "a like spell . . . benumb[ing] / Our hearts, our voices" (24) If the artist develops some innovative new form of expression, it may project a pure manifestation of the message. Yet the artist risks the reader's comprehension. On the other hand, the artist could use established language to ensure understandability. In the act of translating the message into these pre-established but more limited forms of expression, the essence of the message could disappear. The reader struggles with the act of interpretation continuously. Both sender and receiver worry about the channel and the message, which perhaps represents the difference between mortal and immortal. The mortal is more aware of time due to a limited existence. The immortal can worry less since there is additional time to adjust the message should initial attempts prove unsuccessful.

Another danger is how one's evolved sense of individuality may lead towards recognition of significance that differs from the rest of existence. This is especially the case when one feels isolated through a communicative effort that falls on ears unable to discern the message. The other choice, though, is a social and/or religious indoctrination that leads to a disconnected passive attitude. Therefore, Arnold emphasizes a free heart



in lines 27-28, which expresses the importance of a free soul. He asserts, “our lips [must be] unchained,” for liberating the soul is not enough (28). The supernatural presence in each being must discover and commune without the usual ideological fetters. His proposal is difficult, though, because it “seals them [who] hath been deep-ordained!” (29). The self struggles to find and converse with the buried life. A shared social ideology supportive of individual selfhood not only undermines the philosophical communal superstructure, but it could also compromise the delicate power hierarchy empowering some over many.

One could argue that Arnold’s journey represents a simplistic psychological examination of the buried life in each human. He offers commonsensical advice, which may question what I define as the genius of the poem that an authentic supernatural interaction generates. Arnold chronicles this experience in the text for the sake of posterity. His fourth stanza considers this perspective. Humanity often considers its free will—that is, a Chaos Theory-based notion wherein humans consider themselves as the prime movers of their lives. Yet Arnold labels his cosmological proof as “Fate.” This euphemistic secular phrase criticizes a common theism. He blames humanity’s split on a divine presence whose foresight recognizes “How frivolous a baby man would be— / By what distractions he would be possessed, / How he would pour himself in every strife” (30-33). Arnold finds a fundamental design flaw in the general human form: specifically, our mortal and immortal sub-selves duel over control of the self and the future path of individual and larger collective states. This bickering leads to a domesticated state of split selfhood which permanently and hopelessly limits maturation beyond an infantile state. No other explanation exists for humanity’s propensity to demonstrate its immortal

potential through production of tremendous intellectual works. At the same time the mortal animalistic tendency towards horrible nightmares, we perpetrate on other humans and/or the natural environment emerges.

Arnold sees that our mortal frame inclines towards involvement in “every strife,” where our self-identities undergo constant change based on and patterned after the latest popular secular and/or religious creeds (34). A constant fluctuation in selfhood distracts from the “genuine self,” forcing obedience to man-made laws rather than “his being’s law” (36-7). These natural principles come from a genuine self-connectedness to supernatural phenomena (36-7). Without we do nothing else but ignore what Arnold calls the “river of our life,” which prevents our contemplation of this “buried stream” (39, 42). Subsequently, humanity wanders “at large in blind uncertainty, / Though driving on with it eternally” (44-5). We could blame ideological principles alone for our failure to connect to our buried souls. However, Arnold shows the divisive tendencies of a Judeo-Christian faith system. Under these influences, humans ignore agnostic or Gnostic mystical methodologies. These less contemporary methods enable the soul at the expense of larger structural control. As Greenblatt states about capitalism—a construct which I would extend to include religious structures—tendential laws maim “our existence as individual subjects and paralyze our thinking about time and change just as surely as it alienates us from our speech itself” (147). Suppressing our barbaric yawp occurs through cleverly constructed thoughts that conceal the buried life. A plastic self teaches that no internal self exists. If we learn of the soul’s existence, it is not a genuine lesson. Rather, a specific counterfeit construction resembles the soul and disables the supernatural presence in every human.

As Robert Langbaum asserts in *The Mysteries of Identity*, Arnold's poetry is a "convincing rendition of modern urban numbness and alienation" (51). This ironic combination shows the urban propensity to share space with a higher percentage of people versus a rural existence. Yet this environment promotes isolationism rather than inclusionism. In such large social spaces, humans conceal themselves from other individuals. Instead, they redirect their energies towards an internal remoteness to protect them from violation by others. The individual avoids direct interaction with our buried supernatural presence, which authentic relationships could promote. Langbaum notes Arnold's ability to render the "mental atmosphere of the modern intellectual" through "his sense of psychological pathos" (52). This typically depressing environment promulgates a separatist mentality, especially in claustrophobic, socially homogeneous environments.

When social systems successfully influence one's intellectual matrix, it distances a reflective consciousness of our surroundings, other human presences, and interrelated roles (52). In *Life without Principle*, Thoreau states, "When our life ceases to be inward and private, conversation degenerates into mere gossip" (113). This general malaise relies on the rumors of others to compensate for a self that "has not heard from himself this long while" (114). The problem, of course, is that the post-Romantic interior life consists of a thin veneer that cannot process the "true *blankness* and *barrenness*, and *unpoetryessness*" that typifies a Victorian period whose culture is increasingly industrial and reliant on science (119). This materiality provides a false sense of individual and social spiritual depth. Victorian artists like Arnold view their contemporary state in the

context of their recent progenitors. This act recognizes how the fin de siècle pushes humankind towards automation at the expense of spirituality.

*The Buried Life* in particular provides an important supernatural lesson tied to a threatened loss of humanity. Discussions of “what the personality ought to be like and of how far it falls short due to the unprecedented conditions of the nineteenth century” ultimately lead to a “loss of vitality and an assured sense of self” (Langbaum 52-3). In the poem’s fourth stanza, Arnold contrasts the typical obstructions of the modern urban environment with an internal ambition which he describes as an “unspeakable desire” (47). This inspires the pursuit of “knowledge of our buried life” (48). Restoring “our fire and restless force” will eventually provide a “true, original course” which typical obstreperous ideologies prevent (48-50). To Thoreau, the innate unquenchable desire for knowledge requires our minds to progress through a regression towards “innocent and ingenuous children” (649). In this state we recognize that “Knowledge does not come to us by details, but in flashes of light from heaven” (649). The dawn of science and the Industrial Revolution inspire a distancing of humanity from its archaic past, a motive that made the Gothic critical lens in particular so popular. A separation from superstitions will shift the human consciousness so far from the supernatural that “we do not worship truth, but the reflection of truth” (650). These modernist influences warp and narrow our sense of an individual and shared spirituality. We compensate through “exclusive devotion to trade and commerce and manufactures and agriculture and the like” (650). These feed the body but do not necessarily nourish the soul (650).

As the research of philosophers like Thomas Moore reveal, elimination of the primitive self blocks humanity from a portion of its authentic human nature. Greenblatt

asserts that at one point in our history we “were whole, agile, integrated” on an individual microcosmic and a social macrocosmic level (148). Under this dynamic, humanity subsists as “individual subjects but not individuals,” without psychological distinction “from the shared life of the society [where] politics and poetry were one” (148). This may appear as a contradiction in terms, but a deeper analysis reveals its congruency. Suitable individual freedom enables a shared consciousness with sub-selves who co-exist naturally. They subsist exclusive of suppressive agents who force destabilizing artificial constructs that upset a carefully balanced self-matrix.

Arnold recognizes that the modern self fractures the common relationship between the individual and overall social structure. The influence of science forces a different, separate coexistence as disjointed, fragmented selves. To counteract this tendency, Victorians echo Transcendental and Romantic calls for the genuine interaction of selves on a social level and sub-selves on an individual level. Yet Victorian voices are stronger and less idealistic. The threat which the Romantic and Transcendentalists perceive becomes real as we move towards the fin de siècle. In Victorian texts, these authors manifest realistic constructs within which one can realize Transcendental and Romantic idealism. The evident panic, perhaps, comes from a proto-modernist ideologue. This threat is so profound that radical Victorian writers predict a future of permanent spiritual damage unless some counter ideology mollifies modernism. It produces what Thoreau calls “those rare fruits [of] heroes, saints, poets, philosophers, and redeemers” (653). Such individuals distinguish themselves through the strength of their unique personalities. Each archetype supplies critical services that help weaker individuals overcome oppressive influences.

The poem's final stanza expresses a distinctly human condition caused by the advent of modern technology. This epidemic infects the modern twenty-first century culture even worse today than at the time of his writing. The first line of the stanza states that when one enters a deep soulful interaction "there arrives a lull in the hot race / Wherein he doth forever chase / That flying and elusive shadow, rest" (91-92).

Technological innovations should make life easier by raising the overall standard of living. After one hundred-plus years, our technologies only increase the number of hours we work and the number of tasks we juggle at one time. This extra time should afford a gross increase in the number of hours per week to do as Wordsworth discusses in *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*. We should lie on a couch "In vacant or in pensive mood" where our past can "flash upon that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude" (20-22).

The reader can see that these moments of social, material, and mortal disconnection allow one to reconnect with the supernatural through a pleasurable "dance with the daffodils" (24). Wordsworth and Arnold recognize the importance of such human disconnections, especially given a shift towards greater discontinuity. Greenblatt sees difference between our social and individual pasts and our modern state as indicative of a necessary reconnection with the supernatural through the natural. This is the essential beauty of Wordsworth's poetry as well as the poetic misprision of Arnold. Both study the specific processes that lead to difference between our past and present individual and social natures.

Ironically, Wordsworth and Arnold recognize a complimentary society reliant upon individual selves who possess private space to reconnect with the supernatural realm and, ultimately, with the various sub-selves that comprise the larger self. As

Langbaum argues, the nineteenth century witnessed social attacks upon the secular priests of poetry and the lay faculty of monks. Both othered groupings “represent an enduring elite of sensibility” (55). This only becomes more problematic as we progress through the twentieth-century. To survive these destructive influences we require a defensive posture. These shelter our relationships with the supernatural through greater freedom where we explore agnostic fringe spiritualist movements at our leisure.

The most common methods of preservation allow a continued, insulated co-existence. Arduous study of particular disciplines erects figurative and literal walls, disconnecting individuals from surrounding acculturated masses. The few who resist carve out a sub-space independent of larger assimilative social spaces. Langbaum asserts, “To protect . . . sensibility,” these persons must protect themselves through seclusion, often in “the ivory tower” of their intellectual pursuits and associated reflective potential (55). Arnold articulates the benefit of this reflective opportunity through a contrast in temperature. The human, overheated by society’s breakneck pace, escapes to find “An air of coolness upon his face,” encouraging “an unwonted calm [to pervade] his breast” (93-94). At these moments, the reflective capacity of the person turns in two directions. First, to the past, where he/she recognizes “The hills where . . . life rose,” which encourages deliberation over the minuscule nature of our earthly existence through the ashes from which we arose. Second, the individual turns towards the future, a contemplation of “the sea where it goes” (97). We may be certain of our future, given deliberate planning. Arnold’s constantly changing sea represents the chaos of the future as well as the limited power which humans possess over their destinies. Perhaps this is what draws Edna Pontellier to the sea at the end of Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*. The

supernatural presence of the sea, though eternal, never ceases to change. It is a stable force within its essential instability. The turbid ebb and flow not only represents human misery but the essential nature of our consistently unstable natural and supernatural essences.

Arnold recognizes the existence of the buried life, the role love plays in its discovery/rediscovery, and the functionality of the buried life in relationship to the supernatural. Yet he does not articulate how others connect to the supernatural realm beyond a soul mate. Percy Bysshe Shelly and Edmund Burke, though, do offer insight into an additional source of the supernatural that emerges from the aesthetic contemplation of beauty. In his “Introduction to Taste” at the beginning of *A Philosophical Enquiry*, Burke states, “It appears indeed to be generally acknowledged, that with regard to truth and falsehood there is something fixed” (11). Verifiability exists through “certain tests and standards which are allowed on all sides” of a dispute (11). We establish these “in our common nature” (11). Though multifarious, Burke asserts that humans possess a shared unconscious awareness of incontrovertible Truths. Latent deep within our psyches, social forces dislodge these Truths from our available heuristics by conditioning us to focus on superficial materialistic differences where we become ordinary through a false uniqueness. Such systems gain power through the resultant disparate tensions. Even with shared values, these divisive tactics discourage analysis or application. They are supposed “delicate and aerial,” and subsequently “cannot be properly tried by a test, nor exercise of the reasoning faculty” (11). Submitting instead to artificial constructs by society ensures continued control through image-based constructs supporting a homogeneity that weakens the masses while empowering the elite.



Burke believes that these artificial systems supersede shared conscious/unconscious systems. Especially when applied to nature, “we seem in danger of circumscribing nature within the bounds of our own notions, which we often take up by hazard, or embrace on trust, or form out of a limited and partial consideration of the object before us” (12). Purposeful repression of our collective consciousness into an unconscious state leads to deductive methodologies, limiting ideas of all “that nature comprehends, according to her manner of combining” (12). Burke is acutely aware that humans supplant the unbounded potential of the natural supernatural through a flawed system. He responds with an epistemological and metaphysical mission statement that can serve as a teaching philosophy:

I am convinced that the method of teaching which approaches most nearly to the method of investigation, is incomparably the best; since not content with serving up a few barren and lifeless truths, it leads to the stock on which they grew; it tends to set the reader himself in the track of invention, and to direct him into those paths in which that author has made his own discoveries, if he should be so happy as to have made any that are available. (12-13)

Like the Ancient Greeks, Burke wants an investigative human intellect to exceed confirmed existent truths rather than justify myopic elements of human physical sustenance. The Promethean spark should drive humanity towards discovering Truths that provide answers to the most fundamental nature of human existence. This model simultaneously nurtures the individual soul and the collective human soul as well.

As the preeminent rugged individualist, Ralph Waldo Emerson articulates in *The American Scholar* a means by which we can avoid the myopia Burke outlines. We

should spend our intellectual energy seeking higher truths rather than satisfying the base human needs that Maslow expresses in his Needs Hierarchy. As Emerson puts it, the sluggish intellect should “look from under [his/her] iron lids, and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertion of mechanical skill” (53). Instead of the industrialized nature of science, Emerson relies on poetry’s naturalism, which will “revive and lead” the human mind to actualize “its own unifying instinct” in an evolving age (53). He claims that science confines the mind to “analogy [and] identity,” while the artistic mind “goes on tying this together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running underground” (55). The human mind is free to discover how “contrary and remote things cohere, and flower out from one stem” (55). Among the artistry that manifests this search for knowledge through coherence, Burke’s notion of sublime aestheticism provides the quickest and most knowledgeable root. The human most expediently discovers the supernatural within the natural, whether he/she plays the role of creator or critic.

Unfortunately, artists unearth supernatural agencies that do not always confer comfort. The terror and horror-inspiring nature of the tyger and the role of its creator in William Blake’s *The Tyger* confirms this assertion. Ordinarily, a critic sees terror or horror in a text and assumes a Gothic connection. Yet to Edmund Burke, these characteristics serve a different purpose. His archetypal deconstructions align with Shelley’s definition of intellectual beauty. Together, the reader sees how typically negative experiences provide a positive connection to transcendental knowledge of the supernatural realm.

In Part II of *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Burke finds that the sublime in nature produces an associative reaction of astonishment. He defines the “state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror” (53). To Burke, our astonishment and awful responses stimulate a turning toward the supernatural even as these experiences repulse our superficial sensitivities. This perspective is central to Shelley’s poetic theory, specifically in *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. When horror overwhelms the individual, our social ideologies label this temporary weakness as the impression of evil. The individual labors to escape from the supernatural phenomena’s influence as quickly as possible so he/she can restore self-control. The natural response, though, should not lead to escape. Rather, sublime subjects attract the curious human being since “it is impossible to look on any thing as trifling or contemptible, that may be dangerous” (53). This fear should not drive us away but attract us into a closer proximity. Our fear comes from the raw unbridled transcendent power the form represents. At these moments, the naked human subject realizes the true insignificance of mortal existence. Contemplating the role of the individual soul in the larger universal collective is possible. To do so, we must look beyond the prescribed fears we tend towards during sublime confrontations, thanks to the influence of society.

Before I progress further, it is important to provide a working definition for my application of the term “sublime” since it tends towards amorphousness. I find the definition Frances Ferguson offers in *Solitude and the Sublime* most appropriate for this study. She explains that manifestations of the sublime often occur in “Aesthetic objects, like dreams, memories, anticipations, and so forth” (3). These tend to connect “with real

and substantial action and suffering” (3). Importantly, though, Ferguson cites Kant, who she argues finds a “chief portion of their interest . . . in their not being—and never being—identical to them” (3). Similar, then, to the *differance* that encodes symbols, the sublime uses objects with a clear and unique identity. The sublime further bends these aesthetic objects to signify alternative meanings. Differentiation discerns these unique objects from like objects lacking the sublime character.

One need only look at Shelley’s emphasis on physical objects like Mount Blanc to understand this subtle yet importance difference. Specifically, Blanc is neither the tallest nor the widest mountain in the world, such as Mt. Everest. Yet Shelley finds the sublime in Mount Blanc’s rugged crags. At these moments, the initial human response of fear is normal. Burke notes that most of our languages “frequently use the same word . . . to signify the modes of astonishment or admiration and those of terror” (49). The *differance* between these two apparently different concepts represent a natural affinity which our social constructs differentiate to ensure an artificial response that disempowers the supernatural phenomena. The typical subversive temperament of the artist looks beyond these reductive perceptual lenses to see the aesthetic object as it really exists. These special individuals then see the sublime.

Some may consider a sublime artistic work as purely subjective. Under this construct, a true authentic, objective-based experience is debatable. Ferguson and Burke, though, offer evidence refuting such assertions. We can measure the superiority of a work when the mutual alliance of mortal and immortal stimulates moments of artistic genius. Ferguson finds sublimity through a collaborative imaginative tension that creates a transcendental space. Within, new knowledge is not necessarily taught, “because of the

way in which the construction of the lesson plan for that learning is itself unimaginable”

(4). Instead, both the mortal and the supernatural phenomena learn from each other.

Aesthetic contemplation “becomes the site for an examination of the meaningfulness of the very lack of fit between objects and the individuals that perceive them” (5). This moment of deconstructive *différance* provides a perceptual tension between the typical human and supernatural understanding of a particular symbolic act.

Contrasting a mortal’s definition with a supernatural agent’s will lead to a new meaning where a merged deconstructive dichotomy creates a disjointed structural dualism. The emergent tension requires some negotiation to define a discernible static meaning. This complicates the basic signifier-signified relationship of a specific physical object like Mount Blanc. It no longer is purely artificial or natural. Instead, the collaborative effort constructs a new meaning that encapsulates the natural but uses an artificial system—of language or other symbols—to ensure universal human understanding. This works as long as the individual moves beyond typical human ideologies that obfuscate moments of genius. Those who argue about the symbol’s misuse overlook how the new usage is a brilliant reconstitution representing a new thought. For obvious reasons, moments of collegial production “make the apparently objective act of cognition involve more than a mere response to objects” (Ferguson 5). These arguments limit interactions between mortal and supernatural to a mimetic event. The static natural object prompts a specific response from the fluid artificial without intellectual rumination.

Extending Ferguson’s argument, I find that a dialectical exchange between mortal and immortal produces an ingenious text that disseminates Truths. Ferguson states that

the imaginative act “suggests the interconnections between consciousness and matter (the way in which thought continually needs some version of objects in order to be thought—which can be seen as one aspect of Derrida’s and de Man’s interest in language)” (6). There is also a phenomenological matter to consider. That is, imagination “provides a very particular account of what counts as matter” (6). Memory, then, is not some subjective a priori structure. Instead, we discover “a version of the aesthetic experience of everyday life” that captures how “externalized objects of the imagination” become “paintings, poems, photographs” (5). In other words, these manifestations “are equally expression of and analogues to internal impressional states” occurring through shared discourses between mortal and supernatural agents (6).

