THE DANGEROUS LOVER AND THE EROTICS OF FAILURE: NINETEENTH-CENTURY BYRONISM AND THE CONTEMPORARY ROMANCE

by

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Abstract

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Converging primarily on nineteenth-century English literature, this study traces a literary-historical as well as philosophical trajectory of the eroticism of the male lover whose dark past, his remorseful and rebellious exile from comfortable everyday living, point to the dangerous difficulties of existence itself. Beginning with the contemporary romance and moving backward to the Gothic, then up through Byron and the nineteenth century, this work investigates how the dangerous lover figures into history on the side of silence, nescience and temporal interruption, rather than continuity and teleology.

Chapter one culls theories of dangerous love from the contemporary "erotic" historical genre. The eroticism of the hero of this genre centers on his quality of dwelling in the unknown, outside the bounds of knowledge and society, and points to the impossibility of knowing the other. The dangerous lover's eroticism can be understood in light of Heidegger's theory of ontological proximity: that what is nearest to us and most important to our authentic existence is the most unfamiliar and angst-ridden.

Chapter two explores the impotent misanthropy and inability to speak of Melmoth and other Gothic villains and his influence on later heroes and their villainous ways in the nineteenth-century seduction narrative, the twentieth-century gothic romance and erotic historical. From the Gothic uncanny the dangerous lover narrative takes the idea that love itself is uncanny, and the lover becomes a haunting being, emerging from the heroine's dark thoughts yet at the same time utterly distant and obscured.

Chapter three elucidates how Byronism constructs the lover as a transcendentally homeless wanderer and how love itself becomes a type of homesickness. The Byronic hero brings extreme subjectivities into a discourse of love, such as the insomniac, the autoerotic, and the addict.

Chapter four explores the ways in which Victorian novelists such as Dickens and Wilde set the dangerous lover, usually purposelessly malignant, against the responsible, dutiful Victorian in the two-lover motif. Bulwer-Lytton, Disraeli, and Wilde present a completely different version of this hero: the dandy.

This project concludes with a discussion of how love in this trajectory becomes linked with the finitude of being and with failure.

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Preface

> Lone, wild, and strange, he stood alike exempt
> From all affection and from all contempt.
>
> -Byron

The ubiquitous lover whose eroticism lies in his dark past, his restless inquietude, his remorseful and rebellious exile from comfortable everyday living steps into many contemporary genres, most clearly into numerous women's projects, from popular historical romances to romantic cinema. The enemy lover or demon lover, imprisoned in the blighted landscape of his own mind and doomed only to repetition and a desire for death until his possible redemption by the utterly unique moment of love, stretches his pained existence back to Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy and forward to the contemporary romance.

The romance with the dark, estranged anti-hero at its heart—or, what I have named the dangerous lover romance—has not yet been recognized as a distinct genre; it has not been given a history, or shaped into a particular constellation of ideas. While numerous scholars such as Pamela Regis, Catherine Belsey, and Anne Humpherys have

discussed specific literary villain/heroes as lovers and their place in particular narratives, there has not been an exploration of this two-hundred year cultural phenomenon and its location in both canonized and popular culture. The fact that the dangerous lover romance has never been formulated as a genre before, with a place in literary history and a circle of influence, fits well with the character of the dangerous lover himself, who figures into history on the side of silence, obscurity, non-knowledge, and temporal interruption, rather than on continuity and teleology. Yet the paucity of scholarship on the figure of the dangerous lover romance is surprising since, as I will explore, the figure of the dangerous lover represents a whole constellation of important historical and theoretical issues, and his influence on ideas of modern subject formation are substantial. The eroticism of failure that stands as his hallmark points to the dangerous difficulties of existence itself. The forces at work in the attraction to the dangerous lover mirror basic ontological structures, such as Heidegger's theory of proximity and being-toward-death. Both Heidegger and Freud's theories of the uncanny have secretly been in dialogue with early Gothic constructions of the prototype for the dangerous lover. Nietzsche's übermensch and his will to power both rely on various formulations of this figure. The new literary history that unfolds with the following trajectory of the dangerous lover points to genealogies of influence which have not yet been properly studied: such as the relationship of the Regency dandy to Victorian Gothic villain/heroes as Rochester, Heathcliff, and Dracula whose influence can then be traced to various genres of twentieth-century romance. Furthermore, the dangerous lover formula has today become a ubiquitous convention for representing erotic desire and romantic love, and the dangerous lover's literary history is crucial because it discloses contemporary romance's

active role as an important producer of cultural meaning. Understanding the constitutive moments of this kind of conventional "dangerous love," I argue, illuminates the ways in which a particular kind of erotic desire—one based on desire for the unknown and terrifying—defines a modern sense of subjectivity, which is constructed out of a sense of failure, helplessness, and melancholy.

The historical trajectory that I pursue begins by culling theories of dangerous love from the contemporary romance. With these theories in hand, this itinerary travels back to the Gothic, forward through Byron and the nineteenth-century. The following trajectory runs from these romances backwards because its aim lies primarily in discovering the origins of the anti-hero in contemporary romance. Starting with the present and working always in light of this historical or historicist "ending" implies that I take a cue from Heidegger, who believes that to understand being, one must start from the death of this being and look back, rather than understanding ontology through origins, or beginnings. Such a non-originary account of the dangerous lover is also compelled by the convoluted temporality of this character, whose story begins after the damning events of his past have already occurred; hence, in a certain way, his narrative occurs after it has ended.

The historical trajectory of this project does not in any way make claims for a complete account of all instances of the dangerous lover narratives in English and American history. This is the case not only because all history and genre-making is made to be undermined by pointing to subterranean, marginalized, "othered" histories, but also because such a project would be too large for the scope of this project. I therefore discuss *exemplary* texts from late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century England and

twentieth-century England and America. For continuity's sake, I also limit my project to male dangerous lovers. A lively history could and must be written on female dangerous lovers, which would take into account the female characters of Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Victorian Sensation fiction, among many others. Suzanne Valentina Buffamanti traces just such a trajectory; she writes about the Byronic heroine in Radcliffe, Stoker, Alcott, Hawthorne and Charlotte Brontë in her dissertation "The Gothic Feminine: Towards the Byronic Heroine" (2000).

But to return to the question posed earlier: why has the importance of this particular genre or subgenre been virtually ignored? One of the answers to this question leads us to an old-fashioned feminist argument: the dangerous lover romance is in fact a female-coded genre. As such, many of its texts have been relegated to the back-water of literary history. While this is clearly true of twentieth-century popular romance, Jerome McGann discusses the ways that even Byron—who will be an important stop on our dangerous lover itinerary—falls into a tradition of "sentimental" women's poetry, which valorizes the idea of true love as involving both the body and subjectivity. Because it was female-coded, the term "sentimental poetry" became pejorative in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century soon after it was coined.[1] In her dissertation "But are they any Good? Women Readers, Formula Fiction, and the Sacralization of the Literary Canon" (1995), Beth Rapp Young discusses in detail the historical bias against romance and how this marginalization can be linked to both gender and class (because of romance's largely erroneous association with working class readers). Young questions the hierarchy created between canonical books that warrant "intensive" reading or

[1] McGann makes this argument in *Byron and Romanticism*. Although he goes on to point out the misogyny in Byron's poetry, and he argues that Byron also satirizes this idea of true love, his original point still holds.

"vertical" reading—"paying special, focused attention to extraordinary objects"—and those popular or marginalized texts such as romance that permit "extensive" or "horizontal" reading—"one which relies on knowledge of hundreds of texts, and which does not treat any single book as a self-contained system" (5). Pamela Regis and Carol Thurston, among many others, have systematically defended romances against the many criticisms wielded against them, generally by proving just how feminist these narratives can be, when the heterogeneity of the genre is considered as well as the way the readers and writers of romance view their practice.

Yet my project is a different one. I do *not* carefully place my subject-texts within gendered paradigms and a whole host of situational and historical specifics, like most theorists of romance. My project instead treats all the texts under discussion—including canonical, popular, philosophical, and theoretical texts—as equally legitimate. While this is clearly a contentious practice which suppresses important historical contexts and cultural constructs, and many might argue that discussing Heidegger and the contemporary romance in the same breath, so to speak, leads to a comical bathos, my project can be categorized as bearing a traditional philosophical stance. By this I point to philosophy's repeated declaration that its ideas and experiences apply to everyone, no matter the individual's situation in place or time, his or her positioning in light of gender or race. The headiness of this powerful dictation of all human experience is rarely given to female-coded formula genres such as the popular romance. This essay's project is not to read romance using ideas culled from philosophy, but rather to read romance in the same rarefied light as philosophy in order to discover what romance has to say about ontology and epistemology.

Narrative Timeline:
The Gothic Romance, the Erotic Historical Romance, and the Regency Romance

The following is a brief sketch of the literary-historical itinerary which will be traced in the following pages. The history of the dangerous lover begins with four Shakespeare plays. The liebestod of *Romeo and Juliet* (1591?) pictures love as a pilgrimage or a sea voyaging. In *Richard III* (1592-4), Shakespeare creates the hero/villain who combines cruelty with wit and an insatiable will. With *Hamlet* (1600-01), impotent melancholy combined with directionless passion are linked with an erotic magnetism. Iago in *Othello* (1604) represents a purposeless malignancy which will become a key element in a number of dangerous lovers.

In Jacobean tragedy, from approximately 1607-1633, many tormented, sympathetic reprobates are to be found. Lucifer in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) falls from grace as later dangerous lovers will. He also represents wholesale rebellion and the refusal to bow to any power but his own tortured subjectivity. Mr. B in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740-1) epitomizes the eroticized villain who becomes the hero through the virtues of the heroine. The influence of this early seduction narrative can be seen through the Victorian period and into the twentieth-century in the erotic historical romance.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, dangerous lover narratives split along two thematic lines, with Byron's poems appearing in both lines. The first and the most

important of these is the Gothic line, and the second I will call the dandy line. The Gothic novel masters the enigmatic, passionate, tormented and dark villain who threatens the heroine's virtue and even her life. The most important of these figures are Ann Radcliffe's Montoni in *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Schedoni in *The Italian* (1797), and Ambrosio in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) takes up numerous themes that become dear to genres of the contemporary romance—such as silence, secrets, imprisonment, and remorse. The demonic and cursed wanderings of these Gothic villains link them to Satan in *Paradise Lost.* Byron's figures who follow most closely the dark, restless torments of the Gothic hero are Manfred, Lara, the Giaour, the Corsair, and Childe Harold (1812-1817). Love as redemptive for cursed, Cain-like beings becomes an explicit and central theme to Byron. Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816) appropriates the Byronic figure as a malignant seducer and vampire-like enemy.

Sir Walter Scott brings a world of nostalgia, myth, and pre-ordained tragedy to his blighted, haunted anti-heroes—Ravenswood of *The Bride of Lammermore* (1819), George Staunton of *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1818) and Captain Cleveland of *The Pirate* (1822). Sir Reginald Glanville in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham* (1828), with the dark passion and genius of a Manfred, wastes his life away in remorse for seducing and ruining a young woman. Bulwer-Lytton's *Eugene Aram* (1831) becomes attractive to the heroine because of the way his gloomy guilt keeps him awake studying all night long.

Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) are both Byronic hero/villains who are cursed with transcendental homelessness. Rochester

is redeemed by love, but for Heathcliff redemption stands always just beyond his reach. Other Victorian-era dangerous lovers come from the Iago tradition of meaningless malevolence. Steerforth in *David Copperfield* (1846), Carker in *Dombey and Son* (1847), and Frank Levison in *East Lynne* (1861) follow in this descent of seductive enemies. Stephen Guest in *Mill on the Floss* (1860) is a less vilified seducer, and Sidney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) is only out for self-ruin, yet his willful blightedness and need for redemption bring him firmly into this history.

The anonymous *Teleny* (1890?) repeats the liebestod theme, and the fascination of a doomed and tragic love. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and *Dracula* (1897), the erotic intoxication of Dorian and the vampire lead to the unholy demise of both the dangerous lover and the other.

In the twentieth century, the Gothic genre of the dangerous lover divides into two closely intertwined trajectories—the Gothic romance on one hand and erotica on the other. The Gothic romance reaches its pinnacle with Du Maurier's Gothic rewrite of *Jane Eye—Rebecca* (1938). Gothic romances with plots similar to Rebecca became very popular from the mid 1950s to the early 1970s with Mary Stewart, Victoria Holt, and others. During the 1970s, the Gothic romance in its purity was in its decline, yet many Gothic themes were carried into two genres—romantic suspense and the erotic historical. Since 2001, the Gothic romance has reappeared as a genre.

Returning to the early twentieth century, I want to follow the erotica thread I mentioned earlier. While closely related to the Gothic romance, primarily through its hero who embodies both hero and villain characteristics, erotic romances are not as haunted, guilt-driven, or as tortured as the Gothics. Hull's *The Sheik* (1921) is a central

influence on the later "bodice-ripper" with the heroine's seduction and rape by the exotic hero. Many of D.H. Lawrence's heroes are erotically dark (1920-1935), and his theories on liebestod contribute to this trajectory. Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind* (1936) represents a sympathetic dissipated rake who attempts reformation through love. The erotic historical romance came out of the decline of the Gothic in the 1970s and was inaugurated officially with the publication of Woodiwiss's *The Flame and the Flower* (1972) and Rogers' *Sweet Savage Love* (1974). Erotic historicals continue in their popularity today.

The last dangerous lover genre that remains to be briefly traced is the dandy one, which also becomes mixed up with the reformed rake narrative. This anti-hero thread can also be traced back to Mr. B in *Pamela* because of his reformation by love. While Darcy in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) is neither a dandy nor a rake, his mild misanthropy and his snobbish sense of the proprieties are "reformed" through his love for Elizabeth. Byron appears in this generic trail through the cynical, world-weary narrator of *Don Juan* (1819-1824). The Silver-Fork novel dandy continues this history in such works as Thomas Henry Lister's *Granby* (1826), Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* (1826), and Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham* (1828). The dandy in these stories is a kind of rebellious genius who is posited as often in need of reform. *Vanity Fair* (1848) ends the Silver-Fork genre with the dandy ideal exploded as merely an empty superciliousness.

The Victorian seduction narratives mentioned above have a place here as well; the malignant seducer is the kind of rake the contemporary romance will redeem. The contemporary Regency romance descends from the Silver-Fork and the reformed rake narrative. Georgette Heyer's Regencies from 1921 to 1974 exemplify this genre and its

hero whose existential emptiness lead him to excessive dissipation, moral and financial ruin. The heroine arrives to "save" him from his abyss and bring him back to an earthly sense of immanent meaning. Regencies were also an important influence on the erotic historical romance, because the heroes often have the same qualities. Regencies are still being produced and consumed today, although they are fast disappearing as a romantic subgenre.

Contents:

Chapter One
The Erotics of Ontology: The Mass-Market Erotic Historical Romance and Heideggerian Failed Presence (1921-2003)

> And so, by a strange and melancholy paradox, the moment of failure is the moment of value; the comprehending and experiencing of life's refusals is the source from which the fullness of life seems to flow. What is depicted is the total absence of any fulfillment of meaning, yet the work attains the rich and rounded fullness of a true totality of life.
>
> -Lukacs

I. The Contemporary Romance Hero

Creating a taxonomy of contemporary mass-market romances is a difficult task because of the heterogeneity of the market. Publishers, following buying trends, have little need to keep to any system of regularized labeling and accurate descriptions of the generic category of their products. Carol Thurston, a prominent scholar in the field of the history of the mass-market romance, divides romances into two headings, based primarily on the amount of sex they contain—the "sweet" romance and the historical romance.[2] Because of the particular bent of her historical discussion, based on her argument that a sexual revolution in the romance genre has important political implications for feminism in general, she forms her trajectories in light of various types of heroines, and their independence and ambitions.[3] Her category of "sweet" romance means a traditional,

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[2] Others who struggle to categorize contemporary romance are Yvonne Annette Jocks, in her master's thesis "Adventure and Virtue: Alternating Emphasis in the Popular Romance Tradition," May 1988.
[3] Kathleen Mary Therrien also explores popular romances as feminist texts, looking for ruptures, schism and splits in "Trembling at her own Response: Resistance and Reconciliation in Mass-Market Romance

hence patriarchal, formula; the "erotic" category is potentially revolutionary and feminist leaning. Thurston remarks of the "erotic historical romance," summing up her most important argument, that "they mark the first appearance of a large and coherent body of sexual literature for women, providing the opportunity to learn to use sexual fantasy and to explore an aspect of their identities that patriarchal society has long denied women" (88).

I will shift Thurston's basic historical argument, although my categories are closely related (and indebted) to hers. Focussing on the hero and his dangerousness and sometimes, but less so, the heroine's dangerous characteristics, my search for historical shape finds its foundations in myth, fantasy, and even pornography, as I will explain below, while Thurston's lie in feminist consciousness-raising, narratives of female empowerment, female erotica, and validity as contemporary realism.

The dangerous lover romance can be found in all of Thurston's major generic categories. My two central groupings, the historical romance and the contemporary romance, are based on the occurrence of the dangerous lover narrative. The contemporary romance can be delineated into two types, clearly aligned to Thurston's taxonomy—the "erotic" and the "sweet." The "erotic" contemporary romance does not, generally speaking, contain the dangerous lover—an outsider hero, an unrevealed stranger, potentially or actually violent. In fact, both hero and heroine in this type are enmeshed in an active, open, workaday world, presented in a contemporary setting. The "New Hero," as Thurston calls him, comes onto the scene as a man whose kindness, generosity, easygoing even-temperedness attracts the heroine, who is often initially more

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Novels." Through discussing the reader's pleasure in reading the romance, Amanda Marette Kinard claims romances for feminism, in her dissertation, "Forbidden Pleasures: The Romance and its Readers."

interested in her career than in marriage and a man. Many of the romance publishers have a line of contemporaries, such as Zebra Contemporary Romance, Harlequin/Silhouette's Red Dress Ink, Blaze, and American Romance. Harlequin describes the latter line to potential writers as containing "emotional and sensual content supported by a sense of community" (*Harlequin Website*). The contemporary romance, which I will simplify in order to classify, sets itself apart from the dangerous lover kind. It focuses on bringing the lovers into life among people, into a friendly love that lives in an everyday world. Their love takes them deeper into the societal fold, into developed connections with the community, into a safe, accepted union.

Ros Ballaster's two categories of romances from 1674 to 1740, didactic love fiction and amatory fiction, are of use here. For Ballaster, the amatory fiction of Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood is the early modern equivalent of the contemporary mass-market romance. The erotic contemporary romance, what Thurston calls the "sensuous" contemporary romance, falls under Ballaster's category of didactic love fiction—romance that has a didactic project, is future-directed, and attempts to represent a moral way of living, a "just" kind of love (depending on what constitutes the "morals" of the particular time period in question). The dangerous lover type, to the contrary, which falls under the rubric of amatory fiction, cannot be, generally speaking, recuperated morally, nor does it play out in a socially sanctioned realm. The rebelliousness of the dangerous lover narrative, and even its fragmentariness and lack of meaning, undercut a didactic project. Furthermore, the dangerous lover romance's distinction from other romantic genres lies in its aesthetics of failure. Love here becomes linked with the finitude of being, the edge of silence, fragmentation, and disintegration.

Dangerous love plays with the outside—of possibility, life in society, happiness. The dangerous beloved hides a secret melancholy interiority that flashes out in passionate violence and rage. His misanthropy and self-exiled outsideness covers a nature that once believed so deeply in ideals such as Truth, Beauty, and Purity, that his fall from this grace of faith plunges him into a doom of profoundly embittered brooding. The dangerous lover actively maintains and embraces his failure by his work to remain outside social approval and morals.