Ferguson sees the Burkean account of the sublime in nineteenth-century art as an interactive dynamic wherein the supernatural represent how “aesthetic objects,” such as Shelley’s Mount Blanc, “themselves become objects” (9). This may supplant or interfere with “the real objects they . . . represent” (9). Of course, an emerging postmodern deconstructive environment problematizes the representational nature of objects. I agree with Ferguson that Burke’s own rhetoric is “fundamentally consistent with deconstruction” (9). We indeed rely upon imaginative moments to differentiate less creative items through the effervescent dynamic that emerges in the space between artist and supernatural agency. This process injects ingenuity through a shared deconstructive re-engineering of items with new meaning. Afterwards, the rejuvenated medium once again resonates as it carries fundamental Truths essential to the human intellect’s evolution. These genuine moments of pure cognition contrast to the general unreliability of human constructs. These destructive acts compromise any modernist notion of

discovering absolute certainty within isolated artificial systems operating separately from the supernatural force. Instead, we need to rely on sense and sensibility to discover the ultimate Truths of the universe.

The infinite, then, is essential for humanity to realize moments of authentic transcendence. The sublime provides higher-order Truths informing any moment of human history. This litmus test determines the text's sustainability and canonical status under the precepts set forth by proponents like Howard Bloom. Of course, these decisive moments clash with truths from artificial human systems that propose to control rather than facilitate Truth. Burke sees sublime moments "fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror which is the most genuine effect, and truest test of the sublime" (67). These incidents stimulate the mind towards Truth. Yet an empiricist failing jeopardizes these moments since there "are scarce any things which can become the objects of our senses that are really, and in their own nature infinite" (67). Artists and critics alike must rely on senses "strongly affected in some manner" (64). These manifestations do not extend beyond fringe experiential moments.

Artistic geniuses solve this problem as they function "in utter solitude remembering . . . spontaneous thoughts and recording them," which "men in crowded cities find true for them" (64). The true testament to the artist's activities lies in the creative artifact. If it becomes a touchstone for much of humanity who "drink [the artist's] words because [they fulfill] for [average people] their own nature," then it deserves an ingenious label (64). Since the average person cannot easily find the sublime, humankind relies greatly on artists who experience transcendent moments.

A lesser artist emphasizes the beautiful, a pleasing characterization that confirms pre-established histories of a particular narrative identity. The inferior artist believes the work's aesthetic attractiveness conveys some important message. In truth, it only serves to confirm pre-established thought that distracts from the pursuit of genuine knowledge. The sensitive observer and genuine artist differentiate between a beautiful work of art and a sublime production. Each work has aesthetic beauty, but the sublime production provides greater depth by emulsifying significant knowledge for public consumption. The work's consumer can also assert a didactic critical lens that obfuscates Truth through a more superficial and materialistic focus on aesthetic spectacle rather than the work's genuineness. A truly magnificent work balances aesthetic spectacle with knowledge's transference. Even the uneducated consumer will receive the intended message, though it occurs in varying degrees.

When beauty subsumes the sublime, Thierry Hentsch argues that the act of decoding turns into an "instrument for conquest" (34). Within this construct, we read "to devour, to conquer, in accordance with arbitrary, pre-assigned meaning or a sense that the future alone can reveal" (34). This act empowers the reader by providing a system of analysis, yet the reader's deductive assertion of a particular system of meaning simultaneously weakens the reader. The reason is simple: using a particular pre-existent deductive methodology to assert control over a text inhibits the imaginative interpretative potential which one discovers through inductive cognition.

People consider interpretative acts without external ideological direction as covert ideological processes confirming dominant structures rather than deconstructing or suggesting competing systems. Interactivity between subject, object, and artist, to quote



Thierry, puts the creator and the surveyor on a path to promote an “infinitesimal disequilibrium that will propel [the individual] on [a] reconquest of time past [that] never fails to touch off . . . a kind of inner upheaval that calls forth sensation of almost painful truth” (34). To quote Proust in Thierry’s text, “Real life . . . finally uncovered and clarified [is] the only life in consequence lived to the full,” which Proust believes “is literature” (34-5). The “painful truth” is an emotional response to sublime aesthetic objects. These simultaneously promote pain through artifacts which the beautiful object contains.

With color, the sublime supernatural produces objects of near limitless expanse. Burke asserts that the sublime supernatural produces a sense of infinity that accurately senses true meaning and place within a vast cosmos. He indicates that “Greatness of dimension is a powerful cause of the sublime” since it often “has the most striking effect” (66). This reflects two issues that surround the human state. The first is the limitless potential of the human mind, ironic when one considers how we prefer the limited potential of the human flesh. Second, vastness supports the true insignificance of our mortal existence. Humanity copes with these two experiences through artificial intellectual mechanisms. These diminish the objects that should moderate the individual and the collective from a cosmological perspective. Particularly to the mind, Hentsch notes that the “infinite space of the mind cannot liberate it from its internal divisions” (34). These artificial spaces do not empower the mind. Instead, they limit the mind, forcing it to perceive naturally occurring phenomena within pre-existent structures. If they poorly define the event, then the ideology conceals what it cannot explain. We use broad contexts to label what these limiting constructs do not include.

When phenomena are too powerful, the system promotes ignorance through Gothic-based fear and/or terror-inspiring mechanisms. This conflicts with the actual phenomenological intent of the sublime. As Ingarden states, it should produce a “true and honest work of art,” permanently marking “the artist’s soul” (190). For this to occur, the “mental and bodily powers” of the individual must “undergo certain characteristic changes” (190). These will differ, depending upon the “shape of the work of art, or the relevant aesthetic object, that is being created” (190). Unfortunately, artificial divisions limit the human mind’s transference as the phenomenological encounter intends. Ingarden believes that the artistic production or object “is to move the artist” (190). The individual who encounters the object “in a particular way” forces one “out of a natural quotidian attitude and [puts one] into a completely new disposition” (191). Newly acquired knowledge which the naturally aesthetic object provides facilitates a sublime encounter with a supernatural agent (191).

Analyzing most Romantic, Victorian, and Transcendental authors reveals that memory is central to supernatural encounters. Mnemonics particularly suggest how sound plays a critical role in storage and recall by both individual and society. Clifford Geertz notes in *Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought*, “the innovative is, by definition, hard to categorize” (515). There is an intensified difficulty due to “an alteration of the principles of mapping” (515). In other words, “something is happening to the way we think about the way we think” (515). This metacognitive shift forces the average individual towards a personalized encoding that historicizes the phenomenological experience. Unfortunately, this shift encounters significant resistance from tropes that encode our experiences within established “institutions, actions, images,

utterances, events customs . . . all the usual objects of social-scientific interest” which influence and are influenced by the same “institutions, actions, customs,” etcetera (516). This process creates a recursive loop of meaning which opposes ingenious thought. Modes like these rely on non-eclectic, closed circles wherein mnemonics disable rather than enable supernatural contemplation.

Likewise, for Burke mnemonic memory encodes history through associative functions where “we find it very hard afterwards to distinguish [the subject] from natural effects” (118). Instead, established social dynamics influence a consistency to protect rather than subvert the established system. We sacrifice sublimity, which permits human encounters with the supernatural. Geertz levels this criticism against social scientific theoretical models before the rise of analogies. Earlier reductionist systems relied heavily on science-based mechanical methodologies. They may assist in understanding some of “the materials of human experience,” yet their formulaic tendencies close off the potential for new discoveries (516). At their most dastardly, these systems ensure that the investigator does not venture outside prefabricated spaces and explore the possible explanatory potential existing beyond the borders of current interpretive means.

As Geertz notes, the social sciences’ decision to abandon “a reductionist conception” and move towards more analogical formulae destabilize genres (516). There is an “interpretive turn” that revises the “style of discourse in social studies,” where we reinvent “the instruments of reasoning” to study the basic human condition (516). Often we lose the “memory of music” due to cognitive processes that encode and historicize sounds which fit within accepted social matrices (516). We connote pleasant sounds as music, while we label natural resonances “of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or

artillery,” the sort of auditory events that awake a “great and awful sensation in the mind” as noise to ignore or even fear (75). Since mnemonics rely on patterns to stimulate memory, contextualizing an authentic sublime supernatural phenomena through an established artificial structure others the event. Forgetfulness rather than storage of a sublime experience often results.

On the other hand, a natural mnemonic cadence can promote an authentic sublime supernatural encounter. Auditory stimulation provides a message through an embedded referent for easy individual recall. As Philip Shaw asserts in *The Sublime*, poetry is the best human tool for contemplating the sublime supernatural. Its “stress on the synthesizing power of imagination [harmonizes] the disparate realms of idea and reality, mind and world” (92). True ingenuity relies on mnemonic devices to construct three-dimensional thought patterns, enabling ascendance to supernatural thought. In *Circles*, Emerson asserts that our only redress is to “draw a circle outside of [our] antagonist” (181). Though our actions haunt “the mind and cannot be escaped,” this form of discourse constructs a disturbing dynamic through an abridgment in language, explaining nature “as one example of a bolder generalization” (181). In this projective power, we “upheave all thy creed, all the creeds, all the literature of the nations, and marshal thee to a heaven which no epic dream has yet to depict” (181). In these moments, “men walk as prophecies of the next age” where a synergistic model articulates space for supernatural engagement (181). A stable scaffold emerges where both mortal and immortal merge in one transcendent moment.

The transient nature of ingenious encounters via sublime experiences is the greatest challenge to great artists as well as our ability to converse with the supernatural.

It also represents the true philosophical purpose of poetry which the Romantics envision. Shaw finds that this unique form of literary expression “seeks to bring the supersensible back into the realm of sensuous representation” (92). This enables human comprehension of “the sublime” (92). Authors like Wordsworth and Coleridge represent human inconstancy with difficult and abstract textualization processes. At one moment, the supernatural saturate nearly every word. Yet then the artist struggles with clairvoyance as social and religious ideologues interfere with cognitive processing. Most scholarship ruminates over the loss of one’s muse.

Ironically, Wordsworth and Coleridge are the greatest examples. Both poets see their formerly efficient connection with the supernatural disappears. When this occurs, their artistry loses resonance. Later productions are mere shells of their former intellectual creative prowess. As R.C. Townsend asserts in the March 1966 edition of *PMLA*, the February 1805 death of John Wordsworth, “the poet’s brother,” represented what Ernest de Selincourt asserts is the ““most terrible blow that either William or Dorothy had severed.”” (70). As Townsend continues, this event is often considered “as the blow which signals the decline of Wordsworth’s poetic power, his shift towards Christianity, and his withdrawal into the isolation of Rydal Mount”(70). Using his decline specifically as a case study, we can observe what becomes of Wordsworth’s poetic genius through influence of tragedy and isolationism. Perhaps more profound is his withdrawal from his artistry and towards a more recognized faith structure. While this may have granted Wordsworth solace in his loss and advancing age, one can also argue his loss of poetic genius tied to his newfound Christian beliefs contributed to his loss of poetic abilities.

Likewise, Coleridge's conflict between his sense of self and later religious devotions interferes with his poetic potency. As L.D. Berkoben notes in *Coleridge's Decline as a Poet*, his troubles begin when he becomes extraordinarily sensitive to the conflict "between the vague mysticism into which his poetry led him and his views on Christianity" (28). Berkoben cites Coleridge's "To William Wordsworth: Composed on the Night after his Recitation of a Poem on the Growth of an Individual Mind." In it, he characterizes parts from *The Prelude* as follows:

. . . Moments awful,  
Now in thy inner life, and now abroad.  
When power streamed from thee, and thy soul received  
The light reflected, as a light bestowed (17-19).

Though this may assert a shared productive force still capable of significant production, Berkoben finds wistfulness where "Coleridge himself believed that he had lost the power" (160). Berkoben confirms Coleridge's suspicions, finding in his poems after 1815 "sterner stuff than the earlier occasional pieces" (161). Specifically, the "diction becomes abstract and philosophical, while the forms become simple—almost bared" (161). In sum, his later poems concede "that the universe is purposeless, that man is alienated from beatitudes by the puzzle of evil" (164). Furthermore, Man is seen as "separate from Nature; the material universe is no longer viewed as the mighty alphabet of God" (164). In this new mindset, humankind is alienated, which undermines the earlier harmoniousness he preaches as part of his poetic theory. Like Wordsworth, one can link the source for this significant downturn, at least in part, to the strengthening

position of traditional religious structures, specifically Christianity, which dominates his perceptual matrices and as such limit his poetic power of sight.

As champions of this unique form of literary expression, Wordsworth and Coleridge see their power's exodus as a significant lesson. One should never overestimate the possibility that rich inspiration will disappear without warning. Shelley contemplates this dilemma in the second stanza of *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*.

Humankind struggles with how intellectual beauty at one moment exists via the "hues all thou dost shine upon," yet at some future undisclosed point this enlightenment passes "away and leave[s] our state" in a "dim vast vale of tears" that are "vacant and desolate" (13-15). Shelly recognizes the link to a different form of mortality. Transient beings not only have a limited period of physical existence, but our intellectual potency—our intellectual beauty—is also temporary, just as our physical beauty. Most tragic are instances of intermediacy. When our prophetic power disappears, our physical form most often continues. We then feel sub-human, a fallen temple capable of remembering our past potential but now horribly inept at recapturing former glory.

We may never lose the knowledge we acquire via our sublime phenomenological encounter with the supernatural. Yet we have a narrow window to acquire new information. Perhaps the reason we lose this ability lies in Burke's perspective of what produces the sublime in an object. The sublime emerges in the presence of two ingredients: tension and passion. He states, "whatever is fitted to produce such a tension, must be productive of a passion similar to terror, and consequently must be a source of the sublime, though it should have no idea of danger connected with it" (121). Tension, passion, and fear are natural emotions, but the sublime object must produce these

experiences in the observer. This is the crucial limitation. While the supernatural possesses an infinite power to inject the sublime in ordinary natural objects, the infinite does face the receiver's own finiteness.

When misused, the sublime artist or object itself acts as a potential obfuscating agent. William James argues in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, "feeling is the deeper source of religion" (372-73). In comparison, "philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products, like translating of a text into another tongue" (372-73). For the Romantics, feeling provides a suitable empiricist response to a priori functions common during the nineteenth-century. This leads to a common historicist functionality that Saree Makdisi defines in *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity*. While she applies her analysis to India, I posit from a general perspective that the period attempts "to connect factual events into a diachronic story" that is "rational, logical, and above all" appears to be a "historical narrative" (1). Applying an a priori methodology incapacitates the requisite sensory apparatuses which we use to achieve objectivity in an experiential interaction with supernatural phenomena. Rather than focus on feeling, we rely on logic-based philosophical and theological systems. These place less emphasis on sense and more importance on mythical narratological structures that emphasize a priori techniques.

Romanticism's influence then offers a crucial alternate theology to an emergent modernization that carries an absolutist agenda. I concur with Makdisi's argument that romanticism offers "a diverse and heterogeneous series of engagements with modernization," where artists create a "mediating discourse" (6). The Romantic mindset criticizes modernity's desire for homogeneity at the expense of research into alternative



explanations that deconstruct newly formed structures. Instead, Romanticism promotes a “series of engagements [that] contribute to the constitution of modernization as a cultural field that eventually rise[s] to dominance” (6-7). This multiplicity is a precursor to deconstruction and post-modernity. Seemingly flexible, this diversity’s firmness integrates stable elements into an obstructive social fabric inhibiting later opportunities for new discoveries. I would agree with David Brown that “conditioning is inevitable” with any new ideological system that embeds itself within a particular culture (87). The best counteractive solution is dialecticism, since it facilitates “engagement and the search for objectivity” (87). Both need to be “pursued in tandem, and not in opposition to one another” (87). Some consider Truth a pipe dream within an evolving cognitive structure that doubts objectivity and embraces pure subjectivity. Yet Brown asserts the discoverability of Truth. He acknowledges that “its pursuit is more difficult,” particularly for the reasons Shelley posits (87). Our popular ideologues limit our exploration rather than enable deeper penetrations into the cosmological and ontological mysteries of the sublime supernatural.

Realistically, humankind struggles with a prolonged equity among its mortal and immortal natures. Were this to occur, we would cease to be mortal. Instead, humankind would transform into ethereal beings whose power is greater than even the typical gods of our religious structures. A permanent transformation would see us as monstrous vivisections of mortal and immortal selves. While we would have the power to influence the mortal and immortal realms simultaneously, this unnatural permutation would upset the natural balance between both. Even Christian theology shows this through Jesus Christ, whose birth sees a supernatural incarnation of God. To enter the world, Christ

endures the same birthing method. He ages physically and intellectually along a similar mortal scale. To resume His pure supernatural essence He departs the world, as all humans must, through death. Though the Bible purports he possesses tremendous powers to influence the mortal world and constant connectivity with God, one senses a profound isolation from the supernatural realm of heaven during his time on Earth. While his supernatural self sees a return to immortality from mortality as a return to his place in heaven, his mortal self fears this change. Even as a God, Jesus experiences many human emotions. The Bible provides plenty of instances of Jesus' anger (the moneychangers in the Temple), of love (his request to let the children come unto him), and fear (his dying words on the cross). He manages these emotions efficiently for the most part, yet not even a divine being can repress these particularly human responses to pleasurable and painful stimuli.

Specifically, consider also the Garden of Gethsemane, which Jesus visits before His passion. He prays deeply for God to take away his coming trial, torture, and crucifixion. The only reply He receives after some time is a Roman battalion's appearance with orders to arrest Him. The moment before Jesus' death also shows this moment of isolation profoundly. As Mark notes in his Gospel, "At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud shout, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?,' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" (Mark 15:34). In line 37 Mark notes, "With a loud cry Jesus died" (Mark 15:37). Though the incarnate God, Jesus relies on prayer to commune with heaven, a structure we also use to accomplish the same goal. Even Jesus can only populate one sphere at a time. Like the artistic temperament and associated moments I chronicle, the Bible attests to spots of time where Jesus transcends his

mortality and exists on both planes. Yet even with His power, these temporary moments must eventually end.

I would argue for a semi-permeable membrane separating natural and supernatural regions. To straddle these spaces is possible but only for brief intervals. Eventually the individual must inhabit one region on an impermanent basis until the next opportunity for transcendence. As nineteenth-century artists show in contrast to supernatural agents, mortal and immortal agencies differ through transcendent choice. That is, the mortal cannot necessarily choose their moments. In contrast, supernatural agents have greater control. They can cross into both worlds, but this membrane's translucency prevents dual residency. Texts like Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Stoker's *Dracula*, and Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* indicate that our artistic predecessors feared reliance on our unimpeded intellectual capability, specifically with respect to science. To attempt a dual existence is unnatural. Our current historical record shows that these fears were well-founded, a subject I tackle in greater detail in the next chapter.

The dramatic tension between structuring and deconstructive enterprises of the nineteenth-century leads to the formation of two opposing models, Modernist Objectivity and Postmodernist Subjectivity. In tandem, these divergent forces facilitate a constant creation and evaluation of knowledge. Danger emerges when either of these two models becomes so dominant that it weakens the checks and balances of its binary opposite. Nineteenth century writers on both sides of the Atlantic recognize the importance of structural and deconstructive enterprises that are a part of objectivist and subjectivist intellectual activity. Yet as we move into the fin de siècle, science insists that we

discover a new certainty that will eventually supplant subjectivism. The early portion of the twentieth century sees an objectivist monopoly that characterizes the modernist movement in literature, art, society, and science. As the twentieth century continues, the oppressed deconstructive subjectivity experiences a power surge leading to a postmodernist eclipse which undermines modernist thought. Much of our modern societies use artificial constructs to order our social systems. Yet escape from such spheres of influence through fleeting ingeniousness creates a separate space where one recognizes Truth within natural and natural supernatural enclaves. As this chapter shows, the Truth is indeed out there. However, this chapter also shows the substantial interference of our structures dating back to the influence of the Catholic Church and into the nineteenth century.

In the final chapter of this study, I consider an important question: how does the common action of othering supernatural phenomena in the nineteenth-century affect the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries? I consider the prophetic nature of nineteenth century artists expressed through their fears for a new century and how these warnings haunt the unconscious intellectual state of the contemporary engaged mind. I also explore our general supernatural awareness and the soul's impoverishment. Finally, I explore whether we are witnessing a rejuvenated supernaturalism fraught with both virtues and vices.

## CHAPTER V

### HAUNTING THE PRESENT: THE IMPACT OF NINETEENTH CENTURY CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS OF SUPERNATURALISM ON THE NEW MILLENNIAL LITERATURE IN *THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST*, *THE DA VINCI CODE*, AND *HARRY POTTER*

As this study shows, an uncommon bond unites the most prophetic authors of the nineteenth-century. This “Spirit of the Age” sees the production of ingenious texts, particularly about supernatural phenomena. Depictions of human relationships portray a future where redirected human energies cultivate profound symbiotic relationships. In these circumstances, the supernatural operate without mortal assistance, though there is some primacy with these relationships. Supernatural agents cultivate mortal associations crucial to human and cosmological advancement. Humans can exist without supernatural relationships, yet the materialism we often rely on has limited effectiveness. Our core spirituality finds the supernatural indispensable to the establishment of meaning in our lives, which encourages transcendence from our daily existences through something profoundly greater.

In this chapter, I assert that not all members of society were so enthusiastic. During the latter half of the nineteenth-century, primarily evident in Victorian writers and the American authors of the early twentieth-century, significant fissures threatened to destroy this delicate balance. As the imbalance worsened, the unique intellectual fabric of the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth-century began to fray. With the dawn of the twentieth-century’s breakneck progressivism, humanity lost touch with many essential features established during the previous century. The most pronounced area of

erosion concerned our relationship with the supernatural, whether manifest through our religious or secular structures. A dominant faith-centric focus othered supernatural phenomenon outside these predominant structures. By the midpoint of the 20th century, new ideological structures marginalized even faith itself. The new god of science promised to answer all of humanity's fundamental questions in ways traditional religious systems could not. Most believed that science would provide empirical evidence to supplant systems reliant on a priori structures.

Instances of social and ideological structures litter human history with idealistic attempts to encourage interconnectivity with the supernatural. Somewhere along the way these superstructures, though intent on increasing awareness, evolve instead into ideological programming agents. The average human being follows these shared set of general principles, but obedience distracts humans from the discovery of Truth. Those in positions of power show little concern for the discovery of this Truth, perhaps because their artificial structures violate an edict of the supernatural realm's universal availability.

Sporadic moments of intense concern regarding the supernatural realm nevertheless existed. As Arnold notes in *Dover Beach*, the Sea of Faith undulates from high tide to low tide over protracted periods, each signifying high points and low points in spirituality. While he sees the nineteenth-century as a period, when "ignorant armies clash by night," I find the nineteenth century's "Spirit of the Age" as a great moment of spiritual reinvigoration (37). The movement was so substantial, in fact, that it was not just a continental but also an intercontinental phenomenon. It led to an intertextual, intellectualized tension among American Transcendentalists, British Romanticists, and Victorians. Many scholars argue that the nineteenth-century was a rare period of

academic interaction, featuring a synergy between industry, science, and medical fields that led to new daily discoveries. Though nascent fields of study, a unique balance between them established a profound creative dynamic which portended advances in the twentieth-century. People foresaw a modern period when this dynamic would become a permanent fixture of humanity, subsequently ensuring that humans reach the highest pinnacles of potentiality.

Under these conditions, religion became the most imperiled structure. Setting aside divine textual intervention, theisms used a priori constructions of Truth for explanations of the fundamental existential dilemmas faced by humanity. The famous April 1966 *Time* magazine article entitled, *Toward a Hidden God*, warns, “Even within Christianity . . . a small band of radical theologians has seriously argued that the churches must accept the fact of God's death, and get along without him.” Thirteen years later, Jean François Lyotard argues in *The Postmodern Condition* that, “since the end of nineteenth-century,” a dramatic cultural transformation “has altered the game rules for science, literature . . . [and] the arts” (509). Lyotard is accurate in his assessment, but he forgets one important area—that is, the erosion of our relationship to the supernatural sphere.

More specifically, Lyotard sees how “science has always been in conflict with narratives” since the “majority of them prove to be fables” (509). In science’s appropriation of the master existential, cosmological, and ontological narratives, it associatively “legitimate[s] the rules of its own game” (509). This process ultimately invalidates the dominant unscientific narratologies responsible for previously structured human existence (509). While science’s empirical nature provides an apparent stable

means for self-legitimization, Lyotard sees an emergent movement that the term “postmodern” helps to contextualize. That is, “an incredulity toward metanarratives” emerges as humanity continues down a path which was blazed in the nineteenth-century (509). The delicate creative stress between intellectualism, industry, science, and medical fields winnow down to the newly defined intellectual disciplines of arts, science, and religion. Disciplinarity in these areas erects impermeable barriers which destroy any potential new discoveries wrought through a creative comingling of these unique approaches to human cognition. This significant destabilization places science in a dominant role and sublimates the arts and religion to science.

By the 1950’s, this intellectual integrity is critically compromised. A previously latent postmodern condition subsequently emerges. To Lyotard, this now dominant intellectuality splinters faculties “into institutes and foundations of all kinds” (509). Within this new context, “universities [lose] their function of speculative legitimation” (509). Lyotard’s historical analysis is, in my judgment, accurate but overlooks an important additional element—that is, how the othering of supernatural phenomena foreseen by Romantic, Transcendental, and Victorian writers destabilizes the spiritual momentum of the prior century. The intense spiritual uncertainty of later generations strains the credibility of supernatural phenomena. Today, humanity stands on the edge of a most dangerous precipice. Should this imbalance worsen, we will fall down a fathomless rabbit hole where humankind can no longer distinguish between Truth and truth. Too often today, individuals use religion to promote a radical agenda. On the other extreme, religion is under siege by science, whose methodologies destroy faith through a constant search for empirical proof over all humanity holds so dear.



No greater example of the religious radical exists than the regular terrorist activity that threatens the worldwide population. The most prominent instance of science's attempt to invalidate religion is the controversy over Creationism, Evolution, and Intelligent Design. Each of these circumstances illustrates a dangerous gravity towards an all-encompassing explanation. In truth, perhaps the answers are more subtle combinations. For instance, Creationism cannot explain the source of God; whereas Evolution can only take us back to the moment of inception. Perhaps a divine Creator put into place the rudimentary structures that evolved into our current world landscape. Rather than contemplate such synergies, we tend towards one explanation over the other.

Recent historians spot the initial intellectual cracks evident in today's world structure. Materialism, intellectual ineptitude, and social depravity usually precede the downfall of civilizations. All one needs to sample is Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* for proof. If writers like Gregg Braden, author of the 2009 text *Fractal Time*, are correct, all of time and its events are cyclical. This would include the rise and fall of civilizations, whether isolated to a national or international focus. More specifically, humankind's eroding relationship to the supernatural causes a significant loss of spiritual development. As a result, we supplant Truth with short-term epicurean pleasures as the substitute for our purpose, meaning, and intellectual acumen.

Hope exists, though. Although the significant slip of Western Culture since the establishment of idealistic Romantic and Transcendental values is a reason to worry, recent popular cultural artifacts do nevertheless provide some hope for a recovery followed by future spiritual prosperity. These particular texts suggest that nineteenth-century Romantic, Victorian, and Transcendental ideologies haunt this New Millennial

period of human history in a positive sense. What I call neo-Romantic and neo-Transcendental supernatural-centric texts signal an important recognition of our failings over the past century. Perhaps we are slowly moving back into at least a spiritually neutral position. Using Matthew Arnold's model in *Dover Beach*, we see that the era of the Sea of Faith's low tide is ending and indications are that it has commenced re-filling. Recent events, especially the international economic downturn, indicate the importance of faith to a new generation of spiritually-sensitive individuals. With their influence, the Sea of Faith, which began its move towards high tide prior to our recent financial struggles, will soon reach a point of spiritual neutrality. By extending this neo-Romantic and neo-Transcendental thought, perhaps the sea of faith will once again achieve its "full-girdled" state which Arnold longs for in his seminal poem.

Ironically, the source of our return to spirituality prior to the recent recession emerges from what many call the New Terrorism. While this new movement causes angst over ordinary daily activities, it has also encouraged a return to spiritual reflection in a decidedly secular sense, of the sort for which Romantic and Victorian authors argued in the nineteenth-century. Texts like *The Harry Potter* series and *His Dark Materials* series by Phillip Pullman suggest a search for the same authentic intellectualism discovered through supernaturalism witnessed in the greatest texts of the nineteenth-century. A consideration of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Emerson, Thoreau, and Fuller suggests that if our predecessors had embraced these philosophies rather than materialism, we could have avoided many twentieth-century challenges. Placing these Romantic and Transcendental writers into the context of today shows how their ideologies haunted the twentieth century. Rather than pay attention to the positive

attributes of their subversive character, we allowed the fear which this haunting generated to ignore their prescience by Gothicizing the past rather than identifying and rectifying our faults.

In one sense, attention to nineteenth-century supernatural texts would have warned later generations to the dark side of Modernism, Post-Modernism, and Pseudo-Modernism. These three dramatic intellectual turns of the late nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries contributed in different ways to the current world's supernatural angst. Modernism, Post-Modernism, and Pseudo-Modernism are not inherently opposed to supernaturalism. Instead, misapplication of these trends endangers the basis of human progress and potential. These countertrends over the past century compromise and impede the operation of the supernatural and the acquisition of Truth to which it leads its initiates. Their innate natures qualify these theories to detect fallacies, which assist in the discovery of new authentic knowledge. Negative manifestations of Pseudo-Modernism include agents of Terrorism. Recent history shows how our own flawed theoretical manifestations led to social and political structures that threaten academic models based on learning for the sake of extrinsic earning rather than for the sake of intrinsic learning. A fundamental shift in higher education devalues the pursuit of Truth for higher test scores, more money, more prestige, more power, more land, more resources, more buildings, etc. Along the way, our actions compromise the heart of the university—that is, its intellectual vitality. Doing so attacks the heart of humanity, which is our curiosity driven by our innate spirituality.

Many would carry the argument even further and opine that Postmodernism's deconstructive influence upon Modernist certainty marked the beginning of our gradual

decline. I, however, would counter that Postmodernism's deconstructive nature opened up an intellectual domain for new human discoveries that objectively challenged older, less accurate knowledge models we had in fact glibly labeled as certainties under a far too arrogant Modernism. Like any theory carried beyond moderation, pure Postmodernism's uninhibited deconstructionist activities has significantly weakened and subsequently estranged the supernatural from our dominant power matrices. But with the dawn of a New Millennialism, the haunting voices of the supernatural gradually increase in tenor. For instance, western materialism infects all first-world nations. Nationalism's diaspora toward the latter half of the twentieth-century and a newly conceptualized global community's expansion pluralizes the creation of knowledge and the means of communication. This is most evident in the rapid mainstream development of the Internet. Nationalism was not an unconstructive concept, nor is the deconstruction of nationalism by postmodernist influences. These new structures replace outdated ones in an effort to promulgate a newfound connection with the supernatural realm as well as common grounds of human unity. The recent popularity of Neo-Romantic and Neo-Transcendental texts suggests that this trend is indeed occurring. Yet a misapplied postmodern deconstruction delayed this evolution longer than necessary. While this movement ended the Cold War in the early 1990s, it also empowered America with a decade of material prosperity but with a lack of commensurate intellectual advancement. The rapid expansion of America's political, military, economic, and social ideologies replaced spirituality with a religious devotion to democracy, the free market economy, and materialism. These become the new demigod trilogy.

Idealists argue that the resultant freedom from this worldwide promotion of democracy advanced human development. The products, though, were far from ideal. Rather, these forces encouraged a world homogenization largely devoid of spiritual fulfillment. The exception, of course, would be fringe movements that sought intellectual vitality. In these instances, space existed for such pursuits, though they risked othering if their philosophies ran counter to those accepted by the establishment. These same ideologies encouraged their own demise through a virile pseudo-modernism that both fed and thrived on radical religious-based ideologies that were less intellectually driven. As these new concepts attracted the world's disempowered and colonized masses, a dangerous new radicalism threatened to topple the intellectual fervor supported through meaningful supernatural relationships. Rather than silence the ignorant armies who clashed by night via democratic freedom, new guerrilla armies operated on the social and political fringes. When they attacked, their targets were traditional national military forces and civilians. Idealists, unaware of these evolving threats, believed that the world stood on the edge of a utopia where worldwide violence waned and essential human rights spread. It seemed that the United States would lead a glorious new intellectualism predicted by Crevecoeur, DeTocqueville, and others.

Yet beneath the surface bubbled an intense worldwide spiritual crisis. New movements usurped past powers previously held by nationalism. New nations arose that did not necessarily define themselves through geographical boundaries. Instead, pride in a figurative space that was defined by religion, especially fringe faiths, eventually replaced pride in actual space. This new system's focus on religious ideologies spread quickly and filled the spiritual vacuum generated by democratic materialism. Human

history shows that we possess a deep-seated need for religious or spiritual expression, especially in poorer areas of the world where belief systems provide existential meaning when civic, ethnic, cultural, and geographical nationalism do not. The world's flirtation with a homogenized value system predicated on American democracy faced a new threat. While a return to pseudo-definitive ideological structures provided apparent clarity to the supernatural realm through subjectivism, in truth it only further obfuscated our true relationship with the supernatural realm. This emergent relativism during the latter half of the twentieth century reached a dramatic crescendo on September 11, 2001, when the extremist potential of postmodernist deconstructive supernatural ideological structures, minus modernist structural certainties, released their dramatically destructive potential. Thus, the dawn of New Terrorism heavily influenced the death of postmodernism and the emergence of pseudo-modernism.

New Terrorism resembles past intimidatory campaigns, but this particular iteration differs from past organized nation-states where terror-agents are indeed soldiers. In prior movements, sects of radicals mainly lacked the centralized/decentralized organizational structures of Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other contemporary terrorist agencies. Past groups may have possessed the ability to kill in the hundreds and destroy swathes of property; however, none of these agencies resembles those of the past decade. Al-Qaeda specifically brought down the Twin Towers, inflicted heavy damage on the Pentagon, and nearly duplicated their feat on either the White House or the Capitol building if not for the braveries of the passengers who diverted a third attack wave and crashed instead in Shanksville, PA. Consider also the devastation to and widespread terror in the United Kingdom via the London attacks of 7/7. Al-Qaeda agents succeeded

in terrorizing millions of Londoners and billions worldwide. Today, many think twice before they enter public transportation or any space generally.

These new terrorist agencies rose during a period when relationships to Truth and beliefs in objectivity waned. When placed in the context of the nineteenth century, these new forces did not develop coincidentally. Instead, our deviation from Truth and distrust of objectivity, I argue, came from our estrangement from supernatural phenomena. The fiction I examine throughout this chapter represents a more virulent artificiality which threatens to deconstruct the very nature of humanity. Should the human form fracture so substantially, we could irreparably harm the ability to discover our individual, world, and cosmological roles. While this may sound extreme, mull over how many people disbelieved in the potential for humanity to commit some of its worst atrocities, like the slaughter of millions via the Holocaust or the destruction of engineering marvels like the Twin Towers using civilian airliners.

Consider therefore how far humanity's relationship to Truth has regressed over the past two thousand years. Aristotle's concept of ethics argues that goodness becomes self-evident when one considers his/her internal nature and can realize his/her full potential. Socrates found that knowledge of right and wrong comes from a purposeful self-education predicated on the search for facts, the context of these facts, and reflection on our relationship to these objective independent concepts. Like Aristotle, Socrates believed that if humanity turned towards its internal objective nature, it would know what is right. Immanuel Kant argued that noumena, or higher truths, are superior to our limited reason and transcend the physical universe. Because our consciences are inborn, we derive moral law, in Kant's thinking, from internalized ethical compasses that are

unconditionally binding. Other ethical theorists posit total reliance on objectivity, others on varying degrees of both, and still others on subjective considerations that depend mostly on an objective externalized source.

As Hegel argues in *Absolute Freedom and Terror*, there is “the immanent movement of universal self-consciousness” with a “reciprocity of self-consciousness in the form of universality and . . . personal consciousness” (71). In other words, the universal will and personal consciousness may exist independent of each other, but the universal will “goes into itself and is a single, individual will” (71). Similarly, “individual consciousness is no less directly conscious of itself” (71-2). Our individual souls are “aware that its object is a law given by [the universal will] and a work accomplished by it” (72). The concept of modernity recognizes this universality and aligns the self with Truth-based values to allow space for one’s individuality.

Giroux in particular identifies how postmodernism’s response to modernism questions reason itself. Specifically, “reason is not innocent and any viable notion of critical pedagogy” is thus problematic (386). Authentic intellectual study demands “forms of authority that emulate totalizing forms of reason that appear to be beyond criticism and dialogue” (386). These deconstructive acts question long-held human facts often invalidated upon rigorous scrutiny. Yet a radical application leads to significant intellectual production while creating a subversive sub-space. Therefore, I would extend Giroux’s argument to say, when left untenanted, a variety of subaltern ideologies will backfill the space to compromise modernism. Postmodernism’s nature encourages its own self-consumption through its inherent subversive tendencies. When postmodernism fails, humanity sees a more significant separation from the supernatural sphere.



Postmodernism contributes a healthy skepticism of posited Truths, yet its critical engagement focuses on deconstruction to reconstruct better ideological systems more coherent with newly discovered Truths. As with many human theories, preoccupation over the operational practices of deconstruction ignores a far more fundamentally important action—namely, that reconstructive acts replace invalidated concepts. Humanity fails in this endeavor. As with modernism’s decline, a new set of subaltern philosophies fills the sub-space formally occupied by postmodernism alone. In this unique case, though, the concept of postmodernism itself disappears, but its primary methodology, deconstruction, remains. This new dynamic encourages a dangerous relativistic subjectivism, which rejects the existence of Truth and likewise the supernatural. This occurs even though its ideologies, especially religious, tout the confirmed existence of supernatural phenomena. As Alan Kirby argues in a 2006 edition of *Philosophy Now*, “postmodernism is dead” (34). He argues that the evidence of its demise exists within the academy, with a “sense of superannuation, of the impotence and the irrelevance of so much Theory among academics” (34). What now permeates all elements of life today are relative beliefs with no required proof to move beliefs to theories, and theories to truths. Instead, individuals can rest on their beliefs and use them to make sense of one’s surrounding environment without any required objectivity.

Postmodernism and modernism do share some similar fundamental beliefs relative to authority, knowledge, selfhood, reality, and time. While modernism relies on structuralism to identify, describe, understand and preserve, postmodernism evidences an abstract belief in such essential concepts, though it typically doubts any validity which is asserted as proof. Kirby finds that pseudo-modernism “suddenly and forever” alters

authority, knowledge, selfhood, reality, and time, wherein “cultural products cannot and do not exist unless the individual intervenes physically in them.” (35). Within this dynamic, something may exist through testimony alone, perhaps reinforced by some subjective a priori and/or empirical evidence. Kirby cites the Internet as both a chief suspect and a prime exhibit. As seen in the Wikipedia scandal regarding the ability of a pluralist open document to provide accurate information, one can publish or remove data with the click of mouse. There is little agency to prevent such actions. He further argues that postmodernism’s prime charge calls “‘reality’ into question” (37). More specifically, “pseudo-modernism defines the real implicitly as myself” through a dynamic interaction “with its text” (37). The individual can then call something into or out of existence as preferred.