"Sweet" romances, of the contemporary sort as well as the historical type, also contain dangerous lovers. The "sweet" romance genre describes the almost sexless traditional formulas associated primarily with Harlequin's series, or category books, and often-called "brand name" romances. The "sweet" romance can be viewed as another type of didactic fiction, with the dangerous lover reformed in the end, brought from the outside into the domestic life of the heterosexual couple. The "sweet" dangerous lover does not carry with him the extremes of passion, emotion, torment, and violence of the erotic historical. Many theorists of the mass-market romance conflate all romance genres under the rubric Harlequin, by which they mean "sweet" romances. This conflation simplifies a complex constellation of genres down to one simple plot and one single publisher of this plot. Tania Modleski is one such theorist: all mass-market romances, to her, are "Harlequins." She writes that,

> . . . the formula rarely varies: 'a young, inexperienced, poor to moderately well-to-do woman encounters and becomes involved with a handsome, strong, experienced, wealthy man, older than herself by ten to fifteen years. The heroine is confused by the hero's behaviour since, though he is

> obviously interested in her, he is mocking, cynical, contemptuous, often hostile, and even somewhat brutal. By the end, however, all misunderstandings are cleared away, and the hero reveals his love for the heroine, who reciprocates. (35-36)

While it is true that this plot simplifies many different types of romance into one, at the same time, it is obvious that this essentalizing has much truth to it. It does not, however, describe the contemporary erotic romance, and it presents the erotic historical romance with all its excesses removed. The historical romance, my other major heading, includes "erotic" historicals, as well as the "Regency" romance, the historical "sweet" romance, and the modern Gothic romance. All of these types have heroes who are dangerous lovers of differing degrees, with "erotic" historicals purely amatory fiction, and the Gothic, the Regency, and the historical "sweet" varying mixtures of amatory and didactic fiction.

II. Erotic Historical Romances and Heideggerian Proximity

But to begin with the literary history of the most salient and loud representation of the dangerous lover narrative, the erotic historical romance (or what I will shorten to the erotic historical): the hero's rough, mysterious strangeness and his present clouded by a dark past and unreadable emotions unfold in settings distant in time and place, large in historical sweep. The exoticism of the historical romance sets an air of unfamiliarity around the whole narrative, lending the proper atmosphere for a figure out of fantasy, with the nebulous characterization of an archetype.

The dangerous lover steps out of a mythical realm; his construction from an archetypal past maintains its saliency, no matter how real his person. His subjectivity stretches back through time to other mythical figures. As each age remakes myth in its image, the dangerous lover opens out of the uncertainty of the historically great; his dangerousness lies in the unknowability of the past itself, particularly the past of myth. His dangerousness is located in fantasy, in ways that his subjectivity is not representative of some concrete reality, but in changeability, imagination, reformulation. On some level the dangerous lover hides in myth; he retreats from present being into being another from the past. And to love a dangerous lover is also to step into the fantasy of mythology and its truth, seemingly frozen yet always shifting. To retreat into myth is to step out of presentness and recreate a past, larger than life. Barthes writes of this desire for the "impenetrable object" of the other, for the other who is "not to be known": "I am then seized with that exaltation of loving someone unknown, someone who will remain so forever: a mystic impulse: I know what I do not know" (135).

In the erotic historical, dramatic upheavals give the dangerous lover and the heroine permission to be involved in extreme adventures, violent encounters, tense battles. The dangerous lover may be a pirate like Captain Marques, a "battered slave of the world" (108) as he calls himself, who kidnaps the heroine, as in Elizabeth Doyle's *My Lady Pirate*; or Stone McBride, a ruthless rancher, quarreling irreconcilably with his family, lost to his truelove hence entirely outcast and even uncaring of his fate, in Evelyn Rogers's *The Loner*; or the disinherited bastard of an English lord, seeking revenge for his father's rejection of him, who is now a "flinty" gambling casino owner who forces the heroine to marry him to escape penury, as in Barbara Dawson Smith's *Seduced by a Scoundrel*. Or he may be the wandering cowboy, Kain Debolt, in *Winds of Promise*, "He was a loner, making a few friends here and there, but never settling in one place long enough to establish roots. Now he wondered at the emptiness of his life" (60). Most of the major publishers of romance such as Harlequin/Silhouette, Avon, Leisure, Warner, Dell, Island, and Fawcett have an erotic historical line.

The erotic historical romance, sometimes called the "bodice ripper," "slave narrative," or "sweet savage" romance, one of the most sexually explicit of the romance genres, heavily emphasizes innocent heroines, usually virgins, who are roughly seduced, perhaps even raped, by much older, more experienced heroes. The power differential between the hero and heroine and his violent control over her drives the plot, which is essentially a slow movement of power passing from the hero to the heroine. Despite her extreme vulnerability, physical weakness, and lack of knowledge and experience, or

perhaps because of it, in the end of the novel the hero grovels at her feet.[4] His love for her becomes so extreme and his dependence on her love so excessive that she not only has complete control over him, but she has gained many of his characteristics, such as a manifold subjectivity through adventurous and heroic independence. She obtains a mysterious, perhaps even dark side, through the hero's amorous witnessing of her erotic depths. She will often withdraw from society with the outcast dangerous lover, and their extreme investment in the couple serves to further alienate them from others.

As I've already asserted, the essence of this formula, which resides in the hero, lies in the idea of failure, of dystopia. The hero of the erotic historical holds the power of this failure; this is his melancholy truth. His despair at his constant loss does not stop him from perpetuating his fall—out of grace, the social order, communing with people.

The hero of the erotic historical can be compared to that famous writer of failure—Kafka. Walter Benjamin writes of Kafka's sense of failure: "The circumstances of this failure are manifold. One is tempted to say: once he was certain of eventual failure, everything worked out for him en route as in a dream" (*Illuminations* 144). The hero of the erotic historical is always already a failure because he begins with a subjectivity so deeply desiring, so impossible to satiate, his desires are left wanting. His very failure is a powerful force because it brings with it the magnetism of despair, torment, the possibility of failure as large as the world. Because his desires have this ability to expand, his power seems world-encompassing: he can decimate the whole world with the scowl on his face. His attraction to the lover is that she can hold the

[4] Tania Modleski argues that this is one of the functions of romance, a kind of revenge fantasy where the haughty hero is brought to heel: "all the while he is being so hateful, he is internally groveling, groveling, groveling" (45).

power of impossibility, she can make it possible, by being, herself, the plenitude, the immanent meaning of the world for him. The hero's belief in his brilliance, his superior, misanthropic position outside of all others and their run-of-the-mill lives, is so very believable to the heroine, that to change this decimation to a plenitude becomes her world. To believe in the dangerous lover is to be drawn to him with the ties of despair and failure, to feel that oneself also fails, and success comes out of the center of this final despair.

An important construction of this failure could be dubbed "failed proximity," after Heidegger's theories of proximity. In fact, the narrative movement of the erotic historical, based entirely on the relation between the hero and heroine, follows a very similar structure to proximity in Heidegger's ontological theories. A discussion of Heidegger's theory of proximity unravels the paradox in the way the hero and heroine move toward yet away from each other in the erotic historical. The first rule of Heideggerian nearness states the paradox that what would appear to be nearest, in its familiarity, homely-ness, or *heimlichkeit*, and the most easily accessible and handy, lies furthest away from what is authentically most our own. Hence, what is nearest to one is what is most unfamiliar, strange, and *angst* producing. Moving closer authentically or understandingly causes what is familiar to withdraw. Christopher Fynsk characterizes this movement not as circular but rather "in terms of a paradoxical structure of simultaneous approach and withdrawal, of a casting forth that casts back" (41). Heidegger's understanding of this paradoxical structure of nearness begins with the everyday. One of Dasein's everyday ways of being is entanglement in the average, which is an evasion and flight from the authentic possibilities of one's being. Heidegger

believes that one of the fundamental structures of Dasein is the tendency to understand oneself through the immediate surrounding world nearest to one, an average "work-world" where useful objects are encountered. This world of "useful things" includes the "they"—the public that represents an averageness, "which prescribes what can and may be ventured, watches over every exception, which thrusts itself to the fore . . . [thus], every mystery loses its power." The "they" creates a "leveling down of all possibilities of being" (*Being and Time* 127).[5] Because a constitutive factor of Dasein is to understand itself in regard to what appears to be nearest, in its average everyday working, it becomes entangled in the everyday, not understanding that there is a more authentic Dasein, which is actually nearer, covered over by this "tranquilized" being. As the above quote points out, this authentic being is akin to the power of mystery. Authentic Dasein comes from understanding oneself as one's own possibilities, as a singular, finite being, rather than as what is already real and available as a part of "publicness." In an authentic "kind of coming near," Heidegger writes, "one does not tend toward making something real available and taking care of it, but as one comes nearer understandingly, the possibility of the possible only becomes 'greater'"(*Being and Time* 262).[6] For Dasein to come near in this way, which we could call a kind of transcendence, is to see all that is real, that could be "spelled out" withdraw.

Heidegger emphasizes, "The nearest nearness of being-toward-death as possibility is as far removed as possible from anything real" (*Being and Time* 262).[7] The situation of this nearness to greater and greater possibility, or to a kind of unknown,

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[5] "Diese Durchschnittlichkeit in der Vorzeichnung dessen, was gewagt werden kann und darf, wacht über jede sich vordrängende Ausnahme." " . . . die wir die Einebnung aller Seinsmöglichkeiten nennen."
[6] "Deise Näherung tendiert jedoch nicht auf ein besorgendes Verfügbarmachen eines Wirklichen, sondern im verstehenden Näherkommen wird die Möglichkeit des Möglichen nur >>grosser<<."
[7] "Die nachste Nahe des Seins zum Tode als Moglichkeit ist einem Wirklichen so fern als moglich."

lies somehow "inside" one—as possibilities that belong only to this individual Dasein. With this nearness, one draws closer and closer to what is both the most obscure and the most free—a freeing of all possibility—yet still what is so close that it is one's own existence itself. Blanchot describes this type of nearness as a proximity that retains its unknownness because one does not have the distance to see it. In fact, he explains closeness itself as " . . . an experience that one will represent to oneself as being strange and even as the experience of strangeness. But if it is so, let us recognize that it is this not because it is too removed. On the contrary, it is so close that we are prohibited from taking any distance from it—it is foreign in its very proximity" (*Infinite* 45). Fynsk argues that Heidegger's concept of Mitsein, or being-with, relies on the fact that it is when Dasein withdraws from the world that the first contact with the other occurs, and it is in this that the disclosure of the individual's truth comes, which is also the disclosure of the truth of the other.[8]

Heidegger's nearness can be made to work as an allegory for romance, particularly allegorizing an attraction to a dangerous lover, as described in erotic historicals.[9] Flight from the beloved and the evasion of immanent love describe the basic plot structure of the erotic historical formula. Immanent love defines the complete presence of both lovers, as equally confessed lovers, beloved together in the same place and at the same time. All meaning is finally immanent and this is the final aim, or the climax and ending of the book. This full presence of love states the love story's meaning; everything in the narrative means this, and this is all it means. Clearly love's completion defines romance, but with the erotic historical, love's presence constitutes

[8] See especially page 31 in *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity*.
[9] Hannah Arendt calls Heidegger the "last (we hope) romantic" (quoted in Ettinger 66).

the end of the story; all events tend toward this culmination. Yet "to tend toward" here, means both to flee, to cover over and to always be in a movement toward. Again we see Heidegger's nearness here—the moving closer which causes familiar nearness to withdraw. The structure of this proposition—the fleeing movement of love—lies in withheld secrets, postponements, misunderstandings, and evasion.[10] Jean-Luc Nancy sees love as an "infinity of shatters." "There is no master figure, there is no major representation of love, nor is there any common assumption of its scattered and inextricable shatters . . . love itself misses . . . it comes *across* and never simply *comes* to its place or to term" (102).

One register of flight and entanglement in our formula is the almost ubiquitous plot device in formula romance, which provides convenient postponements of the climax: the undisclosed secret(s) between the hero and heroine. Both the hero and the heroine can keep secrets from each other, and usually do, which causes misunderstandings and distance. For example, in Barbara Dawson Smith's *Seduced by a Scoundrel*,[11] the heroine, Alicia Pemberton, is deliberately deceived by the hero, Drake Wilder, into thinking that he is a heartless gambler who wants only to antagonize her. He does this because he plots to hide the truth of his paternity, until the right moment, which will maximize his revenge on his father, who has refused to acknowledge him as his son. That he has this secret pain, this strange and unfamiliar interiority, makes him dangerous, and causes Alicia to flee him as someone who

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[10] According to Pamela Regis's description of the structure of the romance, all romances must have two elements: one or more "barriers" and "the point of ritual death"—"the moment . . . when the union of heroine and hero seems completely impossible. It is marked by death or its simulacrum (for example fainting or illness); by the risk of death; or by any number of images or events that suggest death, however metaphorically" (14).

[11] Smith has written six romances for St. Martin's, this one in 1999.

frightens her and will betray her love. Yet she is, finally, evading her beloved, her final ending. It is fated that what she flees, the terror of the unknown other, is what will finally engulf her, when secrets appear to be exteriorized in amorous unity.

In Dorothy Garlock's *Wind of Promise*,[12] the hero, Kain Debolt, must be cold and distant toward the heroine, Vanessa, even though he has fallen deeply in love with her, because he thinks he is dying of stomach cancer. He cannot disclose this information to her, because he does not want her to see him as sick and vulnerable, and less of a man. He must constantly push her away, which confuses her and causes her to think he is hostile. Yet she can see he has erotic feelings for her, and she senses that he has a secret.

> Kain said the words simply, and Vanessa turned to look at him. She was surprised to see a deep sadness in his golden brown eyes, and a flood of tenderness and longing swept through her body.
>
> On seeing that smile, Kain felt the full pain of his regret. (99-100)

Secret sadness causes longing to sweep through her body because this sadness contains the unknowability of the other. Derrida uses the idea of the secret to describe the utterly singular, the other as other. The secret is that which "we speak of but are unable to say;" it is "the sharing of what is not shared" (58). At the core of an approach to the beloved is the undisclosed secret, and this secret becomes the sadness of the beloved other. In a similar vein, in her discussion of jealousy, Peggy Kamuf describes the impossible desire of the lover to know the other in his singularity. The beloved, and

[12] Garlock has written 26 romances for Avon, this one in 1987.

any possible knowledge of him, is subject to the boundaries of the phenomenality of the object, he "appears; appearing, he or she may also disappear or dissimulate" (2). The failure to know the beloved fully, completely, without remainder, describes the erotic withdrawal, the distance from belonging of the erotic historical.

Heidegger sees truth, or *aletheia*, as an act of uncovering, or the unhidden. The desire of both philosophy and romance is to reveal the truth, to illuminate and bring it to a confession. Yet the loved one envelops and imprisons unknown worlds, which must be deciphered.[13] The erotically charged removal of the veil points to the spark from which this erotic originates—the veil itself. The hiding and the disclosing of the secret both create eroticism. From *Seduced*: "She wanted to feel the warmth of Drake's arms around her. She wanted to learn all of the secrets of his past . . ." (Smith 206). The flight from love and from the beloved, through postponement by the secret, stands as the basis of the erotic in the dangerous lover formula. Postponement *is* the erotic. Hence the evasion of immanent love—thematically the transcendence or sublime in romance—enacts paradoxically a moving closer to an everyday familiarity, away from a secretive estrangement in flight and evasion. Yet evasion is also always already a move toward the full presence of meaning—the full confessions of all secrets at the climax of the book.

Furthermore, when the heroine draws near to the hero through the everyday knowledge that comes from such types of nearness as sight, touch, and discourse, the immanence of love appears to fail, because this nearness is misread as something other than love. What will finally be love is sidetracked into other valences such as loss of

[13] Barthes sees the amorous subject in the light of one for whom there are no facts, but rather only signs that need to be interpreted: "From the lover's point of view, the fact becomes consequential because it is immediately transformed into a sign: it is the sign, not the fact, which is consequential (by its aura)" (63).

self-worth and will; or the equation of sex with love, required for this plot, will go awry, becoming domesticated and miniaturized as a "one-night stand," "pure lust," or "open hostility."

Fynsk discusses how Dasein, as essentially structured, misinterprets. Most clearly seen through Dasein's relation to language, the double movement of nearness creates a kind of danger. Language is "the most dangerous" because through it "man stands exposed in the 'proximity and distance of the essence of things'" (189).[14] Like Dasein, another register of the evasion of the beloved is misreading, generally of the eyes and the face. The heroine and sometimes the hero of this formula are bad readers. Often misreading occurs through not knowing the language, the gestures, of the other, which are fugitive and migrant to such an extent that they cannot be deciphered. Eyes are points of mystery; they speak of the possibility of transcendence in romance, and hence they are often misread. Things that flash in character's eyes contain lost scenes of access and end up closing off possibility, at least for a hundred or so pages, rather than opening it. In Smith's novel, mentioned above, Alicia attempts to read Drake's eyes. "Something flashed in his eyes, a starkness she couldn't read" (178).

> 'I wonder,' she mused, 'if you *want* me to think badly of you.'
>
> For a heartbeat, something flashed in his eyes. Something that came and went so quickly, she couldn't be sure if it was surprise or annoyance. Or something else entirely. (164)

[14] In *Heidegger: On Bring and Acting*, Schürrman discusses the way that the pair 'near-far' in Heidegger describes Dasein's spatiality of being-in-the-world and how Dasein's everyday interpretation "covers-up" its proper being. See especially pp. 222-229 and note 96.

Because the other can never be known, Alicia misinterprets, seeing this flash as anger, hostility, or something undefined which points to his scoundrelhood. Unlike the romantic truism that the eyes are mirrors to the soul, here again meaning fails, and presence delays.

In *Lord of Danger,*[15] the heroine thinks, "As usual, his expression was impossible to read" (226). In *Lord of Midnight,*[16] Claire describes Renald as a "cryptic script" (234). "What was he thinking? She had no idea. She longed for a spontaneous word or gesture by which to judge him, but he was as incomprehensible as a text she'd once seen written in the Arabic script" (65). That he can't be read causes him to be dangerous, to envelop a secret space the heroine would like to plumb. The hardness of his exterior, like a mask, presents a cryptogram or a blank page for which the heroine, in the end when all meaning is present, will crack the code, which is only the discovery of one word—love. The phrase "I love you" presents the completion of the narrative. Avital Ronell shows that love itself is a scene of nonunderstanding in her discussion of the "splendor of unintelligibility" in Schlegel's *Lucinde.* Because lovers must always recognize the difference of the other, the separateness in the midst of summoning the infinite, the lovers run up against finitude, again and again.[17]

In the discourse of love, Barthes writes, language's meaning becomes suspended, and the sentence points only to pure affect. "Amorous *dis-cursus* is not dialectical; it turns like a perpetual calendar, an encyclopedia of affective culture" (7).

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[15] Anne Stuart writes for Zebra books, and Harlequin. She has been a published writer of romances for over 20 years.
[16] Jo Beverly has written at least 10 romances for Topaz, this one in 1998. She has won almost all the various awards that *Romance Times* offers.
[17] See especially *Stupidity*, pages 146-161.

The words of the lover are pure singular presence, and hence the "I love you" must be repeated again and again in order to attempt to recreate the original avowal.

Another scene of misunderstanding in the erotic historical involves hearing. Often the hero mutters things under his breath. The heroine doesn't understand these murmurings, although clearly they are presages of the final end. "Through the heat haze of her own passion, she heard Luke mutter something beneath his breath and then he was kissing her mouth . . ." (Jorden 161).[18] "And she could hear it [intense desire] in the harsh sound of the air escaping from his lungs as he muttered something unintelligible under his breath and then, leaning back against the wall, urged her between his parted thighs" (Jorden 142). To hear the beloved is to fail to comprehend the whispers and garbled words that mean nothing other than love, repeated in an enchanted speech, suspended of meaning other than that the secret will be disclosed.

The series of failures in formula romance point to an important difference between pornography and mass-market romance. Pornography is always a utopia, hence Stephen Marcus's term "pornotopia." In pornography everyone always wins because men always have erections at the right moment; women always desire what the man wants to give them; the orgasm, or the "money shot," always happens right on time, simultaneously, more or less, for both parties. In pornography, everything comes into sexual usage, all objects and subjects are part of the sexual play. For instance, in a pornographic scene, a tree becomes erotic only because it is a secret place to have sex. A telephone's only use is to set up a sexual rendezvous. Conversation is only good for

[18] This and the following quote are from Penny Jordan's trilogy, *The Crightons*. One volume contains the three novels; all about an extended family of handsome men. She writes for Harlequin, and this book was published in 2001. According to the text on the inside cover, she has "over 50 million copies of her books in print and translations in nineteen languages."

seduction. However, in romance, almost everything acts as a catalyst to pull the hero and heroine apart. In dystopic romance, all senses, discourse, and objects, are sites and scenes of failure. Here we are in amorous time, where impulse and act do not coincide, where speaking and understanding miss their proper destination.