Kirby also points out the significant difference between the intellectual progenitors of pseudo-modernism in comparison to the practitioners of Modernist and Postmodernist theories. While the leaders of both movement and countermovement were ideal intellectual role models, pseudo-modernist leaders embody the movement’s characteristics of “ignorance, fanaticism, and anxiety” (37). Kirby identifies these individuals as George W. Bush, Tony Blair, and Osama Bin Laden. Pseudo-modernism exists in a world “pervaded by the encounter between a hyper-religious Israel, and a fanatical sub-section of Muslims” (37). Extending the argument further, the triple axis of evil—that is, ignorance, fanaticism, and anxiety—spread outside of this primarily religious conflict and pervades much of our world’s ideology. Moral relativism strongly contradicts the ethical objectivist theories of Aristotle and others. Rightly, Kirby

recognizes that September 11th is not the birthday of pseudo-modernism. Yet he does argue, “Postmodernism was interred in its rubble” (37).

With the demise of both modernism and postmodernism, contemporary culture—and with it especially minority intellectuals—struggle in a world that “lashes fantastically sophisticated technology to the pursuit of medieval barbarism—as in the uploading of videos of beheadings onto the Internet, or the use of mobile phones to film torture in prisons” (37). Were these issues isolated to our media and technology-based ethics, we could mount a substantial effort towards their correction before they infect other elements of our daily existence. For Kirby it is too late for such action, since the “fatalistic anxiety extends far beyond geopolitics, into every aspect of contemporary life” (37). He mentions “a general fear of social breakdown and identity loss, to a deep unease about diet and health; from anguish about the destructiveness of climate change, to the effects of a new personal ineptitude and helplessness, which yield TV programmes about how to clean your house, bring up your children or remain solvent” (37). Perhaps at no other time in human history have our materialistic, self-centered, subjectivist tendencies so dominated our daily concerns. This represents a significant departure from our supernatural selves and our studied contemplation of the supernatural realm from earlier periods in human history.

Even religious extremists, who express through a fatwa the assumed will of their deities via communication with the supernatural realm, are guilty of the same ignorance, fanaticism, and anxiety which we attest to westernized materialism. This religious extremism and our acquisitive philosophies represent different paths towards the same conclusion. Key mortal-based distractions homogenize competing interests to distract

humanity from its natural purpose. This checks our relationship to the supernatural realm and the nascent intellectual fervor of the nineteenth century. Perhaps at no greater time in human history are we in need of a return to Romantic, Victorian, and Transcendental ideals. Even with the passage of well over one hundred years, the power of these intellectual ideas has never died, even among the competing modernist, postmodernist, and later pseudo-modernist philosophies. Though dormant, pockets of nineteenth century ideologies surfaced during the past one hundred years. Perhaps the dominant ideals of the 1960s best represent a temporary re-ascendance of Romantic, Victorian, and Transcendental impulses.

With recent world history, the slow emergence of several important texts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and their varying degrees of popularity and/or ingenuity represent another latent re-emergence of Romantic, Victorian, and Transcendental ideals in response to the supernatural chaos of the modern era. These texts and recent popular culture's promulgation of supernatural perspectives, a throwback to nineteenth century ideals, suggest the short-lived nature of pseudo-modernism. Perhaps we are on the cusp of re-established structures more carefully constructed to allow for competing interests to co-habitate peacefully, even in shared versus neighboring parallel spaces. The continued creation of structures and subsequent deconstructions are central to our evolution. We must balance the contrast between subjectivism and objectivism, negotiating a fragile balance between both. Of course, we may be on the brink of a neo-1960s decade that recedes as quickly as it advances.

Since the events of September 11th, 2001, a quick scan of movie listings, television schedules, and print media reveals a substantial rise in the number of texts

depicting supernatural phenomena. These films, however, differ from the popular terror-filled slasher and typical horrific Gothic psychological thrillers of the 1970s and 1980s. These earlier decades aligned the supernatural with terror and/or horror-inspiring spectacles as discussed earlier. Mostly, evil characters embody these supernatural phenomena in antagonistic roles that oppose positive protagonists cast in the perfect and pristine imagery of the period that created them. Yet the film industry anticipated a coming shift with the 1988 film, *The Last Temptation of Christ*. This extraordinarily controversial film projects Jesus Christ, perhaps one of—if not the—greatest archetypal supernatural beings of human history, as tormented by His mortal passions—the same ones which continually plague humanity today.

Martin Scorsese's film does not provide any groundbreaking academic insight about the historical Jesus. Yet for popular culture, Scorsese's monumental film is one of the first attempts to mainstream an alternative perspective of a popular religious figure. Jesus' high status in Christianity, particularly in Roman Catholicism, was significantly protected for a substantial portion of the past two thousand years by the tyrannical control which the Church wielded over depictions of any fundamental element of Catholic theology. Scorsese's film attracted significant protests, yet he did not attempt to deconstruct traditional Christian catechism completely. Rather, his film, fantasizing Christ's devil-prompted temptation, suggests the possibility of His marriage to Mary Magdalene. At no point does the film suggest that the Devil succeeded in tricking Jesus.

Though the film suggests Christ's inducement to evil, the film concludes with Jesus' crucifixion and the revelation that the events in the film results from the devil's draconian enticements. In this sense, the film actually secures traditional Western

cultural teachings regarding Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Scorsese may have contemplated an expansion of the Mary Magdalene/Jesus relationship, especially the idea that this encounter was real and not imagined. Frankly, the world audience at the time could not have handled a complete deconstruction similar to those of the late 20th and early 21st centuries by other filmmakers and novelists. Nevertheless, even its challenge to Christianity stretched credibility in the minds of many upon its release in the late 1980s, a time when the slow demise of postmodernism seeded a future pseudo-modernism. Still, the film's postmodern nature clearly questions the typical historicization of an accepted supernatural being and his related acts. Scorsese's work is the first mainstream attempt to reinvigorate popular culture's contemplation of the supernatural realm primarily through the re-examination of the constructed archetypes that buttress mainstream religion, particularly Christianity.

While deconstructing established religious traditions enables humanity's escape from oppressive regimes that, ironically, impede full knowledge and appreciation of the supernatural, overtly subjective methodologies lead to similarly biased conclusions. As Thierry Hentsch states, "fruit of knowledge leads man astray precisely because of his innocence: of that which he has not tasted" (111). We are ordinarily unaware of our actions—particularly the consequences—until it is too late. This lack of clear foresight is truly "the human dilemma; such, indeed, is what makes us human" (111). Immortal intellectual potential ties us to the epistemological power of our souls. Yet our mortal physical limitations inhibit consideration of the implications of our actions, particularly when our endeavors cross into unknown realms that interfere with the cosmological and ontological workings of nature. Hentsch argues, "The man of Eden is a happy beast,

enjoying privileges granted by God” (111). Among the many abilities which humankind wields, “the temptation of discovery and the risk that accompanies it” must be included (111). One common risk which humans identify is our intellectual naiveté since we lack the ability to consider all of the potential consequences of our actions.

Contemporary society overlooks an additional common threat: our limited supernatural knowledge is distorted by and twisted through our own subjectivity either accidentally or purposefully. We subsequently create ideological constructs that enslave others, perhaps to the extent of brainwashing. While postmodernism opens the possibility of acquiring competing perspectives on the supernatural, the advent of pseudo-modernism introduces a more frightening potential: our subjective interpretations of knowledge distract us from the pursuit of Truth. Instead, in our zeal to fixate on the discovery of evidence in support of our particular subjective theologies, we create a fundamental foundation for modern thought that is expressed through typical relativistic assertions, masquerading as Truth and acquired from supernatural sources. While the events of September 11th and July 7th represent tangible real examples, our fiction writers see how this emerging anti-intellectualism leads to closed-minded ignorance. This is especially sad at a time when the minority intellectuals of the world use their inquisitiveness and rigorous intellectual integrity to work towards groundbreaking philosophical discoveries.

Perhaps the most recent popular text to demonstrate the contemporary intellectual’s pursuit of Truth within an increasingly anti-intellectual and ignorant relativistic world is Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*. This text and the subsequent film, like Scorsese’s *The Last Temptation of Christ*, launched a new deconstructive and

neohistoricist examination of the religious and historical Jesus. In the process, this led to what I would call the dawn of a New Intellectualism, a burgeoning academic movement respondent to pseudo-modernist anti-intellectualism. While I would not go so far as to assert that we are witnessing the rise of a New Modernism with the same rigidity and reliance on science which we characterize as Modernism, the New Intellectualism is nevertheless pseudo-objectivist. It encourages a balance between structural and deconstructive tendencies that are part of a natural human intellectual milieu focused on inquiry through the construction and re-examination of knowledge. This New Intellectual pseudo-objectivist mindset taps into alternative perceptual models which lie beyond the pale of scientific epistemology. In a similar vein, recent fiction, pushing towards a new pseudo-science, incorporates the supernatural into applied traditional scientific investigative models. The discovery of sounder knowledge reconstructs our intellectual bases to converge usually divergent mortal brain-based epistemologies with immortal spirit-based ones.

Scorsese lacked this New Intellectualism at the time of *The Last Temptation of Christ's* filming. Consequently, we cannot blame his safe retreat from a hailstorm of criticism through an innocuous and safe ending. Brown's novel and Ron Howard's film, though, conclude with a climax which the New Intellectual model may one day validate, and which would shake the centuries-old foundations of Christianity and western culture. As Kant argues in 1784, "Sapre aude! Have courage to use your reason" (111). Hentsch applies this mantra in his finding that humankind has two fundamental choices to make about the collection of new knowledge and the verification/review of already existent knowledge: we can unnaturally restrict our intellectual capability, or we can allow our



natural inquisitiveness full license. Our discoveries, Hentsch opines, may very well undermine the essential building blocks of human intellectual structure, though “Such, then, is the choice that confronts the man of Eden: believe or understand” (111). Even if Brown’s assertions and future research by others prove invalid, a revised investigative strategy offsets the anti-intellectual and derisive subjectivity of pseudo-modernism. There is hope, then, for the modern soul and its relationship to supernatural agencies since the human interest in knowledge acquisition will not see an artificial suppression.

At the beginning of Ron Howard’s 2006 film adaptation of Dan Brown’s novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, Dr. Robert Langdon lectures in Paris, France. His presentation cleverly manipulates the audience’s point of view, providing purposefully limited perceptions of a variety of signs usually transmitted into symbols and representing a whole host of ideas. Each slide projects a commonly vilified contemporary symbol. When traced back to its earlier manifestation, each represents an entirely different concept that often is a positive feature of a larger contextual construct. For instance, he begins with an apparent image of the Klu Klux Klan. When he zooms out, though, Langdon reveals that the images are of Spanish priests. As he continues, he presents what appears to be the Devil’s pitchfork. Once again, he shifts the perceptual focus of the audience and reveals an image of Poseidon’s pitchfork. Langdon states that this was a “symbol of power to millions of ancients.” He concludes with two more images, one positive, an apparent representation of the Madonna with child. Here he inverts his earlier pattern of first presenting a vilified symbol followed by a revered sign. The slide transposes the Madonna with child, a venerated sign, into the pagan god Horace with his mother Isis. He concludes with perhaps one of the most hateful images of the 20th

century, the swastika. Yet by rotating the image, he reveals the image's etched presence in a large statue of Buddha.

As additional random signs and symbols project onto the screen behind him, Langdon conveys two essential concepts critical to Dan Brown's thesis in support of this New Intellectual attempt to offset anti-intellectualist pseudo-modernism: "Symbols are a language that can help us to understand our past," since they record events beyond the mere imitation of drawn or photographed images. Brown and Ron Howard recognize that our contemporary culture relies more on empiricism than did our nineteenth century counterparts. While the novel does not contain this speech, the film does—an important ironic statement when one considers the popularity of film and its ability to connect with a larger social audience. Langdon follows with a platitude: "As the saying goes, a picture says a thousand words." Yet Langdon also realizes that we do not follow this statement to its logical conclusion—that is, "which words?" The brief segment concludes with his realization that "understanding our past determines actively our ability to understand the present." We must examine events to decode the present and predict potential subsequent events. Yet within this interpretive milieu one must achieve some sense of objectivity and discover some sense of structure to ensure that we do not based our conclusions on personal fancies alone. He questions, "How do we sift Truth from belief?" Similarly, the interpretive act, whether a pure subjective interpretation or a more objectified analysis, composes or re-composes "our own histories." These affect our personal and cultural self-perceptions and projections, both into the past and the future.

Perhaps the most difficult question that the film and the novel tackle concerns the consequence of an unenlightened pseudo-modernist unchecked mindset. What happens

when humans distort centuries of our history? How can humankind find “original Truth?” The film’s opening provides a perfect preface to Dan Brown’s novel. I introduce it before an analysis of the text and its relationship to our current intellectual struggle because it serves as an effective segue into the novel and the film’s contextualization about the importance of neohistoricism, especially in the context of our examination of supernatural phenomena.

Specifically, the current ideological superstructure leads to a degree of subjective diversionary historicization not seen since the apex of Christianity’s power in earlier European times. While the film and novel criticize scholars and theologians centuries before our current anti-intellectual dilemma, Brown sees two important cultural trends. First, there is a disturbing distortive tendency in a world where nationalism has lost preeminence and been replaced by even more fervent religious and social ideologies. Nation-states no longer are solely defined by geographic area. Instead, active recruitment of new members occurs across traditional borders. Secondly, there are oppositional forces who respond to the warping of the objective historical record. Brown sees a post 9/11 world when the rise of New Intellectualism combats the historical misrepresentations by radical groups. Brown represents this contrast by brilliantly avoiding what some could consider a typical Western attack on Islamic fundamentalism. Instead, he focuses on the rampant mishistoricization of the religious and historical Jesus. Still, this text clearly uses the supposed dissimulation of Jesus’ and Mary Magdalene’s history to address the contemporary unreliable interpretation and application of Islamic theology. Radical extremists perform such intellectual atrocities to justify attacks on Western culture. While we should check the colonial tendencies of Western ideology,

the methodologies employed by these religious fanatics also deserve criticism. Should their endeavor prove successful, a new historical record would replace the one constructed via the spread of an Americanized democratic and economic system. This recontextualization of the past within a somewhat amenable ideological schema attempts to promote heterogeneity.

Langdon's speech provides an important opening link to the predictions of nineteenth century writers. They continue to haunt our contemporary world, evident in a burgeoning anti-intellectualism that New Intellectualism seeks to eliminate. The text's plot shows we must regain our vitality through fresh and more objective examinations of past historicizations of the supernatural. These earlier methods distracted us from the true path, much as we see today in Islamic fundamentalism and similarly radical ideologies. We must reconnect to our supernatural selves and the surrounding supernatural agencies that are available. This is especially critical given the current ideological battles that obviate the attention we had formerly dedicated to supernatural contemplation. Our concern with Terrorism and an associated othering of those who contemplate primarily religious ideologies, but supernaturalism as well, redirects our remaining energies. We focus more on mere survival than on any form of intellectual contemplation which may potentially confirm or encourage radical extremist faiths. We must recapture authentic spirituality by wrestling it from fundamentalists who horribly warp religion in order to rediscover our true individual and collective human natures. Our central purpose is not the ignorant adoration of ideologies but the careful investigation of the world to discover the authentic supernatural and the associated

knowledge of these phenomenological experiences. Brown represents these New Intellectual ideas through his ingeniously constructed characters and complicated plot.

It is fitting that the New Intellectual warriors who oppose the religious radicals are a scholar, Dr. Robert Langdon, and an investigative detective trained in cryptography, Sophie Neveu. Her last name, “Neveu,” is particularly appropriate, since, in French, the name means, “nephew.” Robert and Sophie come from divergent backgrounds, one academic, the other the criminal sciences. Both are kindred spirits, though. Each can decipher the multiple deconstructive ideas that symbols represent at times. While Langdon and Neveu function within different social spheres, their tasks are fundamentally the same. Neveu’s role as a police cryptographer usually involves the criminal conversion of information from gibberish.

Similarly, Langdon’s apparent role as a Professor of Religious Symbolism suggests that he studies how humanity employs Saussure’s concept of linguistic homogenization. This is where humanity constructs “a system of signs in which the only essential thing is the union of meaning and sound-images, and in which both parts of the sign are psychological” (76). This arbitrary assembly generates “signs that express ideas” (77). To Saussure, this act is particularly powerful, since “the individual does not have the power to change a sign in any way once it has become established in the linguistic community” (79). Here is the central concern of *The Da Vinci Code*: once we construct a sign and assign a signifier and signified relationship, it becomes difficult to re-assign signifiers and signifieds. If the “relationship between historical facts and a language state” projects “facts at a particular moment,” then it is possible to recode the

signifier so that contemporary members understand what it signifies (79). When this occurs, a fundamental re-historicization forces a reconstructive act.

While the search for Derridean Différance is important, history shows that if the phoneme and associated langue do not undergo a radical reconstruction within popular culture, inconsistencies will lead to significant struggles due to shifts in meaning. Even with the tremendous amount of effort Langdon and Neveu exert throughout the text, the public never consumes the Truth. Perhaps this is to save the faith of ignorant masses, or perhaps Brown knows that publicizing this along with credible scientific evidence such as DNA would have significant consequences. Human faithfulness through established religious structures would quickly refute any fundamental historical contradiction. One could liken this resistance to another nineteenth-century philosophical haunting—that of Darwin’s notion of evolution.

While Langdon and Neveu represent the academic archetypes of this New Intellectualism, the antagonists of this novel come from varied stations. All are ardent followers of Opus Dei, a conservative wing of Roman Catholicism. There exists a more militant and radical sect whose purpose is to seek out the Holy Grail and destroy it. This would eliminate any artifact to validate the assertions of Langdon, Neveu, the Priory of Scion, or anyone else who may research the historical Jesus and root of Christianity. At the beginning of the novel, Brown provides little information regarding the Priory, only mentioning the 1975 *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris, which “discovered parchments known as *Les Dossiers Secrets*” (1). These documents identify numerous members, including a variety of artists, scholars, and writers throughout history. Though subtle, Brown suggests that past members include individuals who often stand out from normal

members of society and who often negotiate relationships with the supernatural by their brilliant research and/or artistic creations. It is clear that Brown positions the Priory in general as a bastion of intellectualism to protect the past and wait for the proper moment when, to cite Saussure, the world would accept a re-signification of the sacred feminine into a new religious structure.

In contrast to the Priory, Brown defines Opus Dei as a “deeply devout Catholic sect that has been the topic of recent controversy due to reports of brain-washing, coercion, and a dangerous practice known as ‘corporal mortification’” (1). This organization represents the extremist Middle Eastern sects of our current period, which promulgate messages and practices at all costs, even if based on fallacious content. As Thierry Hentsch asserts, an objective analysis of *The Bible* outside of theology suggests a significantly improbable story. This prompts him to question, “How can such an implausible story have been passed on as authentic, and gone on to enjoy such phenomenal success?” (205). To extend his question further, I would also ask, how is it that this particular text, saturated in supernaturalism, encourages significant devotion that formalized structures rise from it? Why is it afforded this special place while other texts never become more than fictional works? Is it because Christianity developed during a period of ideological instability, where the power of the Roman Empire began to waver and people began to search for a more authentic supernaturalism?

Historical interpretations of Constantine’s adoption of Christianity suggests that he used this radical new faith to bring the Roman Empire together at a time when it was destabilized by a general lack of common devotion. This politicized motive would take precedence over a decision Roman Catholic teachings historicize as one of conversion.