Failure also comes with the evasion or covering over of love, through misunderstanding seduction, or ravishment. The missed arrival of love occurs through a doubled misreading, both of the heroine herself and the hero. In the dangerous lover formula, sex between the hero and heroine is never solely a material or physical act; hence it doesn't contain the "meatiness" or purely transparent usage of sex in pornography, which is merely to "get off." Sex in the romance always must lead to an excess of meaning, the full presence of love. Because it is a possible point of access to transcendence, like the eyes and their flashing, sex constructs a site of Heideggerian nearness. Hence sex creates a continued failure of presence. The heroine misreads her own sexual desire as, rather than the presence of love, "merely" a lack of contained control on her part, or an embarrassed weakness of the senses, or a too-passionate sensuality which she must avoid, unless she becomes seduced into a loveless affair. She doesn't understand that she is always already in love with him—dazzlement at first sight, so to speak, or on the first page.

Rosemary Rogers's *A Dangerous Man*,[19] contains many of these false arrivals, with an initial ravishment and then later regrets.

> Her mouth opened to . . . protest? surrender? . . .

[19] Rogers writes for Avon's "Historical Romance" division. She has published fourteen titles with Avon, this one in 1996.

> and his tongue slid inside in a sizzling exploration
>
> that shocked a moan from her . . . Her head fell back,
>
> and all thought of resistance faded into something else,
>
> strange new emotions he had somehow awakened in her,
>
> emotions that made her cling to him . . . (82)

> But inside, she was sick with the knowledge that she had
>
> once more ignored convention and wisdom and decency
>
> to throw herself at a man who took her casually and then
>
> discarded her just as casually. But what had she thought?
>
> That he would declare himself in love with her? That he
>
> would beg her to go away with him? No, that sort of thing
>
> happened only in romantic tales, not in real life. (183)

What is covered over here is the authentic meaning of this event—the touch and feel of the radiance of the beloved's body—and meaning is evaded through an everyday publicness of sex equaling lust, a one-night stand, or open hostility, rape. Hence the structure of a paradoxical move toward while moving away occurs, where the most intimate erotic, or what feels to be the closest, the most familiar touch, pulls the hero and heroine away from each other into an increasingly solitary, melancholy despair. Yet the despair will finally lead to full meaning itself. She wants him but she will only

have him if he really loves her, which she is convinced that he does not, generally because of his "dangerousness"—i.e. secretiveness, misanthropy, etc.

Another example of this erotic near/far can be found in Haywood Smith's *Border Lord.*[20]

> Slowly, deliberately, Duncan approached her, blatant hunger in his eyes.
>
> What did he mean to do? Catherine's arms tightened around Nevin, her heart beating faster. Part of her wanted to flee, but the greater part of her wanted Duncan Maxwell to kiss her again. (192)

Other misunderstandings come in the heroine's misinterpretation of the hero's touch. The question above, "What did he mean to do?" is a mainstay in this formula, clearly dating back to the Gothic heroine confronted by the villain, which is "kill me? Rape me? Lock me up in a dungeon?" Generally, in the erotic historical, the heroine believes the hero does not love her but merely desires her sexually or even hates her and wants to revenge himself through seducing or raping her. She lives "tranquilized" into the everyday publicness of "everyone feels lust, hence that is what he (and I) feels." She evades the end and finite destiny, her final meaning that leads to thematic transcendence.

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[20] Smith has written approximately six romances for St. Martin's, this one in 2001. She is the winner of the "Reviewer's Choice Award for Best First Historical" from *Romantic Times*.

The erotic lies in the evasion, in the failure and in the covering over of presence. And at each titillating point of these plot tensions, can be found both the failure and a movement of or toward success.

III. History of the Erotic Historical

The recent history of the erotic historical begins in 1972, when an important shift in romance publishing occurred. Between 1972 and 1974 romance sales were down, publishers were looking for a new formula, and Nancy Coffey of Avon books discovered Kathleen Woodiwiss's *The Flame and the Flower* (1972) from a stack of unsolicited manuscripts. Longer than other romances then on the market, it contained more graphic sexual encounters, near or actual rapes, and much more extensive travel and adventure. The popularity of this new formula "caught the imagination of hundreds of thousands of women and launched the erotic historical romance" (Thurston 47).[21] Soon after the success of Woodiwiss's formula was discovered, Avon came out with Rosemary Rogers's *Sweet Savage Love* (1974). The new convention was dubbed the "sweet savage" romance after Rogers's book. Why did *The Flame and the Flower*, and then *Sweet Savage Love* create such a historical break, a radical shifting of romance formulas thereafter? Thurston argues that the popularity of these narratives rests on their status as women's pornography, as well as their emphasis on heroines who wander the world, and hence escape almost entirely the domestic sphere. Erotic historicals shifted the romance market in other ways as well. Most importantly for my project, and as I've stated above, the heroes in these narratives are more cryptic and elusive, more dangerously dark, and often more strongly delineated outcasts, than in other romance formulas. This also,

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[21] Carol Thurston, Janice Radway in *Reading the Romance*, and Rosemary Guiley in *Love Lines: The Romance Reader's Guide to Printed Pleasures* all give the same account of the influence of *The Flame and the Flower* in reshaping the popular romance formula.

interestingly enough, ties in with Thurston's argument, because these heroes tap into an erotic appeal that has a long history in the imagination of Western culture.

Brandon, the hero of *The Flame and the Flower*, has the usual aspect of the dark hero: hair that is "raven black," skin that is "darkly tanned"; he "sweeps" the heroine "with a bold gaze from top to toe" (31). But Brandon's sexual violence, his initial cruelty toward the heroine, and her imprisonment by him set him apart from earlier mass-market formulas as a character singularly unredeemable: "He had the look of a pirate about him, or even Satan himself" (31). "Tall and powerful he stood, garmented regally in black velvet and flawless white. He was Satan to her. Handsome. Ruthless. Evil. He could draw her soul from her body and never feel remorse" (92). As mentioned above, the erotic fantasy of being subjugated—terrified and trembling—by such an archetypal enemy figure hinges on *his* subjugation at the end of the novel by his love for the heroine. From dark and powerful, he must become pale and trembling, mirroring her terror upon first meeting him. "The breath caught in Brandon's throat. He went pale and suddenly began to shake. He cursed himself for letting a mere girl affect him this way. She played havoc with his insides. He felt as if he were again a virgin, about to experience his first woman. He was hot and sweating one moment, cold and shaking another . . ." (152).[22] Because the hero of the erotic historical embodies greater passionate and erotic extremes than in other formulas, and particularly earlier mass-market romances, his transformation from distant, cold villain to lover whose world resides in the heroine, is of a larger dramatic sweep, of more violent excess. It is this excessiveness that pulls the erotic historical toward the genre of pornography (always keeping in mind their difference in

[22] For further discussion of the play of opposing elements in the romance, see Linda Barlow's "Beneath the Surface: The Hidden Codes of Romance" *Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women.*

terms of utopic and dystopic) with the tendency of both genres to repeat again and again the point of supersaturation of meaning—with pornography this point is penetration, and with the erotic historical it is the passionate frisson between the hero and heroine.

Steve Morgan, the hero of *Sweet Savage Love*, cynical gunfighter, ever-wandering killer, is so full of dark experience and secret doings that his past is never finally told and resolved. Steve's life as a homeless fighter does not change with his final transformation into a lover; he takes the heroine along with him on his travels, and she herself becomes a vagabond and fugitive. In the erotic historical, of all contemporary mass-markets, the lovers remain outside, wayfarers on the margins of society.

Rhett Butler from Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936) stands as an important precursor to the demon lover of the contemporary erotic historical. Rhett's emphasis on his fallenness, and his goading of society to cast him out more and more ("Suppose I don't want to redeem myself?" Rhett states, "Why should I fight to uphold the system that cast me out? I shall take pleasure in seeing it smashed" [240]), as well as his power as a man who has no moral restraints, set him up as an important twentieth-century generator of meaning.

Rhett wears "the clothes of a dandy on a body that was powerful and latently dangerous in its lazy grace" (179). The dangerous lover often dresses as a dandy, as do Wilde's characters, the Byronic hero in the popular imagination, and many characters from contemporary mass-market romances. This performance of eccentricity, showiness, and bold statement expresses a sense of mastery over social codes and gestures—a mastery to the point of deconstructing them. Exaggerating such social expressions performs an ironic disenchantment and, to return to stock Romantic ideas, a sense of self

so singular that, even visibly, he "stands out." To "stand out," though, asks for witnesses to self-exile; the dangerous lover "confesses" his disappointment in a world too shallow for him; his only recourse is to parody this lack of soul. Most strongly seen in the Byronic hero, the erotics of confession express the secret depth of the soul to be unveiled, as well as its impossibility of ever being fully represented. Yet the dangerous lover's infinite subjectivity is infinite only in so far as it is confessed and witnessed; hence, it is its very presentation that guarantees its unrepresentability.[23] Thus the dandy expresses with his style the idea that his style can never represent him.

While Rhett is a rascal, when he loves he is the best of men, but he hides this because, more than any other man, he sees himself as having failed on a grand scale, and he feels that he will continue on this downward slide. Only the heroine witnesses his depths of strength, and hence also his depths of final despair. All others see only his reckless, insolent façade. Like earlier and later dangerous lovers, Rhett is allied with erotic death and darkness. Scarlett describes her first encounter with this erotic: "He was like death, carrying her away in arms that hurt . . . She was darkness and he was darkness and there had never been anything before this time, only darkness and his lips upon hers . . . Suddenly she had a wild thrill like she had never known; joy, fear, madness, excitement" (940). Barthes writes of this craving to be engulfed or annihilated as part of the lover's discourse. It is a dying without the pains of dying, "the gentleness of the abyss" (11) where responsibility no longer holds one in its clutches.

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[23] As Barthes affirms of the lover: " . . .passion is in essence made to be seen: the hiding must be seen: I want you to know that I am hiding something from you, that is the active paradox I must resolve: at one and the same time it must be known and not known . . ." (42).

An early and influential erotic historical, Edith M. Hull's *The Sheik* of 1921, is considered by some to be the first romance of the twentieth century.[24] The sheik of the title kidnaps, rapes, and holds captive an aristocratic English girl; hence again we see why the historical romance often earns the tag of "rape saga."[25] The contrast between, on the one hand, the mysterious, ruthless leader of a roving band of Arabs and, on the other hand, the subjugated, enslaved English girl replays the dangerous lover plot. The sheik has, like the many romance heroes that will come after him, "the handsomest and cruelest faces that she had ever seen . . . He was looking at her with fierce burning eyes that swept her until she felt that the boyish clothes that covered her slender limbs were stripped from her . . ." (56-57). She observes that ". . . his face was the face of a devil" (141). His subjectivity has the hiddenness of danger: "The man himself was a mystery . . . She could not reconcile him and . . . [the] dozen incongruities that she had noticed during the day crowded into her recollection until her head reeled"(79). He has exiled himself from his aristocratic English origins, and he wanders the desert perpetually, as an Arab sheik. His redemption from self-inflicted loneliness comes finally through true love. His only escape must come from the outside, from a redemption which he can't possibly see beforehand, because it is so outside. The lover brings the caesura. In the end, once they both declare their love, they live together as homeless voyagers. Although *The Sheik* is not sexually explicit—in fact, on the page we only read about kisses—their love clearly has a strong physical, sexual element, and the exotic luxuriousness of the heroine's idle, silken imprisonment overflows with eroticism. Not only can the influence of this romance be seen in the themes of the devilish, sadistic, imprisoning hero, who is exiled

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[24] See Thurston, 38.

[25] Barthes points to the equivalence between love and war: "Each time a subject 'falls' in love, he revives a fragment of the archaic time when men were supposed to carry off women . . ." (188).

and brings the heroine into exile, but numerous erotic historicals repeat this story point by point: see Johanne Lindsey's *Captive Bride* for an example of an Arab sheik, really an English lord, who kidnaps and rapes an English virgin. And Beatrice Small's *The Kadin* follows the same plot.[26] The "sheik romance," began by Hull in 1921, rewrites and romanticizes a popular nineteenth-century pornographic narrative. An example is the anonymous *The Lustful Turk: Scenes in the Harem of an Eastern Potentate,* reputably published in 1828. The story runs the same as the sheik romance except that in the romance the transcendent sphere of love "redeems" the brutality of the hero, casting a rosy glow of forever back on all sadistic acts, and in the pornographic version, meaning flattens out into discrete episodes of violent sex.[27]

Love as redemption works as an important theory in D.H. Lawrence, and his influence as a theorist of love must be taken into account. His novels abound with demon lovers who "save" women from the social order; his stories explore time and again the tie between sex and death, the *liebestod*; and his descriptions of sexual and spiritual union provide a more literary and mythical prototype for the scenes of transcendence in the erotic historical.

In his essay entitled "Love," the spiritual union between two people provides the only type of grace achievable in this world. Love, here, has the same kind of transcendental sublimity as in the erotic historical, as well as many earlier love narratives (as will be discussed in future chapters). Lawrence describes love as "neither temporal nor spiritual but absolved by the equality of perfection, pure immanence of absolution"

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[26] Other sheik romances: Lynn Wilding, *The Sheikh*, New York: Silhouette, 1991; Alexandra Sellers, *Sheikh's Woman*, New York: Harlequin, n.d.; Violet Winspear, *The Sheik's Captive*, New York, Harlequin, 1979.

[27] A strange revenge fantasy occurs at the end of *The Lustful Turk*, however. The harem is dissolved because one of his love slaves cuts off the Dey's penis.

(*Sex* 35). He also finds that love resides in the essence of its very incompletion: "But if all be united in one bond of love, then there is no more love. And, therefore, for those who are in love with love, to travel is better than to arrive. For in arriving one passes beyond love, or rather, one encompasses love in a new transcendence . . . Love is not a goal; it is only traveling" (*Sex* 33-34). The near/far that love needs, as Lawrence describes, is similarly structured as the "nearness" of hero and heroine throughout the erotic historical narrative: the desire that always needs distance to be kept alive. This link between love and travel, taken in a literal sense, describes the large-as-the-world quality of the outsider lovers in the erotic historical.[28] The contradiction of Lawrence's two amorous theories described above points to the way the discourse of love is itself always multiple, fragmented, contested and contesting.

Gerald in *Women in Love* (1920), one of the clearest figures for the dangerous lover in Lawrence, stands in Lawrence's visionary, prophetic universe as the moribund wrestler with his soul who is finally dominated by dissolution and disintegration. A lover who marks out the isolated fear of the modern age, Gerald's self defines a microcosm of chaos: " . . . life was a hollow shell all round him, roaring and clattering like the sound of the sea . . . and inside this hollow shell was all the darkness and fearful space of death . . . he would collapse inwards upon the great dark void which circled at the center of his soul" (314-15). Different than the hero of the erotic historical, Gerald's subjectivity, almost saved by his lover, Gudrun, finally collapses in on its own hell. His existential despair as a Modernist hero mirrors the heroes of the erotic historical, except the lovers of romance are created to be absolved and filled by love. Unlike the romance novel, Lawrence feels compelled to moralize against this attraction toward death.

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[28] Love as a kind of travel will be further explored in chapter 3.

Gerald's erotic sadism also marks him as a dangerous lover. Gudrun sees him overmastering his horse purely for pleasure. She later describes this sight infused, for her, by her sexual longing for Gerald:

> Gudrun was as if numbed in her mind by the sense of indomitable soft weight of the man, bearing down into the living body of the horse: the strong, indomitable thighs of the blond man clenching the palpitating body of the mare into pure control; a sort of soft white magnetic domination from the loins and thighs and calfs, enclosing and encompassing the mare heavily into unutterable subordination, soft-blooded subordination, terrible. (106)

Erotic annihilation, an important theme for the erotic historical, here divorced from the transcendent discourse of the romance, becomes Lawrence's means for pointing to the cruel emptiness of the modern world itself.

In both the couples of *Women in Love*—Gerald and Gundrun, and Ursula and Birkin—the lover wants at times to kill the beloved. Sex often becomes a satisfying way of dissolving the other and annihilating the self. Lawrence's other theory of sex resides here as well—sexual union as completion and plenitude. The erotic power of Gerald and Gundrun has the dark potency of the hero of the erotic historical, with an "underworld knowledge" and a dangerousness: "through her passion was a transcendent fear of the thing he was . . . oh, how dangerous! . . . such an unutterable enemy" (324).

Gerald becomes a Cain figure when he shotguns his brother. His family is cursed mysteriously. "There's one thing about our family, you know. Once anything goes

wrong, it can never be put right again" (176). The dangerous lover can always be identified as Cain-like in his homeless wandering, his state of being cursed by the past, and his often self-made tragedies.

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1932), Mellors, Lady Chatterley's working-class demon lover, loves her as the "strange and terrible" outsider, whose cosmic unknownness causes her to "dare to let go everything, all herself" (260). Like the dangerous lover of the erotic historical, Mellors initially searches for the "bitter privacy of a man who at last wants to be alone" (166) but later finds sexual conflagration and spiritual absolution with his lover. Albeit in a somewhat different register, the erotic historical sex scene mimics Lawrence's famous and influential descriptions of sex as world-changing, world swaying, as a door to a mysticism that seeks to explain everything. Like the heroines of the erotic historical, Lady Chatterley finds with this mysterious man a sexual awakening where eroticism becomes a kind of religious faith:

> And now she touched him, and it was the sons of gods
> with the daughters of men. How beautiful he felt, how pure
> in tissue! . . . Beauty! What beauty! A sudden little flame
> of new awareness went through her . . . And the strange weight
> of the balls between his legs! What a mystery! What a strange
> heavy weight of mystery that could lie soft and heavy in one's
> hand! The roots, root of all that is lovely, the primeval root of
> all full beauty . . . She could not know what it was. She could
> not remember what it had been. . . And afterwards she was
> utterly still, utterly unknowing, she was not aware for how

long. (263)

Lawrence's important place in the history of the erotic historical furthers the argument of this chapter: that the power of the dangerous lover in these narratives lies in his failure. The aesthetics of failure point to the Modernist agonies of the alienated emptiness of subjectivity. Lawrence brought pornography into a narrative of existential angst and spiritual transcendence, a move essential to the erotic historical's development both as a more sexually explicit medium and as a narrative of love as spiritually redemptive.

To conclude, rife with paradoxes, the dangerous lover stands, in a Modernist sense, always in-between. The one who fails yet holds the most power, who describes with his subjectivity the infinite yet can be read through and through by a glance at his face, who is never so close to his beloved as when he appears irreparably severed from her, he arrives at the end of the romance united and whole, yet is the one always falling apart. Romance as a genre, although defined by its wholeness, by the progress of two people coming closer to oneness or being pulled apart from the oneness that seems inevitable, but finally, in the contemporary version of the genre, coming to an end in a union, a whole narrative, centers on a character whose subjectivity does not hold together. His narrative follows discontinuously, where pieces of his present come from a past that seems utterly lost. His self fragments along lines of pained forgottenness, along hateful openings into nothingness. As beloved, pieces of him are picked up by the other, an attempt is made to fit them together, to pull together a concept of self, an entity with enough substance to be loved, to place hope in. In some sense, however, the space between fragments holds the love, is the residence of love's movement. The parts of the subject that gap open, that make the self, in some radical way, not a self, hold the

possibility of loving the dangerous lover in a kind of stasis of love and the impossibility of loving nothingness. Love becomes creative, based on reconstituting the beloved again and again. Benjamin elaborates a theory of hidden love, wherein love's secrecy comes through loving the parts of the other that no one else could love.