Hentsch continues, “No other story, no other individual has exerted upon our imagination a comparable dominion, a comparable fascination” (205). The only historical figure who may compare is Socrates, “a just man, known by his words alone, condemned to death by those whom he had troubled”—a history similar to that of Jesus (205). Yet here is where the similarities end. Hentsch notes that while “Socrates asks questions, raises doubts, [and] argues” in a guise typical of the intellectual, perhaps the religiously contextualized Jesus represents the anti-intellectual. Perhaps the historical Jesus was Neo-Socratic, yet it is difficult to make such determinations without more substantial historical evidence. From Christian teachings, Jesus’ sermons are more didactic, wherein he “affirms, proclaims, promises” (205). Hentsch associatively asserts that Socrates “is moved by the desire to think, Jesus by the power of conviction” (206). One would think that Socrates would provide the better lasting legacy since he affirms an intellectualism driven not so much by confirmation of his teachings but by a critical inquiry that could ultimately prove all his assertions false.

Yet this is perhaps Socrates’ greatest failing. As Hentsch notes, “Socrates founded nothing,” because he “left his mark upon thinkers, not upon the crowd” (206). Even in his *Apology*, he states that “I go to die, you go to live” (37). While he hopes future individuals will reproach those who “do not care for the right things and think they are worthy when they are not worth anything,” he does not leave behind the same complex moralistic lessons one finds in Jesus’ teachings (37). Hentsch defines Socrates’ legacy as process-driven. His instruction represents a “form of intellectual midwifery,” where intellectually-focused humans discover higher Truths using the process he defines (206). Socrates never becomes more than “a man to the tips of his toes” (206). In



comparison to Jesus, Socrates does not possess “an ounce of the supernatural” (206). I would disagree with Hentsch, though, from one perspective: Socrates’ intellectual model searches for higher Truths via relationships with the supernatural realm. Socrates fails because his ideological system never requires popular culture to distill his lessons about knowledge management into an ideological matrix. The masses never treat him like a prophet, even though he testifies to prophetic-type experiences with the supernatural. Instead, his teachings support the development of human individuality independent of ideological structures. His intellectual dynamic nurtures and fosters his personal relationships to the supernatural.

Sophie Neveu and Robert Langdon represent the New Intellectuals in the spirit of Socrates rather than Christ. Their search for Truth deviates from long established beliefs masked as truths. In contrast, Opus Dei represents the anti-intellectual Biblical Jesus. Yet their method is even more dangerous because of pseudo-modernism, which re-spins moral codes to justify murder and the permanent elimination of invaluable historical artifacts for the sake of protecting ideological systems. Consider for instance the Taliban’s destruction of “two ancient statues of the Buddha called Bamiyan in an attempt to cleanse the country of Afghanistan of what they perceived as Hindu heresy” (Hirst). Such actions resemble the Opus Dei characters, as well as the 9/11 terrorists and others who justify their destructive actions via the Koran or other religious texts and interpretations through their faith. They argue that contemporary holy wars protect their beliefs and way of life by eliminating people or things which they perceive as threats. Yet they fail to consider the Emersonian principle of multiple paths to divine inspiration, in which religion is not so much about homogeneity of thought as a process that leads the

acolyte towards enlightenment. If genuine, one may discover Truth. If disingenuous, one's discoveries are regurgitations of the past, which impair development of the future.

Brown clearly illustrates the consequence of religious adoration that has no critical component in relationship to the discovery of Truth. Langdon tells Teabing as British police escort him from the scene, "Only the worthy find the Grail, Leigh. You taught me that" (458). A lifelong scholar of the Holy Grail, Teabing's pursuit morphs into an obsession similar to religious fervency. Although a tireless academic who develops an encyclopedic knowledge of the Grail's history, he crosses a delicate line, where intellectual engagement becomes religious fervency. Tired of the academic approach that wields many clues but little progress, he teams up with his butler to become "Teacher" to the Opus Dei members charged with finding the Grail and destroying all evidence of it and the Grail documents. This Faustian deal leads him tantalizingly close to the authentic trail. Ultimately, his mortal greed interferes, and he subsequently proves himself unworthy of this genuine knowledge.

Langdon's statement to Teabing provides a most important insight that relates to Emerson's perspective on intellect. He argues, the "Intellect separates the fact considered from *you*, from all local and personal reference, and discerns it as if it existed for its own sake" (193). True intellection is "void of affection, and sees an object as it stands in the light of science, cool and disengaged" (193). Langdon and Neveu discover the Grail's secret by separating emotion and evaluating the data within a scientific mindsight. This is the essential error of ardent religious believers. They become so involved affectively that they experience a basic intellectual failure. They do not objectify the evidence but immediately force a subjective interpretation. As Emerson argues, "He who is immersed

in what concerns person or place, cannot see the problem of existence” (194).

Consequently, Opus Dei ideologues cannot discern Truth from falsehood since the ideologies which they self-destructively work to protect limit their perceptual systems.

Investigations by Teabing and other Grail scholars, as well as the research by Langdon and Neveu, uncover an apparent historical error of great significance regarding the historical and Biblical Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Midway through the novel Neveu becomes a student of Teabing, an association which Brown uses to level some shocking assertions. My purpose here is not to confirm or to deny his research. I am more interested in the Socratic process he uses and the implied consequence of his information if and when it proves genuine. Teabing starts from an innocuous place, at which point past research into the Holy Grail fails due to the most basic researching error. That is, people question, “Where it is,” when the more relevant question is, “*What* is the Holy Grail?” (249). Brown works within a traditional historical construct seen most recently in the *Indiana Jones* films, where humankind searches for this particular artifact not to confirm the validity of Christian theology but to possess a source of unique power. Theorizing that the cup itself possesses supernatural powers, such as everlasting life or healing qualities that cure any malady, people search for it as an end in itself instead of focusing on and worshipping the Christ who merely used the chalice.

Brown projects Sophie as the new archetype of the burgeoning scholar who is interested in learning for the sake of learning rather than for the sake of earning. Unlike the members of Opus Dei, Sophie admits “a man who worshipped Leonard Da Vinci” forms her education (249). This assertion is sacrilegious, perhaps, to devout followers of Christianity. Yet to an intellectual who seeks to penetrate the tough facade of religious

fanaticism, Sophie's education makes her "an enlightened soul" in the eyes of Teabing (249). Brown's decision to use Da Vinci for Saunière's idol is not coincidental. As Sherwin Nuland argues in his 2000 text, *Leonardo Da Vinci*, many consider him an ardent follower of the Catholic faith. People use his painting, *The Last Supper*, as emblematic of his deep faith, even though the painting was "commissioned by Ludovico and the Dominican friars for the refectory wall of the Church of Santa Maria della Grazie" (49). However, consider Leonardo's interest aside from his religio-centric art. Think of Leonardo the inventor and philosopher; his suspected link to the Priory of Scion makes sense, even if in fact it proves to be an historical aberration. Nuland cites the contemporary research of Georgio Vasari that Da Vinci's notebooks were deliberately "indecipherable to any but those so determined to understand them as to be willing to devote long hours to the process" (105). According to Vasari, Da Vinci's cryptography was necessary since he

had been a heretic, and more a philosopher than a Christian; some must have thought him a crypto-atheist; not a few of his notions were far from those of the Church [at that time]. This is the man, it will be recalled, who wrote, long before Galileo was accused, "The sun does not move." And this is the man who also saw evidence everywhere, whether in the form of fossils, rock formations, or the movements of water, of the great age of the earth and of the constantly changing character of its geologic and living forms. Not until the studies of Charles Lyell early in the nineteenth century would there again be encountered a scholar who theorized with such clarity that the characteristics of the earth's surface are

the result of processes taking place over enormously long periods of geological time. (105-07)

Like Copernicus, Galileo, and Sir Isaac Newton, another alluded to Priory grandmaster, Da Vinci practiced a specific form of objective criticism wherein he moved beyond traditional religious teachings that ordinarily limit what one may discover.

Instead, Da Vinci seeks Truth beyond religion like Teabing, Langdon, and Neveu. Brown re-introduces an important intellectual archetype that is critical to objective historical analysis. This academic matrix is important to counter pseudo-modernist anti-intellectual thought. Da Vinci finds contradictory information that could result in his excommunication should others read and publicize his findings. Yet like many others during this period in European history, fear of the Roman Catholic Church's significant power in nearly every facet of existence forced Da Vinci to encode his data so that only enlightened initiates would understand. Even for a great intellectual, the Church's power finally forced even him to yield. Nuland again cites Vasari, who notes towards the end of Da Vinci's life, "he made every effort to acquaint himself with the doctrine of Catholic ritual" (99). Christian catechism became in time the source of his motivation, as well as his genuine belief in the concept that everyone, including himself, possesses a soul.

Nuland notes that Da Vinci

believed that the soul depends on the body for its activities. In embryonic development, he wrote, the body "in due time awakens the soul that is to inhabit it." And elsewhere, "every part is designed to unite with its whole, that it may escape from its imperfections. The soul desires to dwell in the body because without the body it can neither act nor feel." In this mechanistic model, the soul

cannot function when the body dies. Perhaps it, too, dies. Whether or not this is true, none will ever know while we still breathe. (100)

Da Vinci did trust “in God and in the existence of the soul,” yet he took issue with the religious structure of ritual, “from which he had in general kept himself separated, ‘holding lightly by other men’s beliefs, seeing philosophy above Christianity’” (100). Brown cites two of Da Vinci’s statements regarding *The Bible* found in his notebooks that correspond to Nuland’s research: “Many have made a trade of delusions / and false miracles, deceiving the stupid multitude” (250). Likewise, he also states, “Blind ignorance does mislead us. / O! Wretched mortals, open your eyes!” (250). Brown places Saunière, Langdon, and Sophie within the same philosophic continuum as Da Vinci. All three preserve an idealistic perceptual structure aligned with the New Intellectualism so that future generations can consider alternative neohistorical perspectives. Many would consider these exploits blasphemous, yet they may also hold closer to the Truth than mainstream theocracies.

Brown counteracts the objective intellectual exploits of the New Intellectual movement with religious zealots, a clear indication of the dangers inherent in postmodernist thought. Fache is one particular character cast as the archetypal religious devotee. He seeks an intellectual discourse with an academic guided by the New Intellectualism. Langdon realizes that “Telling someone what a symbol ‘meant’ was like telling them how a song should make them feel” (39). Clearly, Langdon struggles with a modernist demand rooted in a relativistic post-structural deconstructive world. As Iser argues in *Interaction between Text and Reader*, a literary work “has two poles, which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic pole is the author’s text,” where he/she

encodes abstract concepts into empty signifiers that will eventually serve as the vehicle of signification and hence communication (1674). Yet on the other pole exists the aesthetic which constitutes “the realization accomplished by the reader” (1674). In this context, Iser confirms Saussure’s Structural theory.

Yet Iser’s complex dynamic simultaneously reinforces the deconstructive potential of communication. Langdon recognizes how Fache’s *Opus Dei* affiliation influences his interpretation of the symbol. For Iser, “In view of this polarity, it is clear that the work itself cannot be identical with the text or with its actualization but must be situated somewhere between the two” (1674). The profound pseudo-modernist challenge represents the necessity of the New Intellectualism. In an idealistic modern world, both Langdon and Fache would play interchangeable roles of educator and student. Langdon would provide the classical perspective on the symbol while Fache communicated an alternative translation based upon conservative Christian theology. Since the novel is set in a contemporary postmodern world, the realism of academic interactions comes second to a relativistic need for confirmation of one’s subjective beliefs, even if the historical evidence suggests otherwise.

The novel’s neohistorical construction creates two parallel polar structures. Both Fache and Langdon recognize the complexities of the pentacle and see the possibility that the symbol can represent two competing ideologies, yet both will also acknowledge a challenge: the surrounding context can inform which of these two definitions is more accurate. Still, they must also consider additional alternative explanations. Both recognize the need to find the True intended usage. In a postmodernist structure, both Langdon and Fache consider the ultimate complexities of the pentacle and may arrive at

the educated conclusion that the symbol, in deconstructing itself, represents the sacred feminine to encode an important investigative endeavor. Completing this action preserves an important historical artifact that threatens part of human history. It is fitting that Fache's profession in the novel is an investigator, a field that demands the same careful investigative techniques as a researcher like Langdon. Though the two careers mirror each other, Fache is not interested in discovering the Truth. Instead, he is one of many sub-archetypal pseudo-modernist intellectuals of the New Millennium whom the novel presents. Fache works within a structure opposed to New Intellectualism's liberal approach to knowledge production, confirmation, and invalidation. He prefers to protect current truths at all costs. Even if they are invalid, Fache finds comfortable ignorance a superior state of being compared to uncomfortable Truth.

Brown illustrates the shortsighted nature of the pseudo-modernist through Langdon's retort. He does not necessarily invalidate Fache's interpretation of the pentacle. Rather, Langdon admits that the primary meaning as "a pagan religious symbol" only obfuscates its original meaning (39). He knows that contemporary society through traditional Christian constructions project paganism as "synonymous with devil worship—a gross misconception" (39). Langdon retreats into past historicization efforts. He relates the term's etymology, specifically how Christian ideology alters its meaning to serve a particular othering purpose. He states, "The word's roots actually reached back to the Latin *paganus*, meaning country dwellers" (39). The term "pagan" is an anodyne term initially. Further research shows pagans "were literally unindoctrinated country-folk who clung to the old, rural religions of Nature worship" (39). Colonists encountered similar dynamics in Native American and primitive tribes during European colonization.



One need only read James Fennimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* for evidence.

These small faith cadres appeared to threaten the Christian faith, which led to a prominent linguistic shift, where “the once innocuous word for ‘villager’—villain—came to mean a wicked soul” (39). This act of historicization via textualization moves “pagan” and “villain” from a neutral to a negative status. The terms maintain obscure definitions in dictionaries to ensure a continued stigmatization. The Church's significant power ensures that such alternative definitions recede from consciousness.

While the New Intellectual recognizes the pseudo-modernist mindset, he/she is not one to retreat from a dialectic-based instructional opportunity. Langdon clarifies for Fache that the pentacle “is a pre-Christian symbol that relates to Nature worship,” not necessarily the devil worship as Fache's faith has told him. Langdon continues, “The ancients envisioned their world in two halves—masculine and feminine,” which compliments many Eastern metaphysical concepts, among them the yin and the yang (39). Within this nature-based construct, both “gods and goddesses worked to keep a balance of power” (39). A resultant equilibrium achieves a near-utopic bliss to produce “harmony in the world” (39). From one perspective, this is Brown's purpose in the novel. He does not wish to destroy Christianity and Islamic faiths. However, he does encourage a reconsideration of our heavy reliance on two warring fundamental belief systems within our current pseudo-modernist world structure. He incorporates this specific theistic dynamic to communicate a complex and multi-layered message. We must reconsider alternative faiths, taking care not to move so far towards the standardization and associated homogenization of history that we leave little opportunity for neohistorical analysis. We must encourage the potential incorporation of alternative

histories into the world's metanarrative. The novel's message asserts a needed reconsideration of the dominant power distribution in a world vastly improved by racial and gender equality but not yet close to true egalitarianism.

Brown sees a contemporary world trapped behind a thick facade of equality. These traditionally competing interests encourage a growing inequality through fear, which concentrates international power structures to abate the majority of the world's population. Ironically, international diplomacy and preference for democratic political systems should promote equality. Yet beneath the surface, inestimable wealth and power funnel towards a supreme minority. These economic, educational, and theistic efforts disenfranchise the majority. Perhaps there is no greater indication of this than Fache's ignorance. He is a mere foot soldier of God, driven by religious beliefs that block his acceptance of Langdon's edification. Rather than seek additional dialogue to understand this information and consider its potential impact on Saunière's murder, he "eyed the naked man, and grunted," preferring after further discourse from Langdon that the pentacle indeed represented "the idea of devil worship" (40). After Fache's response, Langdon reflects further yet knows the futility of additional efforts. He even realizes that to push the issue further could even endanger him.

Langdon recalls that the pentacle's manifestation serves as a graphic reminder of Venus as a goddess. The perfect pentacle traces the planet's movement "across the ecliptic sky every eight years," which leads the ancients to consider Venus as the "symbols of perfection, beauty, and the cyclic qualities of sexual love" (40). He concludes by remembering that the ancient Greeks chose four years between their Olympic games "as a tribute to the magic of Venus," a supernatural appreciation that

made its way into the original “four-year schedule of [the] modern Olympics” (41). Furthermore, “the five-pointed star had almost become the official Olympic seal but was modified at the last moment—its five points exchanged for five intersecting rings to better reflect the games’ spirit of inclusion and harmony” (41). Through this carefully constructed neohistorical deconstructive act, Brown signifies how the world loses true history through the influence of Christian and Islamic thought engineered by an anti-intellectual mindset. While encoding these symbols via traditional religious ideologies which occurred centuries ago, Brown demonstrates the acuteness of the modern investigative mindset. Our pseudo-modernist world’s shift from a search for Truth leaves us to rely on the minutest shred of evidence to confirm knowledge constructed and confirmed via subjectivist methodologies.

The power of ideology to define one’s perceptual construct is quite profound. This can lead to problematic textualizations—in fact, sometimes a pronounced ideology horribly distorts reality itself. As Foucault argues in *What is an Author?*, *écriture* is “a remarkably profound attempt to elaborate the conditions of any text, both the conditions of its spatial dispersion and its temporal deployment” (1625). In essence, authorial intention affects the text’s place within two infinite parallel horizontal structures—that is, a text’s placement within the contour of competing, yet ironically accepted, ideological structures. This is apparent in the acceptance of Christianity and Islam, even as these theisms engage in new ideological crusades. Likewise, the text’s creator defines the historical and cultural locale to suggest how the particular ideas the associated signifiers communicate fit within the predominant movements of the period and associated

civilization. Should a text exist outside of the predominant ideologies of the period, the author can reposition his/her assertions or textualize them in any way he/she prefers.

The work then becomes an alternative historical act that may never see mainstream acceptance, though. For Foucault, “the empirical characteristics of an author” within modern systems of thought place one in a position of “transcendental anonymity” (1625). The author’s historicization via textualization creates “visible signs of the author’s empirical activity,” which “religious and critical modes of characterization” often efface (1625). Foucault’s argument is dangerous, since granting the act of textualization “a primordial status” where the “particular history is made possible” could subject the text to “forgetfulness and repression” (1625). If Foucault’s assertion is valid, we “reintroduce in transcendental terms the religious principles of hidden meanings (which require interpretation) and the critical assumption of implicit significations, silent purposes, and obscure contents” (1625). This logic-based, double-edged sword has the potential for help and harm. The author becomes the promulgator of limited knowledge that could repress Truth via incomprehensible signs. Simultaneously, such systems help familiarize something which is foreign, whether physical or metaphysical.

Purposeful concealment can preserve Truth for later generations of intellectuals who work beyond the apparent superficial meaning of the sign-signifier-signified relationship which Saussure articulates. Applying Derridean deconstruction unveils Truth hidden within carefully constructed cryptograms. Consider for instance Pompeii, buried under substantial volcanic ash. When disinterred centuries later, we discovered a surprisingly pristine environment that has since wielded invaluable clues about that

particular period in our history. Similarly, Brown suggests how Da Vinci's famous painting, *The Last Supper*, is a profound cryptogram wherein he hides a fundamental Truth—that is, the historicized holy grail is not a cup; rather, it is a person formed by the sexual union of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. Brown demonstrates the potential danger and hidden benefit of what I call neohistorical intertextual concealment. These two historical texts, the *New Testament* and Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, work in unison, in this interpretation, to conceal a historical Truth.