> If the theory is correct that feeling is not located in the head, that we sentiently experience a window, a cloud, a tree not in our brains but rather in the place where we see it, then we are, in looking at our beloved, too, outside ourselves. But in a torment of tension and ravishment. Our feeling, dazzled, flutters like a flock of birds in the women's radiance. And as birds seek refuge in the leafy recesses of a tree, feelings escape into the shaded wrinkles, the awkward movements and inconspicuous blemishes of the body we love, where they can lie low in safety. And no passer-by would guess that it is just here, in what is defected and censurable, that the fleeting darts of adoration nestle (*Selected Writings* I : 449).

Pointing forward to the next chapter, Benjamin explains how the beloved's body fragments in shadowy pieces of others, like the dead body that decays, becoming something altogether different than it was before. Haloed with a shadowy nimbus of desire, mystery, and an impossible insubstantialness, the specter-like other moves and haunts.

Chapter Two
The Spectral Other and Erotic Melancholy: The Gothic Demon Lover and the Early Seduction Narrative Rake (1532-1822)

> There was a laughing Devil in his sneer,
> That raised emotions both of rage and fear;
> And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
> Hope withering fled—and Mercy sighed farewell!
>
> -Byron

I. The Gothic Romance and the Gothic Villain

The twentieth-century Gothic romance, a genre that has almost died out or become diffused today, preceded and greatly influenced the still immensely popular erotic historical. Only one true Gothic romance line still exists: Dorchester's Gothic "Love Spell" series. The "devil" of Evelyn Rogers's *Devil in the Dark* (2001), a "Love Spells" romance, descends directly from the Brontës' Heathcliff and Rochester, as the author herself makes explicit in her introduction.[29] Rogers' Duke of Ravenswood, a supernatural, devilish figure, with a "look of pain" on his countenance, haunts the Yorkshire countryside on his huge black stallion. The heroine, by uncovering his secret—a mad twin brother whose crimes have been attributed to the duke—saves him from his unappeasable inquietude. Gothic themes surface—the dark double, madness,

[29] "I have long wanted to write a book about a dark, tormented hero, a man like the classic Heathcliff or Mr. Rochester, and the courageous heroine who brings light into his life" (author's note). She includes *Rebecca* in her tribute. Perhaps we can also add a Scott influence—the Master of Ravenswood is the hero of *The Bride of Lammermore.*

imprisonment, and a secret interiority inscribed on the brow. At the same time, a Gothic heroine, she must play investigator, searching for the key that will unlock the dark well of the unspeakable self.[30]

Before Dorchester's Gothics, started in 2001, Gothic romances in their purity had disappeared from the market beginning with the 1970s. Before that point the Gothic romance itself evolved out of the decline of the mystery in the 1950s, as Janice Radway explains. Mass-market publishers of the 1950s already had popular formulaic categories, such as mystery or detective stories, but as the sales of the mystery story waned in the 1950s, publishers began looking for a new popular formula.[31] Gerald Gross at Ace books, remembering the success of Daphne DuMaurier's *Rebecca* (1938), and hoping to attract a large audience of female readers, searched for other titles already published that followed the formula of *Rebecca*. He brought out Phyllis Whitney's *Thunder Heights* in 1960, launching a new "gothic" series. At the same time, Doubleday issued another *Rebecca* formula in 1960, Victoria Holt's *Mistress of Mellyn*, beginning a hugely popular gothic revival.[32] But finally, as noted in chapter one, when the popularity of the Gothic waned, the erotic historical was "invented" and swept the market.[33]

Many of the important themes of the Gothic romance run through the erotic historical romance, as well as many other mass-market formulas. The clearest carry over

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[30] Harlequin's "Intrigue" line, dubbed "romantic suspense" also retains some aspects of the Gothic romance. Furthermore, in addition to their Gothic line, Dorchester's "Love Spell" includes romances that contain elements of other genres such as the fairytale; futuristic themes—heroes who are aliens from other planets; sorcery—a heroine who is a genie, or a hero who is a wizard; the "paranormal," and time travel.
[31] For a discussion of Harlequin's move from mysteries, Westerns, and thrillers to romance, see Kay Mussell and Johanna Tunon, eds, *North American Romance Writers.*
[32] See Radway, *Reading the Romance*, especially page 31. See also Thurston, *The Romance Revolution*, especially pp. 41-44.
[33] Mary Stewart must also be mentioned here as an important Gothic romance writer. Between 1955 and 1967 she produced ten Gothic romances, most of them containing importantly dark and willful heroes who are "tamed" by hard-headed, clear-sighted heroines. See Pamela Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel.*

from the Gothic romance is, of course, the hero who embodies both enemy and lover. And in this lies the primary difference between the twentieth-century Gothic romance and the late-eighteenth-century, early nineteenth-century Gothic proper: the conflation in the twentieth century (and earlier) of the enemy/lover into one character. With his historical trajectory, David Richter argues that the Gothic, essentially a failed genre, only found its mode of coherence after the end of its popularity. The Gothic's confusion lay in the distinct moral opposites of the hero and villain, and success came only with the Brontës' reinscription of the hero/villain as one character, the "threat and reward" (Richter 106) combined in one man. Sin and guilt, two expressions of subjectivity in the Gothic, reach the closure of redemption in love in *Jane Eyre* or the spectral transcendence of love as freedom in *Wuthering Heights*. Yet in *Wuthering Heights*, the truer Gothic, it is only through death that the finally failed love between Heathcliff and Catherine might open up into a spectral togetherness. Even this possibility is only hearsay—after their death, Nelly Dean comments that the "old man by the kitchen fire affirms he has seen two on'em [Heathcliff and Catherine] looking out of his chamber window, on every rainy night since his [Heathcliff's] death" (297). And a young country boy tearfully reports to Nelly Dean, "They's Heathcliff, and a woman, yonder . . ." (297). By the time Catherine dies, an amorous accord or any kind of peaceful satiety that can live in the world among people, that can function in the microcosm of society at the estates of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights, becomes impossible for the hated, vengeful malcontent, Heathcliff. Catherine and Heathcliff's love isn't productive of meaning or teleology; it appears in fits and starts, in repetitions. Fragments, pieces, and remnants constitute their love.

To somehow "have everything" in one man is a central tenet of romance—the world's meaning immanent, locatable in one singular embodiment. The evil double contained in a single character is itself a Gothic mainstay, as in James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (an interesting case of a homoerotic haunting by a devil-self). Of course, being haunted by a double who is contained in another character is also a Gothic theme, as in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and William Godwin's *Caleb Williams.* In post-Gothic Victorian novels, these Gothic doubles continue to proliferate, as in *Dr.Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and even *Jane Eyre* with Bertha as Jane's double.

As a brief aside here, it is important to note that Brontë's Rochester was not the first character to wrap up such contradictions into one subjectivity. The tragic hero whose main energy comes from villainous actions, self-destructive impulses, or character flaws can be traced back to Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy, and even earlier, to the Nietzschean will-to-power of Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532). Such early magnetic scoundrels range from the cursed ambitions of the ur-seeker-of-other-worldly-knowledge, Marlowe's *Faustus* (c. 1588); Promus, the just man who wrestles with his desire for Cassandra and loses in George Whetstone's *Promus and Cassandra* (1578); and Guise in Fulke Greville's *Alaham* (159-?) who displays the sublime but wasted subjectivity of the Byronic hero:

> Oft have I leveled, and at last have learn'd
> That peril is the chiefest way to happiness,
> And resolution honor's fairest aim.
> What glory is there in a common good,

That hangs for every peasant to achieve?

That like I best that flies beyond my reach. . . .

Give me a look, that, when I bend the brows,

Pale death may walk in furrows of my face;

A hand, that with a grasp may gripe the world. (quoted in Boyer 73-4)

The haunted look—death inscribed on the face—will come to mark the dangerous lover himself. An erotics of evil develops from these characters and their ambitious will for destruction coupled with the genius of an all-seeing eye. Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1592-4) combines a dreaded cruelty with a witty intellect and an insatiable will.[34] *Hamlet* (1600-01) brings into this history the important characteristic of the tragedy of impotent melancholy, a sense of a world too barren for action, for an attempt at change.

Running through Jacobean tragedy, the tormented, sympathetic reprobate appears in such characters as Vindice in Cyril Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1607) and the atheist, D'Amville in *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611). In John Ford's *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore* (1633) Giovanni, the beautifully-formed philosopher who rebels against divine and human law by an incestuous relationship with his sister, lives the *liebestod* of the erotic transgressor, aggressively looking forward to the Byronic hero.

Lucifer in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), the serpentine tempter of Eve, falls from grace as later dangerous lovers will. And Eve's seduction by this demon lover, causing her own fall from grace, is repeated again and again in the erotic historical where the heroine, after her seduction by the devilish rogue, becomes outcast with him. As Gilbert and Gubar point out, this gives a new meaning to the "fall" in "to fall in love."

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[34] A good source for a discussion of these types is Clarence Valentine Boyer's *The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy*.

And this fall stands always in relation to knowledge, whether it be occult knowledge, which gives one too much power to live in the world, or a cynical knowledge which comes to know the world too well, emptying it of mystery and possibility. Luciferian dangerous lovers always cut a devilish figure with their sneering rebellion and refusal to bow to any power but that of their own tortured subjectivity.

> . . . but I in none of these
> Find place or refuge; and the more I see
> Pleasures about me, so much more I feel
> Torment within me, as from the hateful siege
> Of contraries; all good to me becomes
> Bane . . . (IX, 118-123)

The bitter satanic eye must ruin in order to augment his own ruin, and it is out of this cycle of destruction and chaos that the love narrative will create its story of blissful cessation.

Considered by many theorists, in particular Tania Modleski and David Richter, to be the first romance (some even call it the first novel), Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740-1) places the villain as both the heroine's worst foe and her final blessing for virtuous behavior.[35] *Pamela* stands as an early example of the reformed rake formula, carried into the nineteenth century with Jane Austen (Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* [1813] as, arguably, a man whom Elizabeth "reforms" from his haughty and distanced ways); with early nineteenth-century Silver Forks; and with Charlotte Brontë (Rochester in *Jane Eyre*). The Regency romance then brings the reformed rake into the

[35] Kay Mussell argues that *Pamela* is the most important early influence on the contemporary romance in her *Fantasy and Reconcilation: Contemporary Formulas of Woman's Romantic Fiction.* Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1984.

twentieth century (see Chapter Four.) The reformed rake formula generically stands as a sub-genre of the seduction narrative.[36] The scoundrel/suitor of *Pamela*, Mr. B., plots Pamela's ruin by seducing her but, so impressed is he by her strict sense of the virtuous and dutiful place of a young serving maid, he marries her instead. In *Pamela*, as well as in the Gothic, eroticism resides in texts—letters that Pamela keeps in her "bosom" and then are purloined by Mr. B. While these missives masquerade as virtuous tracts on how to stay away from a scheming rake, they become a nexus for erotic activity with Pamela's flurried excitement in her letter writing, her exhaustive recording of the minutia of her seduction, and her bringing the texts to bed—nailing Mr. B's sadistic letter to her bedstead as a masochistic reminder to "be good." The letter even becomes a substitute for sex when Mr. B. reads Pamela's letters instead of continuing his seduction. The highest point of sexual satiation *is* the text, and furthermore, the text that does not reach its proper destination (her letters are addressed to her parents).[37] These dead letters take us back to chapter one, where love becomes, at least temporarily, a kind of dead letter: love becomes misunderstanding itself. Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-48) is a seduction narrative but not a reformed rake one, because Lovelace, the unredeemable rakehell lover, rapes Clarissa, ultimately causing her demise.

It is in the Gothic then, to continue to follow Richter's trajectory, that Mr. B. fragments into a couple—two characters who relate as opposites. In Radcliffe, the most romantic of the Gothic novelists, the villain and the lover often represent too simply just that; they play roles in relation to the heroine or, more importantly, they follow the

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[36] See following chapters for some of the checkered history of this genre.
[37] In *The Postcard*, Derrida discusses how the proper meaning of language never "arrives," like a dead letter.

conventional Gothic codes.[38] The rogue doesn't always seem particularly fearful or the beloved particularly lovable. Richter points to the ways that the heroine's fears of the villain in *Mysteries of Udolpho* seem to be vague and often unfounded. The villain Montoni, a particularly ineffectual knave who marries the unattractive and unbearable aunt of Emily for her money, tries to bully the aunt's money out of her without success and then attempts the same with Emily, also completely missing his mark. All of his ambitions turn out miserable failures, and he ends up dying without much comment. Similarly, the lover Valancourt isn't the one who saves Emily from the various dangers from which she must escape; he seems to lurk about her, haunt her thoughts, but his presence is never heroic. When they are finally reunited in the end, the description of their love, romance, and marriage are, as has been remarked by many writers, surprisingly bland and uninteresting. The beloved and the enemy are largely apparitions of Emily's own interior landscape rather than separate characters with lives of their own, able to give depth and coherence to a developing suspenseful narrative.[39]

That said, the villains in Radcliffe, and much of the Gothic, create the central development and complexity of the narrative by their inexplicably meaningful actions, their deeply perturbed spirits which precipitously race toward ruin on a grand scale. These villains and their violent machinations against the heroine's virtue steal the show while the pallid, characterless lover is lost in the background with his transparent tenderness and adoration. Both Schedoni in Radcliffe's *The Italian* and Ambrosio in

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[38] As many have argued before me, the Gothic genre, while not exactly formulaic, is like the mass-market romance because it is made up of such a clear set of conventions one could make a list of them and find most of them included in every Gothic novel of the time period. For a further discussion of this, see Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, as well as Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest.*

[39] In *The Female Thermometer*, Terry Castle argues that Radcliffe's lovers are those who mourn for the living, what she calls the "spectralization of the other."

Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* contain the erotic complexities and fascination of a manifold and fearful enemy, while the lover in contrast seems easily read. Schedoni's fallen greatness and gloomy violence disclose a hidden world of darkness and death.

> There were circumstances, however, which appeared to indicate him to be a man of birth, and of fallen fortune; his spirit . . . seemed lofty; it shewed not, however, the aspirings of a generous mind, but rather the gloomy pride of a disappointed one . . . Some few persons in the convent . . . believed that the peculiarities of his manners . . . were the effect of misfortunes preying upon a haughty and disordered spirit, while others conjectured them the consequence of some hideous crime gnawing upon an awakened conscience . . . His figure was striking . . . there was something terrible in its air; something almost superhuman . . . gave an effect to his large melancholy eye, which approached to horror . . . and his eyes were so piercing that they seemed to penetrate, at a single glance, into the hearts of men, and to read their most secret thoughts . . .(34-35)

His penetrating glance exposes the hidden body of the other, without itself showing anything, making the other's interiority known. Schedoni's melancholy self magnetically pulls the other who desires to know; he is like an emptiness which draws in a material to fill it.

In *The Monk*, a Gothic bildungsroman, Ambrosio begins as the adored "Man of Holiness" but develops into a corrupted malefactor when he is seduced by a temptress disguised as a monk (herself a dangerous lover). The Gothic enemy moves, changes, hides a riveting past and future, while the Gothic lover's insipidity comes from his stasis as a character, his ability to be only one thing. For example, with the collapse of the blackguard and sweetheart into one Rochester, Brontë can begin her story with the Gothic character who is the stranger, and hence the more intriguing, and only later transform him into the domesticated and dependent lover.

To return now to the twentieth-century Gothic romance and the Gothic doubling of the hero: *Thunder Heights* (1960)[40] maintains a truer Gothicness than *Rebecca*, *Jane Eyre*, or *The Mistress of Mellyn* because the hero and villain, by the end of the novel, are still two characters, rather than unified into one subjectivity. The heroine of *Thunder Heights*, Camilla, works as a governess, but when she receives a summons from her rich uncle, from whom she has been estranged due to an old family quarrel, she finds herself inheriting a huge Gothic mansion inhabited by her relations. In the usual Gothic way, the house holds many dangerous secrets, and Camilla fears for her life. The hero, Ross Granger, also lives in the house; he worked as a consultant for her now dead uncle. Because of his sinister manner, she believes he may be the one making attempts on her life, but finds the culprit is her aunt's adopted son, Booth Hendricks, who she finds also killed her mother. The heroine experiences erotic tensions with both men, however, and both of them, at various points, hold the role of dangerous lover. Characteristically, it is Booth, the truly dangerous of the two, who maintains the strongest erotic pull. Both men

[40] Phyllis A. Whitney has been called the "Queen of American Gothic" by the *New York Times*. She has written over sixty mysteries and Gothic romances.

contain secret sadnesses; they cast angry glances and lurk about, spying on the heroine. But of Booth she asks herself: "What haunted this man? What drove him and made him so strange? Darkly strange and strangely fascinating" (94). She "was sharply aware of him close at her side, moving with his air of restrained vitality, as though the dark power that flowed through him was held for the moment in leash . . . he filled her with a sense of—was it attraction or alarm? Perhaps a mingling of both, for it might be dangerous to grow too interested in this man" (96). But Ross, the less developed of the two characters, saves her from Booth and from her attraction for him, becoming the lover who provides a safe haven.

Camilla's wondering over the spectrality of Booth's thoughts points to the ways the dangerous lover is continually haunted by an other self—one who has not been schooled in disappointment, one who loves in a just world where he is accepted and accepting, one whose desires can be fulfilled, his ideals made real. The haunting past self, always too late to *be*, has never been alive. This spectrality is one of the keys to the way the contemporary dangerous lover comes out of the Gothic villain. His lover, his redemption, creates another kind of haunting: she is the specter of those lost ideals, those profound desires never-to-be-fulfilled. Her insubstantiality comes from her relation to him as an impossibility. Their togetherness, an embodiment of all his desires, can only happen on the level of a haunting, a fragmentary whispering, a groaning, a dreamscape occurring on the margins of sanity, of the everyday real. Numerous erotic historicals describe their heroes, and often even their heroines, as haunted and haunting. "He was a dark looming silhouette over her, and were it not for the feel of his hard body pressing onto hers, she would have thought him a phantom lover" (Becnel 82). Or, in *Stranger in*

Paradise, the hero "looked ghostly in the moonglow, a haunting figure from the nether world" (44). The outsider demon lover's flash of presence, which happens in an impossible moment of spectral being, does not, cannot, have the substantiality of people who love and live, who work in societal duty. Their presence together, haunted always by impoverished being, by the loss of being non-existent, creates dark, non-luminous figures whose lives are already extinguished. In *Wed to a Stranger?* the lovers have "a relationship of shadows—forged from veiled half truths and illusions" (172). In some sense the dangerous lover has already ended his life when the narrative begins; he has fallen, failed, been cast-out, lost everything. His story of love then happens in an afterlife, a dark fairytale of no possibility.

In non-Gothic twentieth-century romance (and especially in the erotic historical) traces of this old split of the hero into two also appear. In Julie McBride's *Wed to a Stranger?* the hero himself becomes literally doubled. After her husband mysteriously disappears, Fritzi is stalked by a dashing man who flits into her house at night to watch her sleep. This second man turns out to be her husband, who she discovers is a plastic surgeon working for a government anti-terrorist unit. His face, altered by plastic surgery when he married her, is altered back after his disappearance. Now he is more handsome, much darker, and, rather than being a dangerous stalker, has all along been protecting her.

The enemy/lover all wrapped up in one contradictory character appears in DuMaurier's Max DeWinter and Holt's Connan TreMellyn, to return to the two other important Gothic romances discussed above. The similarities in plot structure of *Mistress of Mellyn* and *Rebecca* to *Jane Eyre* can be easily traced, down to the seemingly or actually haunted mansion; the dead and/or imprisoned previous wife; the young and plain

governess/companion, orphaned, forlorn; the marriage proposal that is suspect, unreal, yet so welcome.[41] A line of influence exists in the hero/villains: DuMaurier's Max DeWinter is modeled directly after Rochester, and Connan TreMellyn is another Max DeWinter.

The heroines of these three novels vary greatly, the clearest example being Jane's self-willed determination compared to *Rebecca*'s heroine's lack of self-esteem and constant ontological instability. Yet they all desire, as Jane describes, to plumb the hero's abyssal subjectivity, to discern, understand, see, his vast mindscape. Jane looks into Rochester's face and eyes,

> . . . and as for the vague something . . . that opened on a careful observer, now and then, in his eye, and closed again before one could fathom the strange depth partially disclosed; that something which used to make me fear and shrink, as if I had been wandering amongst volcanic-looking hills, and had suddenly felt the ground quiver, and seen it gape . . . Instead of wishing to shun, I longed only to dare—to divine . . . the abyss. (213)

The heroine, and especially the reader, is never able to fully know this abyss. In fact, Connan, Max, and Rochester, while represented as infinite, often don't have much depth to plumb.[42] Writing on Byron, Elfenbein argues that the seeming depth of these infinite

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[41] The obvious historical relatedness of these plots and *Jane Eyre*'s influence on the contemporary gothic romance has been discussed by many, see particularly Thurston, chapters 1-2 and Tania Modleski, especially chapters 1-3.

[42] As has been argued about *Jane Eyre*, often the heroine's search to read the hero is a search for her own dark depths, her perhaps angry, sexual, insane, powerful and free side, expressed by the hero, her double. To some extent, the dangerous lover always acts as a placeholder for desire. An investigation of this would be another historical trajectory entirely, one that waits to be written. An analogy is Gilbert and Gubar's

Romantic subjectivities actually uncovers the possibility of exhausting these depths easily. Passions so deep that they are obscured and thus not representable could easily be read as lacking altogether. The dangerous lover has a "subjectivity perpetually at risk" (Elfenbein 28), and his fragility is expressed by the need for a repetition of this character. The repetition of this character in mass-market romances also seems to be a way of shoring up a paradigm whose existence, always only on the surface, requires a continual reiteration. Hence, an epistemology of the surface would have to include the dangerous lover.

Rebecca's Maxim de Winter repeats the various near-requirements of the dangerous lover. Max wears the Cain-like mark, the pained mask: "He will look lost and puzzled suddenly, all expression dying away from his dear face, a sculptured thing, formal and cold, beautiful still but lifeless" (5). Forced restlessly to traverse the world after he thinks he has murdered his first wife, Max becomes another disinherited exile. Even his marriage to the heroine can only temporally redeem him; after the revenant of his murdered wife, Mrs. Danvers, burns down his home, Max and his second wife become estranged from all society.

When the heroine first meets him, Max steps out of timeless myth. "His face was arresting, sensitive, medieval in some strange inexplicable way. . . . Could one but rob him of his English tweeds, and put him in black, with lace at his throat and wrists, he would stare down at us in our new world from a long distant past—a past where men walked cloaked at night, and stood in the shadow of old doorways, a past of narrow stairways and dim dungeons, a past of whispers in the dark, of shimmering rapier blades,

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Madwoman in the Attic which charts the ways Jane's anger and sexuality are expressed through Bertha as her double. Also, Laura Kinsdale discusses the hero as double for the heroine in contemporary romance in "The Androgynous Reader: Point of View in the Romance" in *Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women.*

of silent, exquisite courtesy" (15). Max emerges out of a Gothic past, like a glimmer out of the darkness of history. His mythic proportions create the hiddenness of his interiority; he is " . . . a man of yesterday wrapped in his secret self" (29). Dangerous love often turns time into melancholy loss, and *Rebecca* is suffused with the melancholy of time passing, "Even today, when shutting drawers and flinging wide a hotel wardrobe . . . I am aware of a sense of sadness, of a sense of loss. This has been ours, however brief the time. Though only two nights have been spent beneath a roof, yet we leave something of ourselves behind" (44). These exiled lovers must keep restlessly roving, as if they were searching for something, yet there is nothing for them to find.

In Holt's *Mistress of Mellyn* (1960)[43] Martha Leigh, a plain governess, arrives at an ancient, windswept, Gothic mansion with secret doors, chambers, peepholes, and rumors of murder, to take on her position as teacher to the young daughter of the master of the house, Connan TreMellyn.[44] Connan's wife has recently died under sinister and mysterious circumstances, and Martha becomes obsessed with finding out what happened to her, suspecting that she is still living and being held prisoner in the house by Connan, or that she was murdered by him and is buried somewhere nearby. Martha describes Connan as potently dangerous, with a menacing silence and a buried self. "He gave an impression of both strength and cruelty . . . There was sensuality in that face . . . but there was much else that was hidden" (36). She asks, "Was there a streak of sadism in his nature?" (41). Martha soon falls in love with her brooding employer,

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[43] Alice Eleanor Hibbert has written over two hundred popular romances under six pseudonyms. She is most famously known under three names; she writes "romantic suspense" under Victoria Holt, family sagas under Phillippa Carr and historical fiction under Jean Plaidy.

[44] Barbara Bowman contrasts Holt's rakish hero with an ideal father figure, and the way the heroine must accept the rake in order to become individualized from the father. See "Victoria Holt's Romances: A Structuralist Inquiry," *The Female Gothic.*

and he proposes marriage. But she is not convinced he really loves her, and she is suspicious and wary even while she accepts. His proposal itself has Gothic overtones—he "mocks," "I want to marry you because I want to keep you a prisoner in my house" (200). Martha must confront the fact that she "had fallen in love with a murderer" (211). She even makes the decision, "I would rather meet death at his hands than leave him and be forced to endure an empty life without him" (220). But like all Gothic romance, the menacing man turns into, first and foremost, a lover: Connan is not the murderer of his wife.

Connan's eroticism comes from his bleak, enigmatic brooding. In contemporary erotic historicals, the hero's depth of thought and ruminations can often be read on his face, by a "small muscle [which] worked furiously in the corner of his jaw, and his lips [which] thinned dangerously" (Jackson 104). Sometimes his features "tighten," or his eyes become shadowed, darkened, glinting. His pained expression indicates the vastness of his desolated interiority. Rorik, in Catherine Coulter's *Lord of Hawkfell Island*, expresses this profundity of somber self: "He felt as though he were dying, not of wounds valiantly gained, but from deep inside him where there was naught but emptiness and pain and regret and guilt" (208). Or in Dorothy Garlick's *Wind of Promise*, the hero sees himself as "a restless man, seeking to fill an emptiness inside him" (3). Walter Benjamin describes the sadness of the brooder, as opposed to the simple thinker:

> What fundamentally distinguishes the brooder from the thinker is that the former not only meditates a thing but also meditates his meditation of the thing. The case of the brooder is that of

> the man who has arrived at the solution of a great problem but then has forgotten it. And now he broods—not so much over the matter itself as over his past reflections on it. The brooder's thinking, therefore, bears the imprint of memory (367).

The dangerous lover does not brood about the answer, but about having lost it. Hence his brooding is about loss per se, the thinking of loss, and how time sustains it. Brooding creates the impression of a multi-chambered mind full of layered thoughts complex enough always to leave food for more brooding. The brooder is self-contained; he can entertain himself with his mind, always finding fresh scenes and activities within. If we read the word brooding in another sense, we can see the absorbed, not-quite-purposeful subject as feminized, as one who sits over his eggs until their time has come to hatch. The power of the brooder lies in the attraction of his disconsolate independence. Love, however, gives his brooding a witness, a circumscribed reason. The lover acts, caresses, kisses, in an attempt to break in on the brooding of the beloved.

In addition to the hero-as-double, the Gothic novel has influenced both the erotic historical and the Gothic romance in other ways. Gothic settings proliferate in contemporary romance, such as the ancient Scottish manor house in Haywood Smith's *Border Lord*, where the hero, a villain called the "Black Bastard," holds the heroine prisoner. Imprisonment and rape are also common elements, as we have seen with *The Flame and the Flower*. In *Sweet Savage Love*, the heroine is held captive by the hero, as well as by other villains, and she is raped many times. In *Lord of Danger*, the hero is a magician who lives in a castle. Many of Catherine Coultier's novels contain Gothic

themes and settings, with heroines often kidnapped, immured in castles, and subject to violence and villainy.

The Gothic theme of imprisonment appears in the erotic historical as an ontological state of blocked access. Most importantly, one is closed off from some fundamental aspect of subjectivity. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out that much of the tension of the Gothic comes from the experience of being denied access to a space, literal or metaphorical, and figuring out how to discover a passage between the inside and outside. This could, Sedgwick notes, be the self's own past and family history or a lover, or the free air, when the self is victim of live burial. In these two spaces—within the isolation and within the space out of reach—meaning is held apart from its true source. In *Mysteries of Udolpho* Emily, imprisoned in the castle in close proximity to the villain, pines for her lover, Valancourt, who is somewhere outside. She lives with the dangers within, while longing for knowledge about the presence of the lover without. The three primary delineations of this arrangement—what is inside, outside, and what separates them—are repeated again and again in the Gothic, while the various elements that make up the three range over various themes. This same spatialization occurs in the erotic historical (and the Gothic romance): The two selves of the hero and heroine who are, in the logic of the romance, created just for being conjoined, are impossibly separated and distanced until the end of the narrative. "They walked in silence toward the river, side by side but eternally divided" (Beverly 256). The keeping-apart of the heroine and the hero creates a thirdness that comes between. This thirdness can be many things, but its liminal status gives it a ghostliness. Like a wraith, it wanders thinly in-between two worlds of

meaning. Out of place and unwanted, it points to the sadness of ruin, desecration, lost truths.

II. The Erotic Uncanny

This thirdness, moreover, is uncanny. The erotic historical makes full use of this central tenet of the Gothic: the erotic as uncanny. Heidegger, like Freud, interests himself in the etymology of this word—*unheimlich.* Both point to the "*heim,*" or "home" at the heart, but Heidegger is primarily interested in its meaning of "unhomeliness" as in "not-at-home." Heidegger even goes so far as to write, "Being-in enters into the existential 'mode' of the 'not-at-home.' Nothing else is meant by our talk about 'uncanniness'" (Heidegger 189). Yet Heidegger's being not-at-home is directly related to his concept of *angst;* hence the anxiety and even terror of this position is also part of Heidegger's uncanny. As touched on in chapter one, Dasein feels at home in entangled absorption in the "they," which is inauthenticity. When Dasein turns away from the everyday, toward *angst*, being-toward-death, and authenticity, it feels uncanny, because it is not-at-home; it is individuated and thrown onto its own potentialities. In fact, "uncanniness is the fundamental kind of being-in-the-world" (Heidegger 277). For Dasein to be uncanny is for it to be "individualized to itself" and "absolutely unmistakable to itself" (Heidegger 256). Hence when Dasein draws closest to itself, Dasein is nearest to the most unfamiliar and strange possibility of itself (see nearness in chapter one). This definition of the uncanny can be expanded. When Dasein understands its absorption in the "they" as an evasion and tranquilization and turns away from it into a potentiality-of-being, then not only does Dasein feel a sense of being not-at-home in one's potentiality-of-being, but the "home" itself takes on an

aspect of not belonging to one because Dasein realizes the home's "publicness," its status as not "owned" by individuated Dasein. The potential for uncanniness then permeates the movement (which is itself always possible) of Dasein within both the everyday and potentiality-of-being. Face to face with its own being, in its potential, Dasein's uncanny feeling is not just a sense of being not-at-home; it is also a sense of this strangeness being itself at the heart of one's own existence, a "home" truth which has been "undisclosed," to use a Heideggerian word.

A clearer understanding of the romantic implications of Heidegger's uncanny comes from Freud's ideas on the *unheimlich.* Freud takes his idea of the uncanny further with his insight that concealment is an aspect of the work of the uncanny. Heidegger sees the uncanny merely as being "not-at-home;" he does not see concealment as an uncanny liminal, or as integral to creating the uncanny. Freud describes an uncanny feeling, a "dread and creeping horror," coming from, among other things, the revivification through an event or experience of an idea repressed or concealed in the hinter-regions of the unconscious. Freud writes, "the 'uncanny' is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (369-70). Hence the uncanny brings about a "creepiness" not only because one feels "not-at-home" in the unfamiliar and strange experience, but also because, at the heart of the strange, there is a sense of home, of a deep interiority, of a place already visited. The already-concealed which is now partially or entirely disclosed, causes the uncanny to surface as a feeling. This feeling also comes from the fact that what is dreadful is "inside" us, it "belongs" to us, individually, and we have been responsible

for both producing and concealing it. Shelley's Victor Frankenstein has this reaction upon knowing his creation: Oh God, it's mine.

Another etymological thread related to "*heim*" is "*geheim*," which also has the "home" in it but means "secret" or "concealed." As explored in chapter one, the "secret home" can be linked to the Heideggerian idea that, in an everyday way, authentic homes are "secret." This helps to unravel why the secret is such an important theme to the dangerous lover romance. The romantic heroine's potential, her "authentic," lies in the presence of love. Her "ownmost" possibility is unconcealed, disclosed meaning. Her possibility as fully present to love is the secret behind all other secrets and this is her final "home"—destiny, fate. "A cry sounded in her throat; then her legs parted and he was inside her. This was his true coming home, the only one that mattered" (Rogers 287). And another "home" scene: " . . . that bewildering notion that somehow she had found that special wondrous place; that special wondrous person who was her real home, that knowledge somehow or other Luke had reached out and touched the very core of her innermost being and because of that . . . because of him the whole of her life would be changed forever" (Jordan 155). We again see this site of undisclosing in *Border Lord.* "With that simple profession [of love], all the broken pieces of Catherine's life shaped themselves into a picture of perfect provision. Suddenly she saw how everything had worked to bring them to this wondrous moment" (Smith 369). The hero also finds his home in the beloved. As one hero thinks to himself, "he . . . had known the moment he looked at her that he was confronting his own fate" (Jordan 424). For the heroine to draw closer to her "ownmost" self she must move nearer to a dangerous, even terrifying other, who is her "home." Like Dasein, what has been

concealed, the presence of the true love, is something that has been "known" all along. Hence the undisclosing (unclothing) of this love leads to the uncanny: "A heightened sensation of portent, of standing on the edge of something vital and life changing shook her, a feeling of uncannily clear-minded perception that suddenly, here and now . . . she was facing something immensely important" (Jordan 316). And this undisclosing reveals what was already there. "There was a wonderful, exhilarating sense of release and freedom . . . in being able to cast aside her guard and acknowledge, admit, that the desire for him, which she was now allowing to express itself, had been there virtually from the first time they met. It existed even if she herself had tried to force it underground and keep it hidden away" (Jordan 328). The structure of this uncanny situates a sense of strangeness in the heart of what is one's own—the true love and final destiny in an other who appears hostile and dangerous. But, in that it discloses, the heroine also feels that it is something that has been "there" all along but that she has concealed. Instead of horror in the uncanny moment, in romance it is the titillating ache of the "Oh God, it's mine." So, in a sense, while it sometimes appears that the heroine is moving inexorably toward her fate, a mere puppet in the hands of the machinations of the hero, she is always in what is her "own." Or, in the end, he is "inside" her: For example, in *My Lady Pirate*, "She felt as though he had found a secret entrance into her belly, into her bones. She felt that he was folded inside her" (Doyle 121).

The romantic uncanny creates a narrative where in each moment an uncovering of what one already knows occurs, and then it is re-concealed. The heroine already knows she is in love with the hero, and she sees the movement of her narrative ending, while at the same time she flees and evades this destiny. The hesitancy, false starts, and

frozen impotence of uncanny proximity becomes a theme in all three of the genres under consideration here: the erotic historical, the twentieth-century Gothic romance, and the Gothic proper. A dark madness of failure often overtakes these narratives, a sense of movement's terrifying inconceivability. The Gothic proper never fully resolves this madness. Even in Radcliffe, the happy ending feels like an anti-climatic, pasted-on addition—not very relevant to the terrors of the earlier story. But the Gothic romance and the erotic historical interrupt this impotence with the final presence of the scene of union: "His mouth closed hungrily over hers in a moist, deep, endless kiss. It seemed to Vanessa that they were no longer two separate people, but one blended together by magic" (Garlock 358). The reintegration of the strange self leads to an odd looping of time, which both the reader and the heroine experience. The loop occurs because the end—union in love—is prefigured in the beginning, and all along, as it is at the same time concealed. So the end seems to be both a completion, a closure, and a return to an origin, to the beginning. The end doesn't feel like a narrative progression forward or a move backwards, but the meeting of both the arrival and the setting off.

The uncanniness of finding a stranger at the heart of what is the most familiar creates a haunting at the center of one's being. Storytelling itself contains a spectral element: characters come to life, are animated out of the darkness of nonexistence, point to an irreversible past, and then die again at the close of the narrative.[45] Narrative power moves in the shadowy realm of the revenant, the dead but still life-like and illuminated, the remainder of the real.

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[45]See Avital Ronell's *Dictations* for writing as always haunted by the master, by self-loss; Elisabeth Bronfen's *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* where she links storytelling with death, and the reader with a deathlike state; David Punter in *Spectral Readings: Towards a Gothic Geography* where he argues that "all writing is 'haunted' by the shapes of all that it is not"; and Lucie J. Armitt's "Ghosts and Hauntings in the Victorian Novel."

Making explicit the ghostliness of narrative, the Gothic novel tells the story of those things that partake of or fall into relation to death—silence, secrets, imprisonment, and remorse. We are already aware of the importance of the secret to the erotic historical: love itself, and its relation to a past, a history, creates a constellation of secret communications. Silences maintained on the most important matters, hidden facts that would save the lives of many, unfold the plot of Gothic novels as well as historical romances. The hero holds his subjectivity secret. Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) revolves around an impenetrable secret which is so unspeakable, it throws the speaker who tries to utter it into fits, or even causes death. The theme of wholesale tragedy springs readily from the impossibility of communicating one's inner meaning: "The very thirst of my body seemed to vanish in this fiery thirst of the soul for communication, where all communication was unutterable, impossible, hopeless . . . The secret of silence is the only secret" (Maturin 151). The blocked speech of the Gothic novel continues in the dangerous lover narrative: lovers who cannot speak their "inner meaning"—their love for the other—hold their essence in abeyance until the final transcendence of the narrative.

Melmoth, the Cain-like "disinherited child of nature" (245), sells his soul to the devil who curses him to wander the world forever, trying to ruin others' souls. Like later dangerous lovers, he becomes "the demon of superhuman misanthropy" (233). His "boundless aspiration after forbidden knowledge" (380) leads to the Faustian bargain which seals his fall from grace: "I hate all things that live—all things that are dead—I am myself hated and hateful" (244). Yet he loves. Out of the ceaseless torment of a ruined life comes the glimmer of hope: atonement by a true love. He meets the innocent and

beautiful Isadora, secretly visits her at night, and finally convinces her to participate in a clandestine marriage. Yet he inexplicably fails at the crucial moment. In his attempted corruption of another "pure" woman, Immalee, he almost discovers the possibility of "the ineffable and forbidden secret of his destiny" (238). His destiny, as we already know although we are never told, is the possibility of grace through the beloved. But once again he fails; she leaves him just at the ripening moment. His only absolution lies in love, but this can never be. As in the erotic historical, the heroine's love for the hero dooms her to be like him. "'Seek all that is terrible in nature for your companions and your lover!—woo them to burn and blast you—perish in their fierce embrace, and you will be happier, far happier, than if you lived in mine! Lived!—Oh, who can be mine and live! . . . If you will be mine, it must be amid a scene like this for ever—amid fire and darkness—amid hatred and despair—amid—' and his voice swelling to a demoniac shriek of rage and horror, and his arms extended, as if to grapple with the fearful objects of some imaginary struggle . . ." (247). The frozen impotent fury of the dangerous lover will be melted in later love narratives; the Gothic gives only an approach to the interruption, never the actual breaking through.