In the case of *The Bible*, the gospels purposefully conceal the real grail to preserve the accepted religious structure of Christianity. Da Vinci works upon humankind's assumption of the event where people commonly assume his painting is historically accurate per *The Bible's* account. Yet when Teabing questions Sophie and she recites the accepted traditional account, he tells Sophie in a profoundly deep declarative statement to "Open your eyes" (256). When Sophie does so, she moves from the uneducated majority to the educated minority. She finds not the holy grail as expected but that "everyone at the table had a glass of wine, including Christ . . . . Moreover, the cups were tiny, stemless, and made of glass. There was no chalice in the paintings. No Holy Grail" (256). Teabing continues, "This fresco, in fact, is the entire key to the Holy Grail mystery. Da Vinci laid it all out in the open in *The Last Supper*" (256). The painting demonstrates the brilliance of Da Vinci, who encodes an alternative supernaturalism within a dynamic that appears to the untrained eye as a confirmation of accepted supernatural phenomena. Through this act, Da Vinci encrypts a neohistorical explanation of the Last Supper where the *New Testament* gospels conceal Truth while

providing evidence to the trained eye of a Truth that contradicts normally preached religious ideologies.

In addition to the chalice, Teabing shows an additional anomaly within the painting. Most individuals who view it see thirteen men. Yet when Teabing provides a closer look, Sophie sees the person to Christ's immediate right hand, and she discovers "flowing red hair, delicate folded hands, and the hint of a bosom" (263). She concludes that it is a female form. Teabing reminds her that Da Vinci was "skilled at painting the difference between the sexes" (263). He then explains the source of humankind's oversight—that being the concept of *scotoma*, where the brain processes information based on "preconceived notions of . . . scenes," which we are particularly prone to when ideologies are "so powerful that our mind blocks out the incongruity and overrides our eyes" (263). Hence the concept of *écriture* demonstrates its virtue and vice—the potential to encode information through the author, sending such powerful messages that we ignore what lies before our eyes. At the same time, this ability provides the academic with the ability to encode obvious or subtle Truths that others suppress. These circumstances deeply inscribe the Truth within popular images. When an intellectual engages with them, he/she may be able to move beyond the obvious and detect the latent.

Teabing concludes his instruction of Sophie with the deconstruction of one final mythology. Sophie is the most appropriate character in the text to represent the archetypal representative of the New Intellectual burgeoning scholar. She possesses the requisite scholastic gifts yet has not applied them within her prior experiences as a police cryptologist. Nevertheless, she serves as a fitting contrast to Fache, the archetypal pseudo-intellectual ignorant follower. When Teabing explains that the woman to Jesus'

right is Mary Magdalene, Sophie's response is typical of someone raised within a highly structured Christian ideology: "The prostitute?" (263). Teabing responds, "Magdalene was no such thing. That unfortunate misconception is the legacy of a smear campaign launched by the early Church. The Church needed to defame Mary Magdalene in order to cover up her dangerous secret—her role as the Holy Grail" (264). Teabing then informs Sophie, "the early Church needed to convince the world that the mortal prophet Jesus was a *divine* being. Therefore, any gospel that described *earthly* aspects of Jesus' life had to be omitted from the Bible" (264). Brown's decision to focus on Christ's marriage is indicative of Christ's mortality—something Teabing believes Da Vinci encodes within *The Last Supper* as well. He asserts that Jesus' marriage was a "matter of historical record" that Da Vinci "was certainly aware of" (264).

Further validation of Teabing's assertion appear through the spatial dynamics of Mary in relationship to Jesus. He shows how their forms in the painting create a wide "V" shape—the ancient symbol for the feminine in the contour of a cup. The placement of the ancient symbol for the feminine asserts the radical idea of the sacred feminine into Christianity. The position Teabing interprets places Mary Magdalene into a superior position to Mary the Mother of Jesus due to the carnal knowledge that Magdalene would have of Christ. Similarly, both individuals in the painting's text represent equal halves of the chalice in the shape of the "V." Teabing draws upon the rudimentary symbol for the chalice and asserts that the "V"-shape indicates the equal contribution both make to their offspring. The shape signifies two conjoining lines, which represents the comingling of two bloodlines, much as we represent today through family trees. When separate branches merge, a new generation comes forth.

The human element of Christ's historical existence, particularly his marriage to Mary Magdalene and his female offspring is a central dynamic to Brown's thesis. Should both assertions prove true, humanity would need to expand its perception of Jesus to include his mortality as well as his immortality. It also would present the even more critical perspective of Jesus' limitations—that is, his need for a female companion to bring into existence another human being possessed of mortal and immortal blood. This would further affirm the mortal and historical Jesus. In the film version, Landon understand the implication of such information—that is, “it would add insult to injury” since “pagans found transcendence through the joining of male to female.” In a sense, this concept means individuals can find higher truth through sex. Yet the larger implication is that humans do not necessarily need an intermediary to connect with a divine source of knowledge. As Landon states, should this be true, the Church would see its power significantly undermined. Specifically, the Church has a monopoly on salvation “through Jesus Christ.” Without the need for an intermediary, the Church would experience an unprecedented crisis of faith. Teabing says in the novel, “History is always written by the winners. When two cultures clash, the loser is obliterated, and the winner writes the history books—books which glorify their own cause and disparage the conquered foe” (256). He additionally cites Napoleon's rhetorical question, “What is history, but a fable agreed upon?” (256). In one respect I return to a central concept of this dissertation, which is the process societies and similar structures use to other specifically supernatural agents when their actions undermine what is an accepted ideology.



For Christianity, the greatest threat posed by Brown's assertions concerns the sacrilegious nature of his assertions. It is important to note Brown's novel is historical fiction, though he suggests from the novel's inception that "all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate" (1). Still, we should classify the novel as fiction until valid data proves otherwise. Yet it is important to understand that, beyond its specific blasphemy to Christians, the text illustrates a more fundamental concern: how humans throughout history often manipulated history to validate a specific social matrix. In using Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* and Howard's film adaptation, I introduce these texts not to suggest the validity of the findings but to reinforce how cultures skew history to serve a hidden agenda. The danger in these efforts is the potential distraction of humanity from Truth, whether it is knowledge of humanity or the divine. Such actions were dangerous in prior epochs, but even more so in a pseudo-modernist age. Without available, validated absolutes, we drift upon a vast ocean without direction, a phenomena that Virginia Woolf uses as her defining and structural metaphor in her novel, *The Voyage Out*.

To add further credence to Brown's suggestions, modern historians argue over an unaccounted gap of approximately twenty years in the life of the historical Jesus. Few theologians tackle the reason for this caesura, yet many scholars comb ancient records for lost and/or suppressed documentation hinting at Jesus' actions during this period. Within the same vein, Teabing argues that evidence of Christ's historical life exists in carefully encoded texts such as Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. While this text's construction occurs well after Jesus' purported ascension, this Renaissance product suggests the benefit of *écriture*—that is, Foucault's argument about a text's ability to "sustain the privileges of

the author through the safeguard of the a priori” (1626). New Intellectuals like Neveu and Langdon unearth authorial intention and discover Truth through logical analyses of misinterpreted signs, even after centuries of continued misuse.

In his contrast of the historical Jesus and Biblical Jesus, Brown suggests tantalizing clues through Teabing about the concealment of an authentic supernatural agent for centuries beneath a forged artificial supernatural sign ultimately to weaken humanity. This specific signification within Western civilization’s history fractures humanity’s association with true history generally and with authentic supernaturalism specifically. Consequently, humankind is in the throes of a worldwide identity crisis. Anti-intellectual pseudo-modernist tendencies are more prone to accept attractive artificial theistic constructs that distract us from Truth and individual self-discovery. Should we escape such repressive structures of meaning, humankind could discover the essential elements of what it means to be human. Contemporary 21st century religious and social ideologies wage wars of dominance to ensure a homogenized faith community whose beliefs invalidate subversive yet essential Truths. These are critical to individual spiritual development as well as the cultivation of relationships with authentic supernatural agencies.

Brown also uses Teabing to suggest that alternative textual histories do exist. There exist different perspectives on the historical Jesus to inform the Biblical Jesus as well. Teabing makes much of the four accepted Gospel writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Christian theology asserts that these four synoptic writers provide an authentic history of Jesus’ life because they received divine guidance. Consider the Council of Trent’s edict that Catholics must swear to

accept Sacred Scripture in the sense in which it has been held, and is held, by Holy Mother Church, to whom it belongs to judge the true sense and interpretation of the Sacred Scripture, nor will I interpret it in any way other than in accordance with the unanimous agreement of the Fathers. (Freeman 198)

A more cynical analysis reads this as a means to ensure consistency of interpretation through the prevention of alternative readings. The desire for homogeny could suggest a much different motivation—that is, the four synoptic Gospels correspond to the particular vision of Christ preferred by the Church.

Yet additional Gospels do exist. Brown for instance has Teabing cite the Gospel of Philip, which records that “the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth” (266). Though Sophie questions associating companionship with marriage, Teabing reveals an etymological study of the term “companion” to reveal that the term in Aramaic “literally meant spouse” (266). He also explains how Mary becomes the object of ridicule. The same *Bible of Philip* records, “The rest of the disciples were offended by [his kissing of Mary on the mouth] and expressed their disapproval” (266). The disciples followed their retort with a question: “Why do you love her more than all of us?” (266). This is the beginning of misogyny, driven by a deep-seated jealousy that Jesus either viewed women as equals or even privileged women over men. Whether Brown’s assertions are correct or not, he nevertheless evidences the power of human historicization through its control over the act of textualization and the associated act of declaring a text as valid or invalid. In this case, should the Gospel of Philip be accurate, textual evidence now exists to explain the mainstream othering of the sacred feminine.

I would like to address one further point regarding Brown's proposed alternative history. Teabing does cite from the Gospel of Mary Magdalene herself, which records the level of the disciples' jealousy. Peter asks, "Did the saviour really speak with a woman without our knowledge? Are we to turn about and listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?" (268). At his words, Magdalene records the response of Levi, who answers Peter, "you have always been hot-tempered. Now I see you contending against the woman like an adversary. If the Saviour made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Saviour knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us" (268). Peter's response demonstrates the level of disagreement among Jesus' disciples regarding his relationship to Mary. It also shows the prejudices toward elevating the feminine gender role to an equal position via the sacred feminine as a supernatural agent. It does not appear that Jesus' desire to marry is the source of His supposed error. Rather, His preferences introduce a new social dynamic to reflect a philosophy of mutual power between husband and wife as well as men and women within society. Perhaps his New Covenant and novel way of living involves more than a recasting of the relationship between humankind and the supernatural. Beyond the Good News, Jesus' intention in this context is a new level of homogeny to deconstruct common usages of the term. The aim is not necessarily limited to similarity in ideology but in equality between different nations, ethnicities, and sexes.

Brown's theory explores a fundamental inconsistency between the historical mortal Jesus and the Biblical supernatural figure. Independent historical records suggest that Jesus' primary concern was the spiritual well-being of humanity. This explains His non-discriminative approach to the world. Lost in translating the Biblical Jesus is his

historical non-discriminatory support of full human spiritual empowerment. His followers could cope with a new, more flexible religious ideology in comparison to the rigid Jewish system. To accept such a system would empower women by weakening men. The new spiritual mentality, which Jesus promotes and which *The Da Vinci Code* articulates, is a reconstructed relationship with the supernatural that revises the Judaic system. More personalized relationships with the supernatural allow for the spiritual development of all humans. Hence, we see one of the greatest acts of supernatural othering: a structured religious system uses purposeful non-textualization and re-historicization to exclude the sacred feminine.

Further evidence in support of Brown's premise exists in Howard Bloom's study of the historical versus Biblical Jesus in his 2004 text, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* Specifically, he analyzes *The Gospel of Thomas*, a "creedless, Orphic, enthusiastic, proto-Gnostic, post-Christian" text (259). Bloom asserts that its beauty is its ability to guide one towards self-knowledge within a gnōsis, something that is non-denominational and subsequently available for guilt-free consumption by "every Christian, Jew, Humanist, skeptic" (260). The Jesus which Thomas projects "calls us to knowledge and not to belief, for faith need not lead to wisdom" (260). Consider Arnold's *Dover Beach*, where the innocent armies who clash by night on the beachhead may not be those of the faithless. Perhaps they are the faithful, whose limited world knowledge facilitates the same dangerous level of ignorance through belief that characterizes the pseudo-modernist temperament.

Bloom asserts that the Thomasinian Jesus "is a wisdom teacher, gnostic and wandering, rather than a proclaimer of finalities . . . a remarkably Whitmanian Jesus"

whose perspective on knowledge would “have been accepted by Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman” (260). Appositionally to this Thomasinian projection of intellectualism “is precisely what Emerson and Wallace Stevens meant by ‘poverty’: imaginative lack of need” (260). I mention Bloom’s observations since he bases this reading on Jesus apart from the synoptic gospels, which teach a more rigid and exclusive ideology to promote a radical extremism without alternative perspectives. This image of Christ represents Brown’s attempt to project the authentic Jesus, the historical Jesus.

Langdon instead searches after a gnōsis where humanity can return to a default position commonly found among children, when we were, to quote Bloom, “in the light” (264). This implies a return of our human intellectual self to a position where we stand “at the beginning, immovable, fully human, and so also divine” (264). In this space, we are able to “know who we were . . . as we now wish to be known,” and “we came into being before coming into being” (254). In this context, our self-knowledge means we “never were created” but transmigrated from one state to another (254). This returns us to a state of ideological neutrality, a tabula rasa innocence where we shed our prejudices to “dwell in poverty . . . for our imaginative need has become greater than our imaginations can fulfill” (264). Perhaps the original sin that baptism attempts to guard humanity against is not so much a representation of Adam and Eve’s sin. Rather, it is the initial symbolic act of one’s later catechism, an educational experience driven more by conditioning than erudition.

From Bloom’s vantage point, then, the Church’s projection of a Biblical Jesus through its canon may not necessarily jive with that of the historical. If Bloom’s position is true, humanity has seen the greatest recorded spiritual leader re-projected to empower

billions by inhibiting billions. In the same process, the Church disables Christ by othering him from his True self. Textual evidence in *The Da Vinci Code* suggests that the historical Jesus would prefer to empower discovery of the self in a vein similar to Socrates and other great human thinkers. Yet Christianity's own historicization and textualization make this effort difficult without New Intellectuals like Sophie and Langdon. Even more disconcerting is the possibility that the supernatural agents worshipped by humans over the centuries are the fictionalized artificial creations of a small cadre of people. Their actions have dissuaded billions of followers from authentic supernatural agents. If Brown is indeed accurate, the Catholic Church has promulgated the "Greatest Story Ever Sold"—one that is more fiction than fact (267).

As the archetype of the New Intellectual, Langdon hopes to save humanity through the projection of a counter-ideological perspective of Christianity specifically, but religion generally. A corrective force would emerge wherein humanity returns to an intellectual objectivity. Brown's purpose is not to promote a new subjective ideology to replace what is outdated and historically inaccurate. Rather, he wishes the text to pique the reader's latent imaginative sophistication to promote an ideological re-examination so that humanity considers alternative neohistorical readings. When applied to the alternative supernatural explanatory efforts of the text, it is not to profess a new blind allegiance. Instead, Brown specifically hopes that we consider the basis of our supernatural relationships as artificial constructs—perhaps a reason why human progress seems so ineffectual in comparison to the achievements of the ancients.

Ultimately, Langdon's heroism ties to Harold Bloom's reading of another supernatural figure mythologized in the ancient Greek pantheon. To Bloom, Nemesis,

“Daughter of the Night . . . a venerable goddess . . . is our mortality, our ill fortune, our self-punishment, our universal inability to forgive ourselves everything” (282). Most importantly, Bloom finds that “all our unwisdom is centered in her” (282). From a postcolonial perspective, Bloom argues, “the national Nemesis of the United States may prove to be our globalization of the Wilsonian illusion that other countries can be made safe for democracy” (282). This effort represents recent world history, which has led to the current pseudo-modernist intellectual crisis. While democracy is perhaps the best political system to promote and defend the search for Truth, like religion it can also subvert such pursuits if it asserts a monolithic superiority over other systems.

Robert Langdon serves as a critical archetype for future success in relationship to supernatural interactions. He projects the potential of a liberal New Intellectual mindset, which can pull humanity out of its current pseudo-academic funk. Consider how Brown ends the text. The key that unlocks the map, so to speak, of the Grail’s location is a simple five-letter word, “apple.” This fruit, as Langdon argues, represents much of the competing scholarship over human history opposed by Christianity. He states, it is “the orb which Eve partook [which incurred] the Holy wrath of God” since it ushers in a new level of human awareness (457). It also leads to the advent of intellectualism, a pattern in humanity that ultimately provides us with god-like potential within a mortal frame. Associatively, the apple deconstructs into symbols of “original sin [and] . . . the fall of the sacred feminine,” as well as the orb that “fell from heaven . . . [and] . . . struck Newton on the head” (457). While the apple leads to our fall from grace, it also becomes the source of inspiration for Newton’s lifelong study (457). Conservative critics argue that this particular means of individual intellectual empowerment blasphemes the church. In



truth, contemplation of the supernatural does not run contrary to such theisms. Instead, these faiths judiciously move us towards a relationship with the authentic supernatural, a life-force that teaches us how to “hold out against Nemesis” (284). In this sense, Brown’s text is a practical map, so to speak. It leads us towards what Bloom defines as “wisdom literature” (284). These sources’ latent or explicit supernaturalism allow for the collection of “prudential wisdom and some intimations of hope to coexist,” an argument that can help re-center literature back into the heart of the university (284). Research in the context of the archetypal New Intellectual defined by Langdon enables us to learn “how to know wisdom, whether or not it can be identified with the Truth that might make us free” (284). This nineteenth century ideology haunts our twenty-first century mindset.

In our new millennial period, New Intellectualism is creeping back into the mainstream. Contemporary textual evidence of supernaturalism and its growing popularity suggests that this movement has gained momentum in a world scarred recently by war, relativism, and the effects of anti-intellectualism. Recent texts intimate the beginning of this transition. Brown’s text serves as a textual artifact of our crisis state. The recent popularity of the Harry Potter series illustrates an emergent worldwide attitude driven by the New Intellectualism of Robert Langdon and other like characters. Though the series begins before the events of 9/11, the seeds of pseudo-modernism and the emerging intellectual fruits of postmodernism permeate the first two books of the series, *The Sorcerer’s Stone* and *The Chamber of Secrets*. Yet as 9/11 approached, the next two books, *The Prisoner of Azkaban* and *The Goblet of Fire* anticipated the coming end of postmodernism and an emergent anti-intellectualism where these texts take a much darker turn.

Perhaps the greatest change surrounds the collective perceptions of Dumbledore, other scholars in the text, and education itself. In the beginning, both worlds take a positive or neutral stand relative to intellectualism. An important shift occurs beginning with Book Five, *The Order of the Phoenix*, a text produced in 2003, two years after the horrific events of world terrorism and shortly after educational policies like “No Child Left Behind.” These began to infiltrate political systems as popular ways to validate private and public financial investments through tangible outcomes based on assessment practices. In the first two books, Dumbledore, Harry, and other seemingly intelligent folks or those possessed of tremendous potential receive demigod statuses. Yet after 9/11 and the publication of Book Five, pseudo-modernism is evident throughout the remaining texts. Rowling concludes the series with a brief snapshot into the future world of an adult Harry. She promotes an inclusive intellectual mindset that embraces authentic supernaturalism achieved through disintegrating divergent ideologies focused on homogeny.

Perhaps there is no greater authentic textual artifact of the world state before the emergence of New Terrorism in 2001. Among its many contributions, the *Harry Potter* series represents the attempt to counter the anti-intellectual pseudomodernist mindset with a New Intellectualism. This embraces the potential of a relationship not just with supernatural phenomena but also with the supernatural potential within every single human being, whether a pure-blood or a mud-blood, to use Rowling’s language. A great deal of criticism focuses upon the journey motif of the series and its particular evidencing of Harry’s maturation. He evolves from a child with vast potential to a young adult and a later middle-age adult who actualizes this ability through positive applications to make

the world a better but not idyllic place. Yet few examine the text from the standpoint of its conceptual supernatural base and the relationship of these ideologies to the nineteenth century's haunting of the New Millennial period. The series exhibits a new world structure that is not necessarily idealistic but suggests a realistic perspective on what our world would be like if human, natural, and supernatural spheres not only recognized but worked in conjunction with each other.