The obscure flash of meaning, the secret affinity, important both to the Gothic and the dangerous lover romance, draw the lover to her beloved. We can liken fragmented, obscured meaning and the disjointed piecing together of narrative to Benjamin's envisioning of historicity, or ur-history (*Urgeschichte*). He sees historicity not as a series of statements about major events and famous people but rather a collection of secret affinities discoverable only by indirect means and chance occurrences. Meaning comes not through the creation of continuity, teleology, and connective narrativity, but rather

through the side-by-sideness of fragments, the flash of the image.[46] The dangerous lover's subjectivity, his narrativity, or history, similarly shatters into a handful of unexplained pieces like the curiosities in the cabinet of the collector. To communicate with this bundle of meanings, the lover of the dangerous beloved must discover secret affinities, dream-like understandings that are never fully explained. Thus might she create an obscure dialogue, an amatory conversation. This dialogue, like Benjamin's history, occurs in flashes, maintaining an obscure stasis or a dark certainty. Knowledge manifests itself in hiddenness here; knowledge does not occur in the realm of enlightenment. And this knowledge, which also obscures knowledge, is a kind of sight or an in-sight (a sight inside) which brings an understanding of subterranean affinities. The singularity of the hero and heroine's love and the reasons for their coming together are something only they can know. The simple characterization and plots of many important dangerous lover romances express the sense that there need be no drawn-out explanation for love; in fact, it can never be explained. This silent meaning describes the absolute singularity of love and points to its seeming fatefulness, its unexplainable, unhistorical presentness. Here it is; it appears out of darkness, carrying with it always this darkness. Silence keeps the lovers both joined and standing in a nomadic tandem to the rest of the social order, always on the outside of what they are near. Their secret joining happens in a darkness that blinds, subsumes.[47] Whispering, mumbled communications, as stated in the last chapter, are the ways the dangerous lover inscribes meaning. Like the effaced

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[46] For a more complete discussion of Benjamin's idea of non-linear history, see Howard Eiland in his forward to the *Arcades Project*.

[47] Benjamin enigmatically writes, "That which mourns feels itself thoroughly known by the unknowable" (*Selected Writings* I, 73).

manuscripts in *Melmoth the Wanderer*, where the essence of the story has decayed, been ripped off, or smudged, the dangerous lover's meaning never quite arrives.

III. Love as Mourning

Because of their beginnings in the Gothic proper, the erotic historical and the Gothic romance are rooted in a relation to death, to loss, to mourning. The dangerous lover often takes the figure of the mourner; for him, consciousness itself can become mourning, the lamenting of a bitter present, and the obsession with lost bliss. Sad wastedness and a pale longing become erotic. His self is defined by what he doesn't have, and his melancholy guarantees the constant reopening of his desires.[48] The heavy, hanging head, the dark furrowed brow express a disconsolate interiority, a constant longing for already-lost love. As Proust remarks, the only real paradise is the one we have lost.

In the interstice of the Gothic and the erotic historical lies the seminal romance on death's linkage with love—*Wuthering Heights*. If we say that *Wuthering Heights* tells the story of a particular kind of love—one full of passionate mourning—then the very narrative structure takes on the black garb of this love.[49] Because the story starts after Catherine has already died, their love narrative begins doomed. The whole story moves forward toward this inexorable end which has already occurred. The dying of the other and the possibility of love's death suffuse the book, but it is not the silence of death that resounds, but the noisiness of the struggle against pre-ordained fate, as befits a dangerous lover. In the first scene between the lovers—a bedroom one—the dead

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[48] Barthes writes of love as mourning for the other: "The true act of mourning is not to suffer from the loss of the loved object; it is to discern one day, on the skin of the relationship a certain tiny stain, appearing there as the symptom of a certain death" (108).

[49] Emily Brontë's poetry contains all these themes as well—love as mourning, the melancholy dangerous lover, the beloved who is imprisoned and then dies.

Catherine haunts the living Heathcliff, and the dreams of the dead bring on all the wretched pains of living when the beloved other is unreachable. When Heathcliff hears of Lockwood's dream of the child-Catherine trying to come in out of the cold, he expresses his violent longing to cross into that place where Catherine is, to bridge the gap between the living and the dead. "He got up on to the bed, and wrenched open the lattice, bursting, as he pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears. 'Come in! Come in!' he sobbed. 'Cathy, do come. Oh, do—*once* more! Oh! My heart's darling! Hear me *this* time, Catherine, at last!'" (27). Catherine has, in a sense, always been dead. The child-ghost who visits Lockwood's dreams in the beginning of the book states that she has "been a waif for twenty years" (21). This would mean she dies as a child, when she is still together with Heathcliff, running wild on the moors. This haunting waif embodies their love as always existing on the outside—of living, of substantiality, of time and place. Their love dies yet always persists. After her death, Catherine's self seems to flit, shadow-like, all around Heathcliff. "I cannot look down to this floor, but her features are shaped on the flags! In every cloud, in every tree—filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object, by day I am surrounded with her image!" (278). Not only is Heathcliff's very life force, Catherine, as insubstantial as the merest breeze but she also resides within him, as Steve Vine asserts: "Heathcliff encrypts a lost life" (138). Vine utilizes Abraham and Torok's theories on encryptment—the entombing of a lost other within the subject when that subject refuses to mourn, or let go, of the dead other. In his refusal to mourn, Heathcliff becomes Catherine's tomb. Catherine takes on a whole life within this tomb—a life which attempts to draw Heathcliff inside himself, which would mean death for him. The

uncanny core of Heathcliff's subjectivity is Catherine as the object just out of reach. But Catherine also encrypts Heathcliff when she finds the actual, living Heathcliff tormenting and unfamiliar. She wants the child-Heathcliff back, the one who was hers—her own love. Close to her death, during a fit of anger at him, she says in his presence: "That is not *my* Heathcliff. I shall love mine yet; and take him with me: he's in my soul" (138). Catherine refuses to mourn the Heathcliff who is not her own ("*my* Heathcliff"), now irretrievably lost, and this "dead" self enters into Catherine as a subject. Thus the secret self incorporates the desired other—entombs the beloved in order to keep it for his or her selfish self. Each is haunted by the other—making each ghostly to him or herself.

Mourning for the beloved is a part of love; in fact, Catherine and Heathcliff's narrative in *Wuthering Heights* is in love with death. Mournful love searches for a revenant or any scrap or remainder of the lost beloved. In *Wuthering Heights*, love adheres to scraps, parings, or cast-offs. Heathcliff, in saying goodbye to Catherine just after her death, removes Edgar Linton's pale hair from her locket and replaces it with his own heavy black crop. Heathcliff's hair enshrines his body in its most mysterious state: stillness. Here love resides in the decay of the body's ornaments, in its failure, in its always-lostness. The body-in-fragments, and in the most fragmentary state—death—comes to represent the possibility of love for Catherine and Heathcliff.[50] That is, it is only in fragments or specters that their love can be, if ever, fulfilled. Throughout the story, they describe the way parts of themselves reside in the beloved other. Catherine famously exclaims of Heathcliff, "'He is more myself than I am'"

[50] A writer for the nineteenth-century magazine, *Godey's Lady's Book* comments that hair is "at once the most delicate and lasting of our materials and survives us like love." "Hair Ornaments," *Godey's Lady's Book* 2X (1860): 187.

(68). Upon Catherine's death, Heathcliff calls out in grief: "'I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!'" (144). After her death, he doesn't so much lament that she has gone, but rather that he can no longer locate her. "'Where is she? Not *there*—not in heaven—not perished—where?" (144). He needs only to find where she now resides. Death does not present a barrier to their love, but comes to constitute its very being.

This overarching narrative structure of death can, on a less literal level, be seen in all dangerous lover romances and even, Peter Brooks would argue, is a structure of narrativity itself. As mentioned earlier in relation to the uncanny, the loop in time, or the retrograde narrativity of the dangerous lover formula, is such that the whole of the story functions in relation to the ending; all of the narrative "happens" because of, or in light of, the end. Heidegger argues that ontology itself is structured in this way. Dasein is always a "being-not-yet," or a relation to a potential. Dasein's fundamental structure consists of its quality of being "ahead-of-itself." Dasein always relates itself to the possibilities that it will become; in this sense, Dasein is always beyond itself, as it already is. "The not-yet is already included in its own being, by no means as an arbitrary determination, but as a constituent . . . Dasein is always already its not-yet as long as it is" (Heidegger 244).[51] As soon as there is nothing more "missing," then Dasein will cease to be. Fynsk points out that it is in the violent encounter with the other that Dasein is "torn" in the direction of authenticity. And this encounter with the other leads Dasein to its finitude. The other provides "the intervention necessary for drawing Dasein out of its subjection to the they and drawing it before its death" (48-9). The dangerous lover appears here as this violent push toward the end—the

[51] "Das Noch-nicht ist schon in ihr eigenes Sein einbezogen und das keineswegs als beliebige Bestimmung, sondern als Konstitutivum. Entsprechend ist auch das Dasein, solange es ist, je schon sein Noch-nicht."

end of the story, the transcendence of love. The romance also runs "ahead-of-itself"—each moment relates to the immanence of love, the death of the narrative. Each moment moves beyond itself, always a "not-yet" but also always in anticipation of ending. The catching up that happens in the end equals a kind of death, with nothing more "missing." "Aheadness" serves as an explanation for the hesitant, confused meaning of the sexual encounters in the erotic historical. Because an erotic scene, or any scene, is always ahead-of-itself, it projects itself forward; it runs ahead to its end. But the paradox here is the very presentness of an erotic scene, where all meaning appears complete in the moment, yet each of these moments is always flavored by the end.

The immanence of love figures, in some sense, a kind of death, as this moment of full meaning happens once, briefly, and it always means the end of the romance novel. The romance exhausts itself in plenitude. A sense of a poignant flurry of activity, a speeding toward the final consumption, runs throughout the narrative. Often a speedy erotic pushes the narrative; there is never enough time to have all of the erotic feelings the hero and heroine might. "She wanted to have the time to do her own share of gazing . . . but she couldn't. Quit simply, they didn't have the time. She didn't have the time and the feeling that engulfed her as she saw that he was ready for her turned the whole of her insides to liquid heat" (Jordan 165). They don't have time because the end of the narrative nears, and they must fit in, through intensification, all the love and sex they can. Each scene or potential, secret togetherness is consumed by its relation to the end. The moments of the romance saturated by time's fleetingness expose the romance's addiction to the other. Avital Ronell discusses the way that addiction creates a temporal inertia when the subject is caught up in only what is immediately available, hence foreclosing futurity. The

Heideggerian "urge," similar to addiction, Ronell points out, "outruns" the subject's current state of understanding, becoming a submission to an experience of, for example, fascination. Both addiction and urge, however, rush past death's marker, creating little (and false) infinities along the way.[52]

In his comprehensive theory of the history of the novel, Lukacs states that "we might almost say that the entire inner action of the novel is nothing but a struggle against the power of time" (122). The consumption of each moment explains why fire and burning desire appear as important symbols to romance. Dorchester Publishers even has a romance series called "Secret Fires." An example of how fire functions in one scene: "Wrapping her arms around his neck, she returned his kiss. Fires burned within her, consuming flames that had been a secret even from her" (Rogers 119). Life is being consumed, used up, by love. "She responded with all the ardor he could have wished for. She burned the cares of the day from him, the troubles of the past, the worries about what tomorrow might hold" (Rogers 288). The *petit mort*, the little death of the orgasm, brings sex into the realm of danger. Orgasm leads to the possibility of self-dissolution in ecstasy and sublimity. The secret fire of love will leave nothing but the end of the story, the end of our hero and heroine.

The poignancy of love in romance comes from the sense that, once the full presence of love arrives, the characters will be gone, die to their narrative, because there is nothing left to be said. Love becomes a fantasy of dying, a liebestod. Barthes writes that love is a "death liberated from dying" (12). The classic love story is, of course, *Romeo and Juliet*. Not only do both the lovers die in the end, for love, but they are doomed as soon as they fall in love, and the play is a slow movement toward death—a play of mourning. The death is their love: love equals death. Nancy writes, "Love offers finitude in its truth; it is finitude's

[52] In Ronell's *Crack Wars*, see especially pages 40-45.

dazzling presentation" (*Inoperative Community* 99). The liebestod is a theme popular with Keats, especially in "Ode to a Nightingale." Wagner's equation of love equals death in *The Flying Dutchman* will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Often a near-death experience finally brings full confessions or realizations of love. Death as a possibility illuminates the fragility and mortality of the beloved and the ache of bodily existence. Often the dangerous lover plot gives the hero license to kill the heroine. In *Lord of Hawkfell Island*, Rorik Haraldsson seeks vengeance for the brutal murder of his family by Einar. He kidnaps Einar's half-sister, Mirana. He cruelly mistreats her, even trying to kill her. She also attempts to murder him. In *Lord of Danger*, Alys thinks to herself: "She would be no match for him if it came to a battle . . . He would be the death of her, perhaps" (23). "He could kill this tender young girl who was so very great a threat to him" (209). In the end of *Lord of Danger*, at the final sexual climax, Alys, in her love, feels "lost in a sudden darkness that felt like death" (286).

Wind of Promise explicitly deals with the metaphor of the movement of love as "dying." The hero, Kain Debolt, thinks he is dying of stomach cancer from the time he first meets the heroine, up to the very end. The more he falls in love with her, the more he feels the pain of dying. The climax of the book comes when he finds out he will not die—that he does not have stomach cancer, only an ulcer—and hence he is free to be fully present in his love, and in Vanessa's love.

The link between death and love leads to another manifestation of Heideggerian nearness, touched on previously, the idea of an authentic being of Dasein as a "being-toward-death." Heidegger argues, radically, that Dasein can only be understood by understanding first its end. Even the beginning of Dasein must be understood by leading

back to it from the end. This convoluted ontology clearly allegorizes the narrativity of the dangerous lover formula, and perhaps any narrativity.

Everyday or inauthentic being-toward-death is a covering over of the certainty of death, concealing "that it is possible in every moment" (Heidegger 258). As Heidegger explains, "As soon as a human being is born, he is old enough to die right away" (Heidegger 245).[53] With authentic being-toward-death, death is understood as always a possibility, an indefinite certainty; Dasein's authenticity toward death is a "holding for true"—is letting this conviction (of the certainty of death) overcome one. This overcoming is a dwelling with the fact that death could come at any moment, which leads to finding Dasein as a whole, as an individuated whole. An authentic being-toward-death does not evade death but makes it Dasein's own as a possibility. A being-toward this possibility does not relate to something actual, but rather it exists "toward" an unknown possibility, which is nevertheless not to be bypassed and belongs uniquely to each Dasein. Hence existence is at each moment a living with death, a living ready to die, a living always "running ahead" to the end. The structure of this "running ahead" is a way that Dasein is face-to-face with its own self. Dasein is then free to relate to itself as finite. In the shadow of existence's end (death), in the impossibility of existence, Dasein's possibility opens up. Living in the face of death gives Dasein its freedom of possibility.[54]

Heidegger's ideas on being-toward-death are allegories for the narrative structure of the dangerous lover formula's own being-toward-an-end. As soon as a romantic heroine is born, she is old enough to die (fall in love) right away.[55] The series of failures that hold off

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[53] "Sobald ein Mensch zum Leben kommt, sogleich ist er alt genug zu sterben."

[54] We can see Heideggerian proximity here again: "Thus Dasein proceeds in two directions at once—approaching the source of its being as it draws away from it toward its death" (Fynsk 51).

[55] See Fynsk who discusses the way the other becomes the source of one's own nullity. Especially p. 49.

"dying" are required to make the full presence of love possible. It is out of the continual failure of presence, or the impossibility of existence, that the possibility will come about.[56] The certainty of love (death) often overcomes the heroine; it is an idea "held for true" especially when most evaded, flown from. Every moment of the romance "runs ahead" to the immanence of love at the end. The melancholy ache of dangerous love consists in impossibility illuminating possibility, which gives it its measurelessness. From *The Loner*: "Her love was so vast, all of Texas could not contain it. It leapt into the sky and circled the moon" (Rogers 268). And love, while also being finite, a circumscribable fatality, does lead to a measurelessness at the heart of failure and death. Its measurelessness moves vertically, contained in the moment's intensification and excessiveness, which speeds toward the end. Amorous time is a minute infinity in a moment of loving.

There is a clear kinship between Peter Brooks' reading of the relation between narrative and death and Heidegger's concept of an ontological narrativity. Brooks, reading *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, discusses the implicit narrativity in Freud's theories of desire. Brooks places narrative desire, and the desire for narrative, in the realm of Freud's famous statement, "the aim of all life is death" (quoted in Brooks 102). The drive to read a plot, Brooks argues, is a death drive, an instinct for an end. Yet the pleasure principle, while desiring the final discharge as well, also postpones the end with various kinds of foreplay, detours, and tensions which will, for awhile, hold back the end, or death. Freud's Eros and Thanatos color narrativity with desire and death, and make the reading of a novel similar to a sexual experience, with the end a *petit mort*.

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[56] Barthes calls this "languor": "Desire for the absent being and desire for the present being: languor superimposes the two desires, putting absence within presence. Whence a state of contradiction: this is the 'gentle fire'" (156).

The eternity of romance comes in the redemption at the end, the ecstatic, erotic closure; the epiphanic ending holds all meaning immanent. The perfect union has been created, and, in some sense, the end of a romance is the end of all need for romance. Everything arrives solved, beautiful, and complete; everything will be happy from now on. Yet this apparent closure is only apparent; this perfection immediately breaks down into a repetition. The end of the romance leads to the beginning of a new one, which is the meaning of formulaic genre—that it can be repeated, replicated, again and again. Romance teaches us that love, like philosophy and thinking itself, is never completed. Each declaration of "I love you" is finite and utterly singular, yet in its abundance of meaning, it means both everything and nothing. To say "I love you" points to a singular place and time, with a unique and always changing self that speaks, an "I," and a "you" whose status is always uncertain. In this sense, its meaning is so fleeting; we might say that we can never agree on a meaning for this utterance. Yet, everyone knows what love means; to love is, as Nancy writes, to exist as such: to think, to be, to philosophize. The "I love you" is what can be repeated, perhaps must be repeated. "Love in its singularity, when it is grasped absolutely, is itself perhaps nothing but the indefinite abundance of all possible loves, and an abandonment to their dissemination, indeed to the disorder of these explosions" (Nancy 83). The "I love you" points to "the abundance of all possible loves." The prodigiousness of the "I love you" is that, while it ends a particular love story, it also stretches beyond it, indicating a future "I love you." Nancy names love as ". . . always the furthest movement of a completion" (92). It is not a completion, only a movement of one, a finality opening out to a series of other finalities.

IV. Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott

To finish this chapter and take us into the next one, two more pieces of this history need to be put in place: Austen and Scott. While Austen creates her own version of the conflation of the Gothic enemy and lover, her characters and their conversations are also clearly in dialogue with Byronism. Austen's importance to the contemporary romance has been firmly established by such theorists as Tania Modleski, Carol Thurston and Pamela Regis. Scott's novels contain many Gothic elements, and Byron was greatly influenced by Scott, as Scott was also affected by Byron's work. The Brontës also loved Scott and early prototypes for Rochester and Heathcliff can be found in Scott's dark heroes.

Sense and Sensibility (1811) is a seduction narrative, although the seduction is abandoned when only partially achieved. Willoughby takes the role of rake, living beyond his means, pleasuring himself with fine clothing, blood horses, and drink, recklessly playing with Marianne's affections and then betraying her. Yet Willoughby does not have the hidden demeanor or the dark interior of a dangerous lover; in fact he is generally an open, affectionate man, who has simply gone wrong, as Elinor thinks: her "thoughts were silently fixed on the irreparable injury which too early an independence and its consequent habits of idleness, dissipation, and luxury, had made in [his] mind, [his] character, [his] happiness . . . the world has made him extravagant and vain. Extravagance and vanity had made him coldhearted and selfish" (287). Largely redeemed in the end, at least in the eyes of Elinor, Willoughby does not quite fit into the reformed rake formula because his power as a driver of the narrative scatters in his

mercenary marriage, taking him largely outside the lives of the characters central to the book. *Sense and Sensibility* falls into the didactic category of romance, while the Gothic romance is generally an amorous type. In the Gothic romance guilt only increases the hero's magnetism. For instance, the discovery that Max murders his first wife only makes him more attractive to the heroine. Willoughby, never so villainous, is punished when he doesn't get Marianne and is doomed in the end to feel his loss sharply.

In *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) Darcy, on the other hand, stands as a seminal influence on the dangerous lover figure in contemporary mass-market romances.[57] Darcy begins the narrative as powerfully aloof, the rich misanthrope who stands apart, sneering at the vanity and silly folly of those around him. Darcy is proud, a snob in fact, and the plot's movement is driven by the need to humble Darcy, so that he will realize the worth of the middle-class Elizabeth. While Darcy's only violence is in his reserve, his resentfulness, on some level he becomes a rake who must be reformed. This drawing-room Cinderella story, like *Jane Eyre* and *Pamela*, is an important point of origin for the "rags to riches" theme in mass-market romance. The dangerous lover's redemption lies also in love overpowering considerations of class. Yet clearly class *does* matter to the heroine, because an important part of the story—often a fantasy of romance and we can see this in the twentieth century with *Rebecca*—is to have the man, his love, and also share in his power, meaning his capital.

Other signs of the dangerous lover in Austen cluster around Captain Benwick in *Persuasion* (1818), who is proud of his "melancholy air" and mourns for his dead fiancée. He reads Byron's "The Bride of Abydos" and "The Giaour," and identifies with their heroes closely: "he showed himself so intimately acquainted with . . . all the

[57] For further discussion of links between *Pride and Prejudice* and contemporary romance, see Modleski.

impassioned descriptions of hopeless agony . . . he repeated, with such tremulous feeling, the various lines which imagined a broken heart, or a mind destroyed by wretchedness" (100). But Benwick's poetical, aesthetic melancholy is not taken seriously, becoming only a weakness of disposition. With Benwick and *Northanger Abbey*, Austen pokes fun at the passions of the Gothic hero/villain.

One of Scott's important contributions to the dangerous lover narrative is his strong sense of the nostalgia of love and its connection to a great past, now irrevocably lost. Important to later historical fiction, Scott's historical romances express the secret reaches of the vast, mysterious, mythical past, and its ancient magic and folklore. Scott made history itself the adventure of the individual in a world obscured by the depths of time. His characters themselves, including his dangerous heroes, become mythical. In Scott's *The Bride of Lammermore* (1819), Scottish myth creates the doom-destined hero, whose love and life are fated to end horribly from the very start. The movement of the story has the complex narrativity of a recounting of events about lovers who are, in some sense, already dead, both because the narrator tells us from the beginning of their imminent fate, but also because myth has already accounted for their lives and their dreadful end. The house and name of Ravenswood is cursed to decay, and the current master lives in poverty. The narrative begins with Ravenswood's melancholy brooding: "But its space was peopled by phantoms which the imagination of the young heir [Ravenswood] conjured up before him—the tarnished honor and degraded fortunes of his house, the destruction of his own hopes, and the triumph of that family by whom they had been ruined. To a mind naturally of a gloomy cast here was ample room for meditatio." (22). An ancient legend, obscured and garbled by temporal distance, tells of the death of

the last of the Ravenswood race. His death is linked by legend to the death of his beloved, who will die for her love for him. The tragedy of the myth begins its inexorable course when Edgar Ravenswood meets Lucy Ashton, the daughter of his sworn enemy, at a fountain known by legend to be fatal to the Ravenswood family. Lucy Ashton falls in love with the hero largely because of the pain inscribed on his brow: "Some sweet sorrow, or the brooding spirit of some moody passion, had quenched the light and ingenuous vivacity . . . and it was not easy to gaze on the stranger without a secret impression either of pity or awe" (45). Our lovers appear ghostly from the start, and the Byronic Master of Ravenswood, "with dark and sullen brow," (21) has his gloomy death written all over his countenance. Ravenswood does not develop into a rounded character; his countenance in some sense *is* his character. Ravenswood's gloominess is never cast off, the weight of myth and superstition hound him to his tragic end.

While Ravenswood's passion and willfulness give him a powerful mein and deportment, his actions only pull him deeper and deeper into his foretold doom. Many of Scott's heroes appear very modern in their passivity and their languishing attitude toward the tragedy of fate. Alexander Welsh defines two kinds of heroes in Scott—the passive and the dark one. The passive hero, such as Nigel in *The Fortunes of Nigel*, finds himself "a victim of events": "whatever of good or bad has befallen me, hath arisen out of the agency of others, not from my own" (quoted in Welsh 32). Ravenswood, although passionate, takes very little decided action against his fate. He does initially save the heroine from death, but this brings about their love, which begins the legend that will end in death. He blusters into the scene at the climax of the book, when Lucy is being forced to marry another, and threatens violence, but his actions only serve to foreground his

inability to counter his already-written story. Ravenswood's passionate defeat, his feeling of lostness in the hands of a harsh world, point forward to the hero of the erotic historical.

Scott's "dark" hero, as Welsh defines him, usually moves outside the law; "he acts with deep feeling, and his intentions are 'good,' though fierce and mistaken" (59). George Staunton of *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (1818) is just such a figure. While Staunton comes of very good family—eventually he becomes Sir Staunton—in his youth he leaves his home, rebels against his religious father, and becomes a smuggler, a robber, and a vigilante. He seduces and impregnates two women, one who goes mad after her mother murders her child, and the other who is almost hanged for the apparent death of her child. He has the vices of many dangerous heroes, as we shall particularly see in chapter four: "He was so well acquainted with the turf, the gaming-table, the cock-pit, and every worse rendezvous of folly and dissipation, that his mother's fortune was spent before he was twenty-one, and he was soon in debt and distress" (358). Yet there is something about his very willfulness, his passion, and the depths of his despair that make him romantic. Staunton's manner is "daring and unrestrained," his carriage "bold and somewhat superfluous" (111). He is described by Butler, the clergyman:

> The fiery eye, the abrupt demeanor, the occasionally harsh,
> yet studiously subdued tone of voice,—the features, handsome,
> but now clouded with pride, now disturbed by suspicion, now
> inflamed by passion—the dark hazel eyes which he sometimes
> shaded with his cap, as if he were averse to have them seen
> while they were occupied with keenly observing the motions

> and bearings of others—those eyes that were now turbid with melancholy, now gleaming with scorn, and now sparkling with fury—was it the passions of a mere mortal they expressed, or the emotions of a fiend, who seeks, and seeks in vain, to conceal his fiendish designs under the borrowed mask of manly beauty? The whole partook of the mein, language, and port of the ruined archangel. (115)

His show of passion is so extreme he appears to be a Lucifer or some kind of non-human demon. His remorse for past deeds consumes him: "Think what it is, to rush uncalled unto the presence of an offended Deity, your heart fermenting with evil passions, your hand hot from the steel you have been urging, with your best skill and malice, against the breast of a fellow-creature. Or, suppose yourself the scarce less wretched survivor, with the guilt of Cain, the first murderer, in your heart, with his stamp upon your brow" (113). To see Staunton as a Cain-like figure is to disclose his kinship with the ever-wandering Byronic hero, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The hero of the erotic historical also carries the burden of restless wandering, of depthless passions that remained unslaked until the heroine appears. Yet Staunton does marry his beloved and he is reconciled to his father and hence his fortune, but instead of being redeemed, soothed, and happy with his lot, he still manages to pine. His "gloomy thoughts make him terrible to himself and others" (475) and the compulsion to hide his passions in order to maintain his position in society lead him to "consume his health, destroy his temper, and render him at once an object of dread and compassion" (521). Staunton finds no quietude on this earth.

In Scott's *The Pirate* (1822), one of his most Gothic novels, love reaches into the obscure depth of time, becomes material in dangerous cliffs, the uncontrollable storm, the wind-foamed sea. The dark sublime here bounds subjectivity by nature's ravenous dangers, and an ineffable destiny.

> Tis not alone the scene; the man, Anselmo,
> The man finds sympathies in these wild wastes
> And roughly tumbling seas, which fairer views
> And smoother waves deny him. (Scott 22)

The Pirate is a novel-length version of Byron's "The Corsair." Scott quotes from Byron's poem to describe his corsair, Captain Cleveland, one of Welsh's dark heroes. Cleveland has a "spirit so unsettled and stormy, whose life has hitherto been led in scenes of death and peril" (251). Like a true dangerous lover, his name is "as terrible as a tornado" (276) and his face has become an "iron mask." Not long after Cleveland washes up on the shores of Zetland, the rocky, wind and sea-tossed setting of the novel, he searches for expiation for his violent, outlawed life, so that he may be redeemed and marry his beloved, Minna. Like a Byronic hero, Cleveland ultimately fails to be united with his beloved, but he does give up his life of rape and pillage and becomes a worthy soldier, fighting for his country. *The Pirate* recounts an erotic scene which later becomes dear to the erotic historical: the story of the pirate who captures the heroine and makes her his love slave (although Scott only alludes to the chance of Minna taking this role).[58]

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[58] There are hundreds of Pirate erotic historicals; a few are Connie Mason's *Pirate* (New York: Leisure 1998), Sabrina Jeffries' *The Pirate Lord* (New York: Avon, 1998), and Jayne Ann Krentz's *The Pirate* (New York: Harlequin, 1990). Yvonne Annette Jocks argues that the erotics of piracy date back to the Greek romance.

As we will see in the next chapter, Byronism and its infinite longings, its tormented sense of homelessness come out of Scott, among other places, and particularly Scott's ideals of nostalgia and the vast sweep of myth and the past. Scott's dangerous lovers were dark rovers who hid secret crimes, who couldn't find a spiritual home on this earth, who were doomed before their story ever started.

Chapter Three
Love as Homesickness: Longing for a Transcendental Home in Byron and the Brontës (1811-1847)

> We have eaten from the tree of knowledge. Now paradise is bolted shut, and the angel stands behind us. We must journey around the world and see whether perhaps it is open again somewhere on the yonder side.
>
> -Heinrich von Kleist

In his essay on the uncanny, Freud mentions briefly what he calls a humorous saying: "Love is homesickness" (399). He goes on to connect this to homesickness for the mother's womb, which manifests itself in the uncanniness of the female genitalia. In this essay I want to look past the depth of Freud's reading of this expression, and see its obvious meaning—the nostalgia of falling in love. Nostalgia comes from the Greek "nostos" for "return home" and "algia" for pain. The OED defines it as "a form of melancholia caused by prolonged absence from one's home or country or a severe homesickness." I see another interpretation of the etymology of this word, however, which implies that the nostalgia or sickness comes from a return home, a return to a home that is changed from the passing of time—that is no longer the ideal home of memory. Love, then, opens the doors of memory, of childhood familiarities and happiness; hence love accesses the desire to go back to a past that, because closed by time, resides in the rosy light of a lost paradise. Love leads to homesickness because its ideal quality

illuminates the impossibility of other ideals, those tied to the belongingness of the past—the childhood haunts, the home country.[59]

Yet another way I read this expression turns on understanding the amorous attraction of one who is homeless; it elucidates the tendency to fall in love with the pathologically homesick. The eroticism of homesickness settles around the desire for one who restlessly pines, who looks always for something, who, in a word, desires. If we take this expression at "face value" then, and keep to the surface of its meaning, we step into the realm where love partakes of the outside, where love describes a desire to be with, or to be oneself, an outsider. And the home stands as an important trope for many love narratives, where homesickness becomes both literal and figural with the fugitive, melancholy wayfarer, who is both loved and loves under the sign of his homesickness. The legacy of Byronism in fiction includes linked concepts of existence and love that are based upon an erotics of homesickness. The question presses: Why does the mark of Cain become a mark of the beloved?

[59] On the lover's absence, Barthes writes, "The other is in a condition of perpetual departure, of journeying; the other is, by vocation, migrant, fugitive . . ." (13).

I. The Erotic Wanderer

The figure of the tortured hero created by Byron stands as an early articulation for theories central to Modernism, such as Georges Lukacs's theory of the transcendentally homeless—the lack of and need for a home wherein a belief in a true and fixed meaning can be housed, such as God or Nature. Byron's figure of the traveler stands also as a prototype for such influential theories of subjectivity as the world-weary, world-traveled, sophisticated Aesthete of Oscar Wilde and the philosophers of the late Victorian journal *The Yellow Book*, whose jaded palates seek ever-newer scenes to whet their appetites. Related also to the flâneur in Proust, Baudelaire, and Benjamin, Childe Harold's voyages mark him as a connoisseur of human nature, an idler whose work is to brood.

Beginning with Childe Harold's poetical voyage around the world, the Byronic figure eroticizes the voyager so important to the imagination of Western culture,[60] linking him to a tradition that stretches back to Odysseus as the lost traveler, looking for his homeland.[61] The mythic *liebestod* lover, Shakespeare's Romeo, whose name means "roamer," or "wanderer," marks the tie between love and travel. *Romeo and Juliet*, riddled with metaphors of pilgrimage and sea voyaging, pictures love-sickness leading to a melancholy end. Love's destiny, fated from the start, encompasses an itinerary that travels the wide ocean. Romeo versifies to Juliet:

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[60] See Thorslev's book on the Byronic hero and his discussion of how Byron comes out of the tradition of the exiled wanderer.

[61] Odysseus in *The Odyssey*:

> I long for home, long for the sight of home.
> If any god has marked me out again
> For shipwreck, my tough heart can undergo it.
> What hardship have I not long since endured
> At sea, in battle! Let the trial come.

More contemporary to Byron, the wanderer is part of the Romantic tradition of the quest-poem, such as Shelley's Alastor, and Keats' Endymion.

I am no pilot, yet wert thou as far,

As that vast shore wash'd with the farthest sea,

I should adventure for such merchandise. (II.II.87-89)

The Byronic hero, particularly the Giaour and Childe Harold roams disenchanted and exiled; he has no place in the domesticity of society.

Different than the flâneur and the Aesthete, however, Childe Harold circles the earth in passionate torment, a ruined vagabond. Doomed to lorn voyaging, he searches, always failing, to be *placed*, comfortable, situated in a context that fits. Not just aloof, the Byronic Hero often, like the Giaour and the Corsair, is a criminal, an outlaw who is not only self-exiled, but actively, hatefully works against society, as a murderous pirate or a vengeful lover. Outside the law of society, also cast out of a heaven or paradise, he moves with the likes of Lucifer, Cain, the Wandering Jew and the Flying Dutchman, all popular figures in numerous Gothic novels, as well as other Romantic poetry.[62] The Wandering Jew, Ahasuerus from medieval legend, was an infidel who cursed Christ at the crucifixion. For this heresy, he was made to wander the earth, until the Second Coming, seeking death and peace. Byron's Manfred and the Giaour feel they have profoundly sinned, it doesn't matter how or why, and they are cursed with the pains of remorse, not only for their crimes but also for their self-inflicted homelessness.[63] Redemption for these characters will come only with death, unless forgetfulness or madness are possibilities. Childe Harold compares himself to the Wandering Jew: "It is that settled, ceaseless gloom / The fabled Hebrew Wanderer bore; / That will not look

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[62] For instance, in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Mathew Lewis's *The Monk*, James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*

[63] Barthes points out that, since Christianity, the "subject *is the one who suffers*" (189).

beyond the tomb, / But cannot hope for rest before" (1.LXXXIV.26-29). And Manfred also wants to forget his crime through self-oblivion:

> . . . —I have prayed
> For madness as a blessing—'tis denied me.
> I have affronted Death—but in the war
> Of elements the waters shrunk from me,
> And fatal things passed harmless; the cold hand
> Of an all-pitiless Demon held me back,
> Back by a single hair, which would not break.
> . . . I dwell in my despair—
> And live—and live for ever. (II.II.134-148)

Manfred is caught in gigantism; his capacity to think and suffer is so immense, it is almost immortal, even super human.

The other possibility of redemption for Byronic dislocation is, of course, finding a home in the beloved. Byron's unique manifestation of the myth of the wandering and outcast hero brings homelessness into a narrative of love by delineating it as a melancholy chaos that might possibly be ordered or bounded through a second self. Love might give the terrible internalized infinite of his desire a home. Another mythic figure that has ties to the Byronic hero is the spectral outcast lover of the Flying Dutchman. His story would have been familiar to British readers in Byron's time, if not before: William Johnson Neals's 1840 novel, *The Flying Dutchman*, refers to what appears to be a well-known myth. Frederick Marryat also plays with the myth in his 1839 novel, *The Phantom Ship*. The basic outlines of the myth are simply this: the Captain of this

phantom ship vows he will round the Cape of Good Hope during a heavy storm, or be damned. Some versions more explicitly state that he makes a pact with the Devil, that if his ship makes the Cape, he will give up his soul to eternal damnation. When the Flying Dutchman succeeds, he becomes cursed by Satan to sail the seas forever. Wagner's famous version of this legend, first performed in 1843, comes from Heinrich Heine's novel of the 1830s, *From the Memoirs of Herr von Schnabelewopski*. The Flying Dutchman, called by Heinrich Heine "the Wandering Jew of the ocean," feels "agony is as deep as the sea on which he sails" (100). Forever doomed to be exiled from a native land, imprisoned on his enchanted ship, he despairs in his homelessness. Heine writes a new resolution of the story—the possibility of redemption for the Captain by the love of a woman. The Devil has no faith in a woman's "truth" (sexual fidelity) and hence gives the Flying Dutchman the chance to arrive at port every seven years and attempt to meet a faithful woman, who will then save his soul. He does meet a woman who falls in love with him, and she agrees to sail the seas with him, hence herself becoming an outcast. But the Flying Dutchman, in his love for her and his desire to save her from having to live in his curse, exiled like he, leaves without her. In the tragic end, affirming she will be true to him, she throws herself off a cliff into the sea, to her death. In this act, the Flying Dutchman is saved yet never saved—the curse dissolves yet he has lost his true love.

The lover as a figure for redemption is a common trope in Byron. The Byronic figure's one beloved, who for the Corsair is Medora, Manfred Astarte, the Giaour Leila, and Childe Harold an unspecified woman, is represented as a container for the purest good and the highest truth, and she could possibly be a realized transcendence or finally a

true immanence of meaning obtainable in this world.[64] The Giaour states, "She was my Life's unerring Light:/ That quenched—what beam shall break my night?"(lines 1145-46). Hence homelessness seems possibly surmountable, by discovering the home of the essential in another, in a two-person subjectivity. The Corsair's love is described:

> Yes—it was Love—if thoughts of tenderness,
> Tried by temptation, strengthened by distress,
> Unmoved by absence, firm in every clime,
> And yet—Oh more than all!—untired by Time;
> Which nor defeated hope, nor baffled wile,
> Could render sullen were She to smile . . . (1.293-298)

Love creates a dwelling place in space and time, filling it up so that it becomes reachable, moveable. One of the most obvious reasons for the appropriation of the Byronic figure by love narratives and romance is the Byronic hero's sweeping belief in the possibility of love as the most important force for defining being itself, and for locating the transcendental home.

> But heaven itself descends in Love;
> A feeling from the Godhead caught,
> To wean from self each sordid thought;
> A ray of Him who formed the whole;
> A Glory circling round the soul!" ("The Giaour" lines 1136-1140)

Hence, in some sense, the Byronic philosophy sees love as the ultimate, and only, redemption and home for one in this life. Love is the only force that still holds meaning.

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[64]See Caroline Franklin's exploration of the Byronic figure's lovers in *Byron's Heroines*.

The Brontë children were fascinated by Byron's dashing life and his tormented characters in his poetry; he figures heavily in the juvenilia of Charlotte, Branwell, and Emily.[65] One reason for the Byronic figure's appropriation by the Brontës and Gothic romances centers on the tormented exile's inability to love. The very foundations of love for the Byronic hero are based on failure and the forgetting of what is possible. The impossibility is that the Byronic hero in his purity can, by definition, never be redeemed by becoming a couple, and he is thrown back upon black despair in the wide world that he must wander without a home. In "The Corsair," Conrad loses Medora because she pines away when she thinks he is dead. In "The Giaour," Leila is murdered by her master because of her love for the Giaour, and the Giaour's life becomes one of vengeance against her murderer, and then a tortured living in the past of his love. In "Manfred," Astarte has died because of his unspecified sin. But finally the hero fails because this is the definition of the Byronic Hero. He is the tormented melancholy failure who nears success and then fails and experiences the eternal loss, the repetition, of the possibility of bliss.[66] The Byronic hero would no longer be the Byronic hero without these qualities. He retains his status as the outcast, the dangerous lover whose subjectivity is as large and as impoverished as the world. For Jane Eyre, and innumerable other romantic heroines (and heroes), to become an ideal lover, to turn this impoverished world into a plenitude, is to obtain an impossibility. To make the impossible possible is the erotic excitement of the dangerous lover romance.