Many who read the *Harry Potter* series believe the world of Hogwarts is akin to Neverland in *Peter Pan* or Narnia in *The Chronicles of Narnia* series. These locales exist in different dimensions where people must commune through some sort of transportation. Yet the world of Hogwarts and its related entities depends on the muggle world. Harry usually boards the Hogwarts Express to move between Hogwarts and London, as several of the books demonstrate. Yet Harry evidences that one can move between these two places independent of the Hogwarts Express. Examples include a flying car and a broomstick. Magic does not enable these transportation mechanisms to usher Harry to the world of Hogwarts. Consider that the Ministry of Magic itself and Sirius Black's home, the headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix in Book Five, are located in London itself. They exist as real structures. However, the world of Hogwarts inserts these buildings into parallel spaces within muggle structures. Muggles cannot conceptualize expanses in the same way as witches and wizards.

The magical and muggle worlds co-exist within the same space, which means that the world of Harry Potter is just as dystopic. The same challenges confront the magical world as the muggle world, and there are similar political, social, and educational dynamics at work. Rowling's construct echoes nineteenth century Romantic, Victorian,

and Transcendental values, where the natural and the supernatural occupy the same space, only the muggle and the magical organize these spaces differently. The enlightened individual within the nineteenth century tradition possesses the associated machinations for a dual perceptibility of both constructs to assemble meaning in these spaces differently. One need only read Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Emerson, or Thoreau to recognize such potentiality. This sensitivity is akin to those who are multilingual. They possess knowledge of the linguistic structures and the associated deconstructive abilities to see, understand, and analyze how each method structures meaning.

Special multiculturalism reinforces a central premise of Rowling's texts, where a more idyllic world opens to difference through the recognition of *différance*. The central ideological struggle throughout the series revolves around a magical backsliding. The effort towards homogenization would implement a more rigid, polarized dynamic that would create borders between pure-blood and mud-blood, and between magical and muggle worlds. Were this to occur, the magical world would become a separated space. Even more devastating, though, would be the affect on the supernatural. The magical world's relationship to its own defining characteristic would mirror that muggle world. Appropriate and inappropriate magical machinations would emerge, much as there is accepted and othered religious constructs of human interaction with accepted supernatural agencies. Rowling does not suggest that humankind's acceptance of the supernatural will usher in a utopic, highly intellectual world stage. However, she does suggest human potentiality through alternative metaphysical constructs beyond the dominant Western and Eastern systems. Through its mystical shortsightedness, humanity

may very well ignore a much larger natural world population comprised of different beings who are of equal or perhaps even greater intelligence.

The series anticipates the potential impact of pseudo-modernism on the magical world early in the series. Rowling sees the coming demise of post-modernism through muggle anti-intellectualism, particularly with respect to Harry's non-magical relatives. Her creation of a parallel construct within the same sphere of reality realizes an interesting dichotomy. A more objective contemplation of the human group and individual psychological states directly affect our epistemological potentials. Some may perceive that the magic of Hogwarts occludes the vision of magical agents just as much as the muggle ideology blinds the non-magical. This is not Rowling's intention, though. Rather, her purpose indicates how less-intellectualized perceptual systems blind us to magic, especially at an early point in life. Our ignorance prevents the processing of what subsists within the same or similar spaces.

Rowling presents the notion of muggle ignorance of the supernatural within the first thirty pages of *The Sorcerer's Stone*. Harry, not yet acquainted with the existence of Hogwarts, talks about a dream where he sees a flying motorcycle—a representation that his subconscious and unconscious sub-selves are very aware of his supernatural talents and are prescient of his future activities. These dreams are premonitions of what is to follow, another way that Rowling represents supernatural agency. Vernon and Petunia, muggles sworn to take care of Harry after Voldemort's attack kills Harry's parents, deny the existence of the magical world. Even with this unbelief, though, there is a latent fear both of the world itself and of Harry's untapped potential.

One cannot ignore the psychological dimension of Rowling's text relative to the supernatural. Consider that the Romantic, Victorian, and Transcendental writers believe a supernatural phenomenon exists within each human being. As Emerson argues in *Prospects*, "the foundations of man are not in matter, but in spirit," and the "element of spirit is eternity" (45). Vernon, Petunia, and other muggles' denial of the supernatural represents Emerson's projection of the typical human, one especially whose lower artificial constructs unduly influence his cognitive and metacognitive abilities. As Emerson states, "we distrust and deny inwardly our sympathy with nature. We own and disown our relation to it, by turns" (45). In this sense, humanity is like "Nebuchadnezzar, dethroned, bereft of reason, and eating grass like an ox" (45). From Emerson's perspective it is possible to cure humankind, but we must rely on "the remedial force of spirit" (45). Our internal supernaturalism then re-orientes our internal compass towards an authentic self, which is powerful enough to resist manufactured agencies intent on dissuading us from the discovery of Truth.

The nineteenth century Romantic, Victorian, and Transcendental authors fixated on the importance of self through the sublimation of social influence. Rowling uses this same orientation for Harry, whose independent status ensures he is not distracted, whether by muggles or supporters of Voldemort. Harry almost unwittingly falls into the Death Eater cause in Book I. When Harry first meets Malfoy, Malfoy tries to convince Harry of the appropriateness of the homogeneous cause. When Harry tells Malfoy that his parents were a witch and wizard, respectively, Malfoy responds, "I really don't think they should let the other sort in, do you? They're just not the same, they've never been

brought up to know our ways” (78). Harry offers a cold retort and later tells Hagrid of Malfoy’s attempt to convince him of the validity of this pure-blood mindset.

As a newcomer to the magical world, Harry could blindly agree with Malfoy and begin a journey down a much different path. Yet Harry’s internal spirit leads him to refute the Death Eater ideology. Similarly, Harry nearly ends up in Slytherin as opposed to Gryffindor during his initial sorting in Book I. The Sorting Hat takes some time to decide on Harry’s appropriate placement. Aware of Harry’s potential, the Hat vocalizes an internal debate. It knows that “Slytherin will help [Harry] on the way to greatness” (121). The Hat seems overruled by Harry, though. He forces Gryffindor on the Sorting Hat, evident by the Hat’s dialectic monologue, “Not Slytherin, eh?,” after Harry grips “the edge of the stool and [thinks], Not Slytherin, not Slytherin” (121). This remarkable event demonstrates how close Harry comes to immediate ideological programming as a newcomer to the magical world. Harry even questions this choice later in the series. He shows the ability to speak parseltongue, a language associated with Slytherin and Voldemort. Harry also becomes aware that Voldemort’s blood courses through his veins, and Voldemort can enter Harry’s mind. The internal authentic spirituality and implied logical choice by Harry protects his logical faculties, though.

In addition to the magical agents vying for control over Harry, the muggle world likewise tries to prevent Harry from becoming aware of the magical world’s existence. His muggle family in particular attempts to prevent Harry’s magical education. Perhaps the most vocal is Uncle Vernon, who regularly offers strong retorts about the possibility of the magical world. For instance, when Harry mentions his dream about flying motorcycles, Vernon screams “MOTORCYCLES DON’T FLY” (25). Here is another

attempt to inculcate Harry into a muggle ideology that denies the existence of magic. Yet Vernon's common retorts suggest a latent belief in magic itself, the world, and an entrenched fear regarding Harry's ability to perform magic. Each time Harry enters the muggle public space, Vernon warns Harry about "funny business," a vague signifier that denies the supernatural yet warns Harry not to do anything out of the ordinary. Such deconstructive moments are important indicators of humanity's typical mixed response to supernaturalism. The deep-seated tendency of validation through fearful resistance occurs along with a conscious denial of magic through rationalization.

Yet humanity does sanction magical events within its world all the time, an obvious point when one considers *The Da Vinci Code* and its portrayal of Christianity. Consider the mysticism associated with the typical Christian mass. Roman Catholicism believes in transubstantiation, where the bread and wine undergo a miraculous transformation into the literal body and blood of Christ. Many accept this magic yet ironically code as impossible the ability to make a heavy metal object fly, such as when the magical world embeds the power of flight into a muggle automobile. Between the two, one could argue through a priori and even empiricism that a large metal object can indeed defy gravity. In fact, this assertion is more realistic, one might argue, than the conversion of foodstuffs into flesh and blood. Rowling contemplates the impact of scientific empiricism along with religiously-structured supernatural experiences. Both extremes ultimately lead to the potential extinction of the other. Her texts demonstrate a contemporary haunting by a particular nineteenth century ideal: that a truly enlightened individual combines science with the supernatural. Both mutually support each other through knowledge that is terrestrial and divine.



Though the muggle world ardently denies the magical world, Rowling demonstrates a suppression of anti-intellectual relativism in favor of genuine clarity. One of Rowling's main purposes is to ensure the continued borderless nature of these two spaces. She hopes, ultimately, that humankind will merge spiritual with mortal, a significant quest of nineteenth century Romantic, Victorian, and Transcendental metaphysics. We maximize the strengths of both sub-selves so that we are more in concert with nature, each other, and ourselves. Rowling educates our modern period with the haunting presence of ancient metaphysical concepts embedded in specifically nineteenth century Romantic, Victorian, and Transcendental ideologies. Perhaps the popularity of these novels comes from the idealistic projection of a world that actualizes the positive liberalism of the 1990s, moving humanity into a new enlightened state.

The overall shape of the *Harry Potter* series from beginning to end starts with a relative calm, though a deep latent fear emerges which only Harry and other intellectuals detect. The fear of Voldemort's return represents a similar concern of the late 1990s—that is, the political, intellectual, and social liberal gains saw a significant threat with the coming new millennium. Scholars recognized an emerging conservative mindset that quickly convinced the population of the dangers of liberalism even with its successes. This new conservatism threatened to erode the power base of the liberal mindset, which subsequently forced a worldwide retrenchment that would other the diversity achievements of the 1990s. Gains in the supernatural arena were one of those liberal achievements threatened by the emergent conservative mindset. Rowling began her series in 1997, three years before the election of 2000 and four years before the explosion of New Terrorism. This ideological retrenchment reaches crisis proportions in Book

Five, where Rowling provides a scathing criticism of an educational system that ironically works to distant the magical world from the supernatural. She chronicles how government intervention in the magical world replaces higher-order thinking with rote memorization measured through disconnected objective assessments. These ultimately anaesthetize the students' minds from true intellectual discoveries. The focus is on producing prescribed answers rather than answering complex challenges through critical thought.

From Book Five, *The Order of the Phoenix*, until the text's conclusion in Book Seven, *The Deathly Hallows*, Rowling characterizes the rapid descent of the magical world's once promising heterogeneity. The threat of terrorism moves the magical world towards a homogenization that fears difference, both in the form of muggles and mud-bloods. Rowling shows the ultimate battle between the New Intellectuals and the pseudo-modernists. In the end, Rowling offers an optimistic future worldview where Harry defeats Voldemort. In this ending, Rowling suggests that a liberal intellectual mindset which espouses natural/supernatural selves and associated relationships, will be established. Yet she also offers a chilling realization, maintaining that the New Intellectual and the pseudo-modernist mindset cannot co-exist as the modernist and postmodernist could. Rather, one must die for the other to survive—a frightening prescience that casts a threatening image of the future. Rowling represents this concept through Harry's recognition that in the end, either he or Voldemort must die, since their two selves cannot coexist. It is a clean ending, but I do wonder if the elimination of one to sustain the other is indeed realistic. Alternatively, does this represent the yearning dreams of an intellectual who hopes humanity will one day separate itself from its

tendency to embrace ignorance? History shows a cycle to extremes thesis, yet rarely do we eliminate antithesis.

Our fear of death leads humanity to concoct some strange forms of avoidance. Still, most humans begrudgingly accept its certainty. There are those who, exerting an extraordinary effort to avoid death, live an artificially extended existence for a variety of different reasons. Consider for instance the haunting legacies of texts like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In both texts, the integration of different methodologies ultimately works to avoid death. In the case of *Frankenstein*, Shelley depicts what occurs when humanity usurps the natural processes of birth. Though Victor animates his monster, one can question whether a soul imbues a created body. Shelley's text offers a stern warning and an associated moral judgment on the ability of humanity to install itself with divine power—something that may represent an overreaching as well as a misapplication of our knowledge. Learning about the processes associated with life and death may add to the human storehouse of knowledge. Using knowledge to reanimate what reaches the end of its natural life cycle may overextend human capability, especially in light of our limitations to consider all potential direct and indirect consequences. This particular issue continues to trouble humanity in the New Millennium, and it is an important concept throughout *Frankenstein*. We can disrespect our relationship to the supernatural by overstepping our limitations as humans and othering variables that we cannot understand.

Rowling also embeds within her text another particular nineteenth century concern—namely, that we may use knowledge of the supernatural to prevent our becoming a part of this metaphysical collective of disembodied spirits. In the case of

Dracula and the other undead, the alternate ritual which they conduct ultimately leads celebrants to achieve a pseudo-existence characterized by a physical transformation of the body into an unnatural state that impedes a person's development. This event ensures that the soul will forever inhabit the earth. Similar to Shelley, Stoker depicts a future humanity steeped in the archaic Gothicism of the past. We rely on a different form of science as well as an associated application of our supernatural selves to defeat death. Similarly, Voldemort's ultimate purpose throughout the *Harry Potter* series is to secure his own permanent existence in the flesh. His superb magical powers provide a substantial amount of control over the supernatural realm. These same abilities make Voldemort a god on earth—a status he formerly occupies when one considers the apostolic nature of the Death Eaters.

In this respect, then, the *Harry Potter* series focuses intensely on the notion of death and the associated machinations people construct to avoid the great unknown. Harry resists death, evident each time he confronts his own demise. Yet there is one substantial difference between Voldemort and Harry. Voldemort goes to any extreme to ensure his continued existence, even subsuming himself within another human being. In *The Sorcerer's Stone*, Voldemort's face occupies the back of Professor Quirrell's dead body in a weird twist of the traditional Janus myth. This unnatural act evidences Voldemort's power but shows the deep-seated fear he possesses of death itself. In contrast, Harry, the far braver character, fears death, also. Unlike Voldemort, Harry controls this fear, perhaps because he nearly experiences death so early in life.

Yet when Harry experiences his most hopeless situation, at a moment when it seems that his life truly has reached its natural, intended end, he does not resist. In Book

Seven, *The Deathly Hallows*, Harry realizes that resistance is futile. As he states, “the snake was too well protected . . . . If he managed to point the wand at Nagini, fifty curses would hit him first” (704). When Voldemort raises his wand, Harry does not experience an overwhelming fear. Instead, Harry looks back “into the red eyes” of Voldemort and hopes for “it to happen now, quickly, while he could still stand, before he lost control, before he betrayed fear” (704). Believing it is the natural time for his demise, Harry prepares to submit himself to the end. Harry’s rugged individualism imbues him with a more substantial confidence, where he sees the potential benefits of a transition from mortal to immortal existence.

Among these many benefits is the opportunity to reconnect with Dumbledore and learn the Truth about his relationship to Voldemort. At a surreal King’s Cross, a fitting transitory location between the mortal and immortal realms, Dumbledore reveals much of the mysteries surrounding Harry and Voldemort since the beginning of Harry’s life. Yet even before the revelation of these secrets, Harry asks Dumbledore, “I’ve got to go back, haven’t I?” (722). In response, Dumbledore tells Harry, “That is up to you” (722). When Harry inquires where he would go since the current space he occupies with Dumbledore appears transitory, the best answer he can give is, “On.” (722). Harry’s first emotional inclination is to choose death so that he can start this new journey among so many people he loves. Additionally, the natural human curiosity craves knowledge of the next realm of existence, especially when it appears that one has accomplished all, and/or a return would be futile.

Though Harry reaches a natural breaking point in his life, his soul has yet to accomplish the greater purpose of silencing Voldemort permanently. As Dumbledore

tells Harry, “If you choose to return, there is a chance that he may be finished for good. I cannot promise it. But I know this, Harry, that you have less to fear from returning here than he does” (722). As Harry contemplates his decision, Dumbledore offers one final lesson central to understanding our relationship to the supernatural realm:

Do not pity the dead, Harry. Pity the living, and above all, those who live without love. By returning, you may ensure that fewer souls are maimed, fewer families are torn apart. If that seems to you a worthy goal, then we say good-bye for the present. (722)

Harry receives a lesson in True natural morality—that is, one of the important charges of the human individual is to make a difference in the lives of others, even if it serves no benefit to the facilitator of the action. Ultimately, Harry chooses life. Yet he does so selflessly to secure the happiness of others. In one sense, Harry chooses death through life, since he delays passage into a realm populated by many of his loved one. His personal happiness augments development of his soul through securing the future happiness of countless others. Harry’s actions ultimately demote Voldemort from a burgeoning god-like status, which simultaneously invalidates the maniacal homogenous ideologies he and his Death-Eater disciples promote.

Pseudo-modernism’s inherent flaw is in its tendency to limit objectified thinking, favoring subjectified reflections to confirm a particular worldview. These deceptive ruminations become True to the thinker within this intellectual reflective loop. As Klein argues, the inherent danger is in “confusing appearance for reality and thus failing to gain knowledge” (93). To Klein, “If we fail to identify the actual features of the world and instead dwell on mere appearances, then we fail to find knowledge or truth” (95). Not

only does our ability to connect to the natural world disappear, but also we risk permanent extrication from the supernatural realm. This in itself is pejorative.

Perhaps even more frightening is the distraction to the supernatural self. We lose sight of our authenticity in favor of rationalized projections, aligned with artificiality and produced by world structures that are engrossed in their own Mirrors of Desire. Klein cites Descartes, who argues that “the foundation of knowledge is knowledge of [one’s] own existence. This is his famous cogito ergo sum. I think, therefore, I exist” (96). Contemplation of the natural and supernatural world enables an exteriority that prevents a rationalized and subjective-based metaphysical existentialism that denies the existence of Truth. An expressed fear within the Harry Potter series, thus, exists: the upcoming demise of postmodernity will usher in a pseudo-modernity, where desire becomes the primary means of intellectual facilitation. Rowling predicts how concerns of the nineteenth century haunt the period before and after the new millennium. Taken as a whole, the Harry Potter series expresses the New Millennial struggle to establish an objectivity that will fight ideology wars on the world stage. As Rowling shows through *The Sorcerer’s Stone*, each human is a touchstone for the other, an alchemical device that promotes our own intellectualism and immortality through the human interactions we experience on a daily basis. Unfortunately, we choose difference over difference. The process of differentiation and a related willingness to delay meaning at the fundamental level would allow additional learning about our fundamental similarities as opposed to our differences. These start with the essential supernaturalism existent within each individual and perhaps beyond.

Embracing a radically different educational structure is one means for decisive individuality to emerge and combat the anti-intellectualism of the pseudo-modernist state. This neoclassical system incorporates modern advances to facilitate a more evocative relationship with internal supernatural natures. Such a specific epistemological structure relies heavily on the contemplation of the metaphysical state and its relationship to other states of mortal and immortal being. In his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Pierre Bordieu argues that one achieves objectivity through a contemplative “dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality” (72). More simply, Bordieu sees this as the introduction of “incorporation and objectification” (72). On the surface, his assertions may seem contradictory. Yet a deeper consideration reveals a dichotomy that embraces *différance* through minimizing attempts at differentiation for the sake of discrimination. Such deliberations shift key conceptual structures to the introduction of new pedagogical cultural systems that embrace Truth rather than the myopic careerism of our current intellectual exploits. This new methodology embraces neoclassical principles of academic development that were so much a part of the nineteenth century. John Henry Cardinal Newman’s thesis in *The Idea of a University* provides sound evidence to support such assertions.

Rugged individualism in particular assures maturation of the supernatural sub-self disassociated from typical negative denotative structures of meaning. Emerson and Thoreau from the Transcendentalist perspective, Wordsworth and Coleridge from the Romantic, and Arnold from the Victorian—all assert similar findings. The application, the system of meaning, so to speak, of an ideology constructs a framing perceptual mechanism. Particular neutral denotative conclusions connote application in the absence



of modernist certainty to deconstruct meaning to the very foundational level of significance. When this transpires, a shift occurs from a connotative to a denotative available heuristic. In a very short period, what is immoral becomes moral within a pseudo-modernist system so structurally deficient that we can deny the very nature of existence, even with significant tangible evidence. This is another nineteenth century flashpoint. Attempts by dominant ideological contexts to other supernatural phenomena necessitate socially subaltern systems of meaning to preserve supernatural authenticity independent of dominant systems. Le Corbusier asserts in *Towards a New Architecture*, the concept of plan “holds in itself the essence of sensation” (132). That is, plan becomes the structuring mechanism which the nineteenth-century artists fear. Systemic integration generates a particularly powerful form of scotoma which, to quote Teabing in the film version of *The Da Vinci Code*, leads the “mind to choose what to see.” In the same process, one’s mind generates a figurative myopia to occlude vision of that which undoubtedly exists.

In Harry Potter, structures of meaning influence nearly every character. *The Daily Prophet* is perhaps the prime example. Rowling illustrates how the modern press historicizes newsworthy events by skewing details based on popular political and social ideological structures. This is another reminder of the media’s role in promoting a nascent pseudo-modernism. Their particular spins do not necessarily rely on empirical data to validate what news they report. Early in the series, *The Daily Prophet* treats Harry as a messianic figure and Dumbledore as the heroic academic who is the protector of Truth from sophist-style attacks wielded by anti-muggle and pure-blood forces. Yet this particular mindset disappears in Book Four and becomes anti-establishment in Books

Five, Six, and Seven. Harry consequently loses his messianic status and becomes an alarmist figure prone towards exaggeration to promote his own cause. Likewise, Dumbledore shifts from the defender of Truth to a liberal academic. Society questions his influence on the youth in a way that mirrors the sophist criticism of Socrates, especially when they suspect him of forming an army to overthrow the Ministry of Magic in Book V. The strong criticism of liberalism and an associated anti-intellectualism permeates the series from the midpoint of Book IV until the series' conclusion. This movement has clear ties to our New Millennial state, where there are criticisms of the rampant liberalism in higher education and the perceived brainwashing of students by the leftist-leaning professoriate.

Rowling shows throughout the series how the ingenious adoptions of new linguistic structures combat the pseudo-modernist trend, especially regarding the supernatural realm. To Le Corbusier, the arrangement of "forms and shapes [affect] our senses to an acute degree and provoke plastic emotions" (132). Rowling in particular shows through Harry Potter how a pseudo-modernist world easily introduces new linguistic structures to striate a world population where faith in the potentiality of creative tensions disappears. Modernist and post-modernist structural and deconstructive models create a system of checks and balances so that language has some flexibility. New forms of expression emerge to provide a sharing of evolutionary principles. The modernist mindset checks the postmodernist to ensure these deconstructive tendencies do not necessarily create a signifier devoid of authentic signification. The Death Eaters' responses to Voldemort's pure-blood elitist mentality lack true evidentiary legitimacy, which later strains phenomenological objectivity.

To encourage individual development and associated communicative abilities, Rowling represents throughout the series her model for a revised educational system. This would righteously discredit the pseudo-modernism rampant throughout current ideological structures. Richard Dawkins finds in his 1998 text *Postmodernism Disrobed* that post-modernism's deconstructive principles create new linguistic structures devoid of signification. Dawkins cites Félix Guattari, who asserts,

We can clearly see that there is no bi-univocal correspondence between linear signifying links or archi-writing, depending on the author, and this multireferential, multidimensional machinic catalysis. The symmetry of scale, the transversality, the pathic nondiscursive character of their expansion: all these dimensions remove us from the logic of the excluded middle and reinforce us in our dismissal of the ontological binarism we criticised previously. (141)

Consequently, we place style in a place of greater importance rather than form. Dawkins quotes Peter Medawar's perspective that "style has become an object of first importance," which is now full of "prancing, high-stepping . . . [and] self-importance" (141). While the text provides aesthetic pleasure, Dawkins notes it is "tough on the reader" (141). While he acknowledges that "there exist thoughts so profound that most of us will not understand the language in which they are expressed," within this postmodern existence it becomes difficult to discern if the text's density is truly a product of profundity or designed to "conceal an absence of honest thought" (141). It appears, then, that Postmodernism's main weapon against modernism is the seeming lack of meaning evident in postmodern criticism. These explorations generate Faulknerian sound and fury, yet the noise conceals decaying structures with little real substance. If

such neomodernist approaches invalidate postmodernism's legitimacy, the application of neomodernist deconstruction on pseudo-modernism's anti-intellectual nature quickly creates new binaries. These would reconstruct systems of meaning to allow for Truth-driven analyses of our current epistemological state, validating and invalidating contemporary theories. Instead, pseudo-modernism tears down or prevents an objectification of knowledge that could undermine popular, yet flimsy, concepts.

Rowling's proposed educational pedagogy would reinvigorate our relationship to the supernatural realm. The passion that surrounds Harry indicates a haunting worldwide spiritual quest, spurred on by recent cultural wars and driven by competing religious ideologies. When overextended, authentic faiths may lead people to sacrifice genuine concerns for spirituality in exchange for potential worldwide domination. Should we succeed in injecting a sustained neomodernism into our contemporary world state, it would establish/reestablish accurate authentication structures to validate phenomenological supernatural encounters. These efforts would align with those of the fin de siècle authors. More specifically, these particular writers saw a looming threat to the successes won by Romantic, Victorian, and Transcendental artists.

Rowling's high esteem for nineteenth-century ideals throughout the Harry Potter series supports a Neo-gothic epistemological structure. Past and present form a more idyllic future world structure that willingly embraces *différance*. As Susanne Becker finds in *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions*, Neo-gothicism works "beyond the post-modern scene," to provide a credible platform on which we learn from the "fears and pressures of those marginalised" (284). At the same time, the Neo-gothic structures "point to and profoundly challenge the grounds for marginalisation and suggest their

excess” (284). Most importantly, this particular methodology points to “the various workings of globalisation we presently encounter” (284). These events move beyond pseudo-modernist, anti-intellectual structures that other authentic supernatural agents. Embracing these efforts would re-inject Truth into a world that has largely turned away from such scholarly endeavors (284).

The Harry Potter series promotes this Neo-antiquarian system of knowledge production to re-establish a central premise of academic performance in antiquity—that is, a profound criticism to discover new levels of understanding through the objectification of knowledge, often at the expense of the expert. As Harrison and Huntington assert in *Culture Matters*, neo-antiquarian movements reject “the idea that the world woke up, emerged from darkness, and became good for the first time yesterday or three hundred years ago in northern Europe” (166). Individuals with this perspective may not think “that newness is a measure of progress and is quite prepared, in the name of progress, to revalue things from distant places and from out of the distant past” (166). This neohistorical application of common cultural deconstructive acts would see a radical application of typical Gothic theory. The very act of deconstruction suggests the real primitiveness in our contemporary history. Our supposedly obsolete past is indeed the period of greater authentic knowledge production, which relationships with supernatural phenomena facilitate. In this sense, we use the Gothic form to realize Horace Walpole’s initial intention, that it becomes a form of social criticism. Doing so reacquaints us with authentic supernatural encounters through the recognition of artificial structures that inhibit such relationships.

One cannot underscore the importance of a neo-antiquarian mindset as evidenced in the Harry Potter series as an effective answer to this dominant pseudo-modernist, anti-intellectual environment we inhabit today. As Richard Rorty argues in *The Communitarian Impulse*, a lecture delivered at Colorado College's 125th Anniversary Symposium in February 1999, the neo-antiquarian revalues "things from out of the past, including pre-modern notions of community" through a reconsideration of historicist attempts to project particular events within either positive or negative constructs. This search for Truth exposes "corrosive irony latent within every fixed and totalistic point of view, whether articulated from the left or from the right." A reductionist approach focuses one's internal spirituality through a dialectic encounter with the sublime. Ultimately, we would rediscover our intended spiritual journey.

A modern day reconsideration of antiquity and Gothicism within the Harry Potter series has its roots in Emerson's *Divinity School Address*. In this address, Emerson looks forward to a day when there emerges a "new Teacher, that shall follow so far those shining laws, that he shall see them come full circle; shall see their rounding complete grace; shall see the world mirror the soul" (92). The Hogwarts' instructors of Dumbledore, Lupin, McGonagall, and even Snape, possess specific qualifications which Rowling hopes will propagate in a New Millennial neo-antiquarian education system. Should this occur, we would embrace the past to influence the future in support of authentic spiritual development. Prominent scholars like Robert Scholes share this perspective. He asserts in *The Rise and Fall of English* that through the fin de siècle and the first half of the twentieth century, pockets of worldwide educational systems embraced Romantic and Victorian ideals. Educators in these systems—specifically,

those in the emergent field of English studies—existed as lovers of Truth. To Scholes, this was “the first protocol of teaching, upon which any others that we might devise would depend” (57). This brief period of modernism witnesses the emergence of a New Criticism when the study of literature becomes an objective practice akin to a secularized religious explication of great writing.

Scholes finds the source of Truthfulness in the “rigorous attention to the grounds of our own beliefs and a willingness to be corrected” (57). This echoes the pedagogical methodologies of the ancients. He misses a critical component in the study of literature, though. While the search for Truth is vital, equally important are the underlying spiritualized structures within both animate and inanimate objects. The Romantics, Victorians, and Transcendentalists provide a model to commune with animate and inanimate natural objects. These authentic supernatural encounters embed a specific spirituality within inanimate artificial objects produced as a byproduct of these direct interactions. Acquiring Truth through academic endeavors involves a moment of spiritual connection with these textualized supernatural agents. Salman Rushdie demonstrates knowledge of this particular concept in the novel, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. The source of stories is a supernatural fountainhead from which great authors draw the literal texts themselves. These stories contain latent Truths that emerge through unique textual interactions. Not all of us are great authors, yet great texts enable significant encounters to nurture our individual spiritual development. While the Harry Potter series reveals the relationship between education and individual spiritual development, discovery of this knowledge is highly problematic. The thick veils of our

mortality dominate our phenomenological encounters, which subsequently impair if not problematize opportunities for authentic supernatural moments.

Through deep textual enlightenment, the spirit engages with the supernatural knowledge professed through modern supernatural texts, where Romantic and Transcendental ideologies show a particular process to unearth objective Truths. These counteract typical dominant ideological structures, which often distract us from the very Truth we seek. As Scholes argues, literary studies hover between

forms of canonicity proper to science and those proper to religion, sometimes regarding its objects of study as specimens, but more often giving them the status of quasi-religious texts, not grounded in the Word of God, exactly, but in the Imagination, which, as Coleridge so explicitly argues, is analogous to and partakes of the creativity of God the Creator. (110)

This form of study discovers Truth through secularized textual analyses akin to a neo-antiquarian method. Through such methods, impressions of the supernatural realm embed themselves within the associated historical efforts of inspired artists.

The greatest need for such Neo-antiquarian approaches is the current perception of what Bill Readings calls “the administration of knowledge” in his posthumously published text, *The University in Ruins*. As Readings observes, the modern university is a factory to create a well-trained workforce to perform assigned tasks efficiently, to think and communicate in a fashion that will benefit the organization, and to relate well with others in a growing multicultural workforce. Readings accurately prophesizes a future university culture where the educational system itself transitions from a classical humanist-based model to a more structured outcomes-driven system facilitated through



corporate management structures. The associated perceptual system of knowledge production argues for the quantification of knowledge through superficial assessment strategies.

This mode of epistemological development numbs students to the typical inquisitiveness of a humanist education. This modern educational structure focuses exclusively on delivery methodologies. There is little attention to content for the purpose of enlightenment. To Readings, content-related questions only occur when “managed by teachers and administered to students” (152). Still, this discussion relates not to the precise nature of information but to its provision in “manageable doses” (152). Students become tremendous at “handling information” but cannot think about the information. Instead, they merely regurgitate at the appropriate moment, in the correct form, and in the correct language. While effective from an assessment perspective, this particular methodology not only inhibits authentic learning but also removes spiritual considerations about the learner and the content from the cognitive dynamic.

Rowling identifies the same issues in contemporary education and fictionalizes them in Book Five. Dolores Umbridge, in her Ministry of Magic role as undersecretary of education, shifts the intellectual dynamic in a spiritless, assessment-driven direction. From day one, she tells students they will learn about magic by putting “wands away and quills out” (239). In a typical rhetorical mode, she informs the students that their past education “has been disrupted and fragmented,” caused by a “constant changing of teachers, many of whom do not seem to have followed any ministry-approved curriculum” (239). In this context, one does not assess the intellectual development based on their ability to take their learning and become intelligent and capable wizards

and witches. Instead, the true test is the O.W.L. exams. To her and the Ministry of Magic, the true measure of student learning is not their status as well-rounded and educated individuals who appreciate the overall complex spiritual dynamic of the magical world. Instead, measuring their progress relies almost exclusively on standardized testing assessments indicative of book knowledge acquired through rudimentary memorization. There is no authentic assessment of their ability to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate. Of course, such assessments do take place in real contexts, during battles with Voldemort himself.

Such authoritarian approaches to teaching eliminate the appropriated student space to penetrate beyond the superficialities of learning. Without true spiritual enlightenment about the essence of past academic pursuits, supernaturalism's ability to influence our individual and collective perspectives is limited. For Readings, true education demands a "reflection on the institutional context of education" (153). One does not isolate "education in relation to wider social practices and the subjugation of education to predetermined or externally derived social imperatives" (153). Good teaching, soulful teaching, "is not a matter of drawing flow charts that track and police the movements of knowledge, power, or desire" (153). These methodologies assert a "single and authoritarian point of view," which reduces the art of teaching, "to an object of knowledge for a sovereign subject who will play the role of policeman" (153). True learning does not occur because the pupil suffers a critical separation from the authentic supernatural essence found in truly substantial texts from all university disciplines.

This particular pedagogical approach is perfect for a pseudo-modernist anti-intellectual environment. It can mask its contempt for real education via plastic

structures to demonstrate educational excellence via objectified test scores. Such a ruling body molds graduates from educational systems to maintain authority. From Book Five of the Harry Potter series until its conclusion, the Ministry of Magic loses much of its democratic nature. Instead, it reacts to news of Voldemort's return through a profound form of denial. Compliance becomes its official stand, relying upon educational and social approaches that other any dissenting mindset. History in our own world shows that this is problematic; it becomes more difficult to resolve in a parallel space where the majority of citizens embrace magic for all the wonder that the supernatural provides.

With Voldemort's defeat at the end of the novel, Rowling suggests the beginnings of a neo-intellectual new world order. Once again, we strive for an efficient balance between modernist and postmodernist thought, while eliminating pseudo-modernism in the process. Even with her optimism, though, Rowling knows the precariousness of our position. Her text offers an idealistic future. Policies that repress authentic supernaturalism can impede such advancements, though. To combat this dark future, Rowling preaches the importance of a dialectical engagement with Truth. From one vantage point, the course of human history since the Ancients digresses from progressivism. Dominant conservatism inhibits human potentiality towards the accumulation of knowledge by bettering our mortal existence at the expense of our intellectual and, associatively, spiritual selves. Eliminating the current pseudo-modernist anti-intellectualism which will see a new world order of inclusionism and intellectualism promotes development of our spiritual selves. Future historians could then historicize this New Millennial period as one that endured a temporary intellectual recession

followed by a pedantic boom. A new Humanism would facilitate our true academic potential by eliminating ignorance.

Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* and the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling serve as two representative texts of a New Millennial period at the crossroads of human history. Recent world events promote pseudo-modernism, which leads to an anti-intellectual demeanor. While this movement affects humanity in various ways, perhaps one of the most substantial concerns our relationships to authentic supernaturalism. By othering the supernatural, we have weakened our individual and collective spiritual development. Recent interest in Stephenie Myer's *Twilight* series, the *Harry Potter* series, and Dan Brown's collection of texts show an emerging newfound interest in questioning the traditional religious structures we rely upon. The fervent popularity of these supernatural series, as well as many more like them, indicates a profound interest in supernatural matters apart from solutions offered by religion through texts, prayers, and agency. Amid a current world crisis caused prominently by religious fervency, the average human does not seem to believe that these traditional faiths answer all of the fundamental metaphysical questions that haunt them. Overly didactic formulation of catechisms turns people away from these faiths more so than it attracts them.

Relatedly, we see a new fictional archetype in the works of these New Millennial supernatural texts. This is of the heroic intellectual who separates Truth from mainstream ideologies. This allows a debunking of long-held teachings that entrap humanity into powerful dogmatic inhibitive structures. The Robert Langdons, the Albus Dumbledores, the Harry Potters, the Hermione Graingers, and other such characters construct a complex new intellectual archetype we all can follow. The supernatural tendencies of the

Romantic, Victorian, and Transcendental artist facilitate a profound relationship with the supernatural realm through related agencies. More finitely, as Bill Readings argues in *The University in Ruins*, this new archetype can facilitate a new community “that abandons either expressive identity or transactional consensus as means to unity” (192). To Readings, such constructs “refer to what the posthistorical University may be” (192). Yet in a world blighted by anti-intellectual rhetoric for nearly a decade, Readings’ insights are too myopic. To deconstruct the walls of universities in the spirit of these New Millennial supernatural authors would require a heroic academic archetype to overcome a cumulative ignorance. Robert Langdon performs most of his functions outside of the ivory tower. Rowlings’ academic heroes do to a certain extent act within the confines of Hogwarts, yet their combat with Voldemort does not just affect Hogwarts alone. Instead, their actions affect all of the magical and muggle worlds.

At the end of Book Seven, Hogwarts sees serious damage to its protective walls. While such destruction indicates rampant damage to the intellectuality of our world, perhaps knocking down these walls is best. As Readings notes, “The University is where thought takes place beside thought, where thinking is a shared process without identity or unity. Thought beside thought perhaps” (192). Readings aptly puts a positive spin on the collapse of the university system in a way that contextualizes the physical damage to Hogwarts—that is, these ruins “offer us an institution in which the incomplete and interminable nature of the pedagogic relation can remind us that ‘thinking together’ is a dissensual process; it belongs to dialogicism rather than dialogue” (192). Similarly, deconstruction of our current educational paradigm encourages a collegial discourse among all of us. This can promote unions through the appreciation of our uniqueness,

both on an individual and cultural scale. As Stanley Fish states in his most recent book, *Save the World on Your Own Time*, an academics' social responsibility is to "introduce students to bodies of material new to them and equip those same students with the appropriate (to the discipline) analytical and research skills" (168-69). This effort inspires questions to achieve "a more accurate description . . . or testing [of] a thesis" (169). Fish's advice would realize a discourse of research to discourage proselytizing. Authentic supernatural phenomena do not seek homogeny; they seek heterogeneity of self-development without conscription.

To embrace a more pedantic cultural framework of thinking even with the threat of its subversive potential would realize a more profound relationship with the supernatural agencies whose purpose appears so fundamentally driven by development of the human self. This has been the purpose of this chapter and this study—to show how the intellectual fervor generated by the nineteenth-century concern with the supernatural continues to haunt contemporary society. Interest in the intellectualized supernatural suggests the human spirit is capable; the true test will be whether individuals carry and animate flesh. Only time will truly tell—something that follows not only the mortal realm but the immortal as well.

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