Directly descended from the Byronic hero, famous literary figures such as Rochester in *Jane Eyre* and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, exemplify beloved

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[65] See particularly Elfenbein's *Byron and the Victorians* for Byronic heroes in the Brontës' juvenilia.
[66] In his discussion of *Cain* and *Heaven and Earth*, William P. Fitzpatrick points out that "the inborn desire for the lost paradise brings about in man a perpetual recurrence of the initial fall" (616).

estranged waifs.[67] Rochester explains to Jane, after his hated wife goes mad, and he discovers the lies of his father and brother, how he became a homeless rover.

> I transformed myself into a Will-o'-the-wisp. . .
> I pursued wanderings as wild as those of the Marsh spirit.
> I sought the Continent, and went devious through all its
> lands. . . Disappointment made me reckless. I tried
> dissipation . . in a harsh, bitter frame of mind, the
> result of a useless, roving, lonely life—corroded with
> disappointment, sourly disposed against all men . . . (348-351)

Rochester's superior, misanthropic pain projects his bitter mind onto the world; by wandering, he tries to outrun this lack of belief in any possibility of a "home." Heathcliff, as a young child, is "dark almost as if it [he] came from the devil" (36). He is a "gypsy brat" who was discovered "starving, houseless, and as good as dumb in the streets of Liverpool" (37). A vagabond, an "out and outer," he haunts the thresholds of the Earnshaw family, first as a replacement for Mr. Earnshaw's dead son, then as an abused "servant" by Hindley after Mr. Earnshaw's death. With his rough, brutal, demon-like appearance and actions, he lurks around the margins of society. Insidious to family unity, to the couple, he is described by Catherine, after he returns from his three years of mysterious roaming, in this way, ". . . Heathcliff is an unreclaimed creature, without refinement—without cultivation; an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone" (101).

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[67] Many before me have discussed the Byronic figure in the Brontës. It is well documented that the Brontës appropriated Byron's poetry and life into the juvenilia and their adult novels and poetry. See especially Gilbert and Gubar's discussion of the Byronic hero in Emily Brontë's poetry, her juvenilia, and in *Wuthering Heights*. They see Heathcliff as a Manfred, and they argue that the union of both Manfred/Astarte and Heathcliff/Catherine create an empowering "androgyne." Stevie Davies discusses incest and the outcast in Byron's mystery plays and *Wuthering Heights*. Elfenbein points out the Byronic characters, primarily females, in Emily's poems.

Blighting both interiority and exteriority, his subjectivity, like the desolate moors, desiccates all around him.

Desolate homelessness points to the Cain figure. Byron's identification with Cain is well noted. Cain carries the mark of his sin for killing Abel, and he must be forever an exiled traveler, as expiation for this sin. Besides his poem entitled "Cain," Byron portrays Childe Harold seeing himself like Cain: " . . . life-abhorring Gloom / Wrote on his faded brow curst Cain's unresting doom" (1.LXXXIII. 8-9). His gloom will not rest; it stings him into more and more restless roving, ceaseless thinking. He cannot outrun his remorse as much as he tries. And in "The Giaour," the hero condemns himself for Leila's death: "She died—I dare not tell thee how; / But look—'tis written on my brow!" (1057-1058) The Byronic figure is *marked* as a fugitive; his homelessness can be seen on his face. His sin is sometimes so primal, or so profound, it becomes merely a cipher, or even unspeakable. Coleridge's Ancient Mariner must wander in expiation for killing the Albatross: ". . . this soul hath been / Alone on a wide wide sea: / So lonely 'twas, that God himself / Scarce seemed there to be" (lines 597-600). His sin and punishment is marked by his eye, which fixes his audience in horror, so that they must listen to his tale. Similarly, the Byronic figure's lonely soul, while withdrawn from other men, human communities, values, a God, needs to be witnessed; he desires to have someone to hear his story, to *see* his depths of pain. Byron's interest in Cain lies in this paradox: his sin and pain is so primal, it is almost unrepresentable, yet it is unmistakably written on his face.

The tormented, mysterious brooder, with outward signs of the darkness that is inside him—his homelessness—has become a ubiquitous trope for the dangerous lover

narrative. Melville's Captain Ahab carries his obsessive, wayfaring pain on his face; all who see him know he is cursed to wander. The "enemy lover" or "demon lover's" dark frown, his tortured and furrowed brow magnetically draws those around him. In Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham* Sir Reginald Glanville, a beautiful, brilliant man whose seduction and inadvertent destruction of a middle-class girl lays waste to his life, is consumed with remorse and obsessed with revenge. His countenance marks his tortured subjectivity, "a gloom and despondency which seemed almost like aberration of intellect. . . his cheek was hollow and hueless, his eye dim, and of that visionary and glassy aspect . . . which, according to the superstitions of some nations, implies a mysterious and unearthly communion of the soul with the beings of another world" (176). As another worshipper of sorrow and a man whose salvation is lost as soon as his narrative begins, he is compared to a kind of circle: "a circle can only touch a circle in one place, everything that life presents to him, wherever it comes from, to whatever portion of his soul it is applied, can find but one point of contact; and that is the soreness of affliction: whether it is the *oblivio* or the *otium* that he requires, he finds equally that he is forever in want of one treasure" (177). In Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her*? the villainous rake who is attractive to the heroine and other young women, George Vavasor, receives a knife wound to his face in a violent scuffle as a boy. While outwardly a suave and persuasive gentleman, inside his nature is dark and violent. The scar tells us this from the start, but his violence doesn't explicitly show itself until the end of the story. "On some occasions, when he was angry or disappointed, it was very hideous; for he would so contort his face that the scar would, as it were, stretch itself out, revealing all its horrors, and his

countenance would become all scar" (32). Unredeemably cursed like Cain, he becomes a voyager in the end, sailing for America to escape punishment for his murderous actions.

In Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* the blue-blooded "prince" Lord Steyne, although famous for his worldly carelessness, his cruel misanthropy, and his excessive dissipation, falls for Becky. When Becky's husband, Colonel Crawley, discovers Steyne and Becky alone in intimate conversation and flirtation, he rips Steyne's gift of a diamond ornament off Becky's chest and casts it at Steyne, cutting his forehead. "The scar cut by the diamond on his white, bald, shining forehead, made a burning red mark" (630). Lord Steyne has always felt cursed because of an inherited susceptibility to madness, and his scar signifies a kind of deadness to life, along with his "livid face and ghastly eyes. . . ordinarily they gave no light and seemed tired of looking out on a world of which almost all the pleasure and all the best beauty had palled upon the worn-out wicked old man" (632).

Often attributed to Wilde, although today considered to be written by an unknown author, the homosexual, pornographic text *Teleny*, dating from the 1890s, works with the dangerous fascination of the deeply pained, doomed man. The Byronic lover as the melancholy artist surrounds himself with a nexus of painful desire, piercing in its insatiability. Teleny's deep sadness and terrible realization of his final fate—his violent suicide—can be read on his face. "Still a close observer would every now and then have seen in [his features] a scared and wistful look, as if he were gazing at some dreadful dim and distant vision. An expression of the deepest sorrow invariably succeeded his painful glamour" (8). The narrator and lover, M. Camille De Grieux, describes his desire for the beloved, "That thrilling longing I had felt grew more and more intense, the craving so

insatiable that it was changed to pain; the burning fire had now been fanned into a mighty flame, and my whole body was convulsed and writhed with mad desire" (10). The ecstasy of their love and lust edges always on other extremes, such as madness, death, eternity, hell. The wild, uneducated, often roving artist, Teleny, comes of gypsy blood. After Camille meets Teleny, he feels a sense of transcendental homelessness spurred by his painful love; he sees "that the exile knows what his cravings are, but I did not" (21). The two lovers imagine that they might be doppelgangers and, after he discovers that Teleny has betrayed him by sleeping with his mother, Camille's Byronic homelessness becomes overpowering. He feels "cursed like Cain, or like the Eternal Wanderer" (152). After Teleny's death Camille says that "Earth seemed a desert I was bound to traverse" (158). Hence Camille himself becomes the Byronized outsider, lost in an empty and desiccated world.

Numerous mass-market romance dark lovers carry the mark of Cain. In the first novel in Harlequin's "[Men Who are] Dangerous to Love" miniseries, Bonnie Gardner's *Stranger in Her Bed* (1999), the hero, T.J. Swift, has an "angry scar that angled from his right eyebrow and plowed a furrow across his brow and hid in his thick hair" (10). The scar represents his mysterious and guilty past and the deep remorse felt because of his role in the accidental death of his first wife and his son. Having a past that shows in "hard lines of experience" (Smith 5) perpetuates the erotic hiddenness of pain while making this depth naked, exposed. Until saved by the love of the heroine, he is cursed to feel he has no home in the world, that living itself is his punishment for past errors. Rochester's scarred face after the fire of Thornfield signifies his lived punishment but also his exiled status; Jane's love is his only redemption in life.

In "Childe Harold," not only does the hero wander because of his sin and his misanthropy—his ideals too pure to be sullied by the common race of men—but most importantly, he wanders to escape his own consciousness. Hence, his self-exile leads to the question, "What Exile from himself can flee?" (1.LXXXIV.30) He is "the wandering outlaw of his own dark mind" (3.III.2). Unlike Cain, the Wandering Jew, and the Ancient Mariner, the Byronic hero is self-exiled. This modern trait connects him to Joyce, Stein, Faulkner, and Kafka. Even though Cain and the Wandering Jew act willfully so that wandering is their punishment, there is no sense that they can choose redemption—be accepted back into the fold. Yet the Byronic hero *might* be able to be redeemed because his exile is situated in his own mind. His self-exile links him to Milton's Satan, who has created his own hell in his mind. When the spirits speak to Manfred — "By thy delight in others' pain,/ And by thy brotherhood of Cain, / I call upon thee! And compel / Thyself to be thy proper Hell!" (I.I.248-252) —Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* seems to be speaking his famous lines: "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" (IV.75). But even for Satan, there are exterior forces at work (God) that deny him entrance back into the heavenly fold. The Byronic hero, by contrast, acts, at each moment, on his own free will. This existential abyss of free will is why Nietzsche preferred Byron's Faustian Manfred to Goethe's Faust. Unlike Faust, Manfred stands alone; he does not even give the Devil his due.[68] His subjectivity becomes entirely his own.

The Byronic self complicates the division between subjectivity's interior and exterior. Related to the Romantic sublime, his subjectivity lacks liminals; it is

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[68] From *Ecce Homo*: "I have no word, only a glance, for those who dare to pronounce the word 'Faust' in the presence of Manfred" (254).

boundless.[69] One reason why the Byronic hero exiles himself from society is that his consciousness creates the world as a mirror of his own hellish mind; the world is an interior space where all is decimated of meaning. He restlessly circles this world of his own making, this infinite mindscape. The world can provide no relief or change because of the immutable script in his mind.

> Alike all time, abhorred all place,
> Shuddering I shrank from Nature's face,
> Where every hue the charmed before
> The blackness of my bosom wore. ("The Giaour" lines 1196-1200)

His thoughts taint "all time," "all place," and make all of Nature black like his own heart.

The Byronic figure's hell is situated in memory. It is because he cannot forget the past that he is imprisoned in a soul tormented by remorse. In some sense, he has lost the possibility of the present, as an ever-changing, moving scene, containing the possibility of change, because of his moral fixity on a point in the past that will not pass. Manfred states, " . . . and for/ The future, till the past be gulfed in darkness,/ It is not of my search" (I.II.5-7). The past negates temporality; the only way he can fall back into time is if the past is obliterated, "gulfed in darkness." He is lost in a self-perpetuating agony that comes from an idealization of a past "before"—"before" his fall from grace, "before" his realization of the vanity and valuelessness of human society. The Byronic hero feels he once had a home in this world before he realized his desires were so profound they could never be fulfilled in this life. He imagines that, in the past, he lived in a world full of immanent meaning, where his desires for ideals such as Truth, Beauty, and Purity were

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[69] To view this subject from the position of the lover is to see this sublimity as an atopos, in the Barthesian sense: "The loved being is recognized by the amorous subject as 'atopos' . . . i.e., unclassifiable, of a ceaselessly unforeseen originality" (34).

still in play, still open as possibilities. Yet from the beginning of "Childe Harold," "The Giaour," and "Manfred," the Byronic hero is always already unredeemable. The past can never be passed. The Byronic hero's homesick wandering is interminable because he cannot absent himself from time, from those aspects of life which make people mortal, earth-bound; yet he also feels himself cast out of a present and future temporality, an interest and place in a country, a people, a community.

For the Byronic hero, the tragedy already happens before the story begins. Barthes explains that love is not narrative: "For me, on the contrary, this story has *already taken place*; for what is event is exclusively the delight of which I have been the object and whose after effects I repeat (and fail to achieve) . . . amorous seduction takes place before discourse" (93-4). Jock Mcleod, in his discussion of Canto three in Childe Harold and Byron himself in his letters, refers to the narrator as "coming after." For the dangerous lover, time is always out of joint. Deleuze writes that ". . . in love, the truth always comes too late" (86).[70] The temporal world of the dangerous lover is that of too-lateness. Always too lateness: to be redeemed, to be an idealistic youth, to believe, to have faith, to find the true love again, to live in the present moment. The temporal structure of the too-late closes off the present and the future. Because meaning is always already past, time does not pass; the past is the only time of possibility and because it can

[70] The time of dangerous love follows the structure of amorous temporality in Proust. Swann is, for the most part, in love with Odette after she has already fallen out of love with him and it is this distance which, at least up to a certain point, increases his love for her. When he hears Vintueil's sonata at Mme. De Saint-Euvert's party, he has an involuntary memory, suddenly remembering with great pain those days when Odette was in love with him which he characterizes as "the forgotten strains of happiness" (Proust 1: 447). Yet when those days were present Swann was rarely happy in them, there was more often indifference and/or various kinds of pains and jealousies. Through this involuntary memory he is able to finally feel the happiness of being in love and being loved at the same time—the lover and the beloved together. Time is regained and then lost forever: "In place of the abstract expressions 'the time when I was happy,' 'the time when I was loved,' which he had often used until then, and without much suffering, for his intelligence had not embodied in them anything of the past save fictitious extracts which preserved none of the reality, he now recovered everything that had fixed unalterably the peculiar, volatile essence of that lost happiness; he could see it all" (Proust 1: 447).

never be retrieved, re-lived, time fails. In too-lateness lies the inability to forget, to forgive, oneself and others.

In *Middlemarch* (1871), Will Ladislaw has a diffused or diluted Byronism about him. When Dorothea first meets him, he "wore a pouting air of discontent" (52). Mr. Brooke comments that he "may turn out a Byron . . ." (55). Frances Wilson sees him as a Byronic hero, a "motherless and malcontented Childe Harold who wanders through Europe and the Midlands" (1). When he thinks that he cannot have Dorothea's love, he shows a Byronic sense of the "too-late": "There are certain things which a man can only go through once in his life; and he must know some time or other that the best is over with him" (437). His sense of homelessness is appeased when he finds home in his love for Dorothea. She represents all of Truth, Purity, and Goodness; Will feels, when in Dorothea's presence, that his "love is satisfied in the completeness of the beloved object" (251). Will's reformation, his domestication through his love for Dorothea, lead him to become a responsible citizen, a hard-working politician.

In Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* Sidney Carton, the "careless and slovenly if not debauched" (135) immoral ruin, lives in a Byronic feeling of too-lateness: "It is too late for that. I shall never be better than I am. I shall sink lower and be worse" (229). He always wishes to go back to a "before time": a time before he became a drunk, before he descended "the cloud of caring for nothing." This "cloud" "overshadowed him with such a fatal darkness, [and] was very rarely pierced by the light within him" (228). He comments about himself, "I am like one who died young. All my life might have been" (230).

As a wanderer whose subjectivity includes the whole world—eternal space—the Byronic hero also occludes time in his ownership of infinity. He has lived ages, an eternity, even though he is still young. He has experienced more in his short life than most will in a whole long life. Byron describes a moment of the Giaour's life:

> But in that instant o'er his soul
> Winters of Memory seem to roll,
> And gather in that drop of time
> A life of pain, an age of crime. . . .
> Though in Time's record nearly nought,
> It was Eternity to Thought!
> For infinite as boundless space
> The thought that Conscience must embrace,
> Which in itself can comprehend
> Woe without name, or hope, or end. (lines 261-276)

Byronic mind time is a momentary intensification in which an eternity is lived, or an infinity of space is realized.

Temporality and spatiality also lead to homelessness; the eternal or infinite are not dwelling places where familiarity is encountered, where final beliefs are housed, where fixed truths are discoverable. The Byronic subjectivity is unbounded; he contains everything, and he decimates all of it, hence containing nothingness in all its vastness. The Byronic impairment of the fabric of time takes his story into the mythic realm, a transcendental outside where the cessation of time, of the self, is desired, exhaustedly and from the start.

The Byronic mind is imprisoned in his thoughts; and these thoughts alienate the man, the subject, from the world, from moving time, from presence. This figure, attempting to reconcile the relationship of his mind and the world, becomes the intellectual of Novalis' expression: "Philosophy is actually homesickness—the urge to be everywhere at home" (135).[71] The Byronic brooder has this urge, which explains his ceaseless roving, his desire for the highest ideals, the purest truths.[72]

The Byronic figure can be linked to the German Romantics who wrote on the problematic possibility of the "modern" self being unified and of this self having and living a meaningful connectedness with the "external" world. Heathcliff explains, "My mind is so eternally secluded in itself" (320). Abrams, in his *Natural Supernaturalism*, explores the use of the trope of the journey and a sickness for home in the German Romantics' ideas on consciousness. Focusing on Schiller, Abrams traces the theory of the journey of the individual from an originary self-unity, a home, through a complex self-consciousness that involves seeing the self as an object, and then a reaching for a higher unity, which is, however, never quite attainable. This is precisely what Hegel later calls his dialectic, which is the movement of consciousness from an initial alienation, to a transcending of this objectification of the self, which leads, finally, to a synthesis wherein the self finds a home in his/her otherness.

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[71] This famous quote has been cited by many. Heidegger quotes it in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, and explains that "to be at home everywhere" means to be "within the whole," and this "whole" is the "world." "We are always called upon by something as a whole" (5). Lukacs begins his *Theory of the Novel* with this quote. "That is why philosophy, as a form of life or as that which determines the form and supplies the content of literary creation, is always a symptom of the rift between 'inside' and 'outside,' a sign of the essential difference between the self and the world, the incongruence of soul and deed" (29). Adorno and Horkheimer discuss Novalis' quote, stating, "Homeland is the state of escape."

[72] Bertrand Russell has a chapter on Byron in his *History of Western Philosophy* because he feels that Byronism is important to philosophy in general, especially in the thinking of Nietzsche's *Übermann*.

I see Byron's philosophy as more radical, skeptical, and hence more modern; it breaks the Hegelian dialectical circle.[73] In Byron, the spirit does not become alienated so that it can find itself again as an absolute goal; rather it becomes alienated and its meaning comes from this alienation and the always failed attempt to return to this lost home of unity. Mcleod discusses a similar concept of Byronic desire which he describes as metaphysical; that is, desire for distance between subject and object. "Byron's desire, then, is to be so separated from the object that he can imagine conjunction with it" (269).[74]

Byron's ideas are more closely related to the Kantian crises or what Kant himself called his "Copernican Revolution" or "transcendental idealism," an important point in philosophy with which all the German Romantics wrestled. Kant was the first to see space and time grounded in the experiencing subject. The "thing in itself" became totally unknowable to the subject because the thing must always be filtered through our sense of time and space; they are forms of our sensibility with which we perceive the world. Thus the Kantian crisis constructs the subject as one whose experience must always be mediated. Friedrich Hölderlin saw this loss of immediacy as the definition of tragedy—the tragedy of the speculative.[75] Hölderlin feels that the essence of tragedy is that we can never have immediate experience and that as soon as we think, then we have always already lost immediacy. Therefore, the subject thinks to bring the object of thought

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[73] As a philosopher, Byronism would fall under Klossowski's category of the "philosopher-villain," like Sade. The philosopher-villain sees thinking as a part of his strong passions, as a means to fulfill these passions, whereas the philosopher-decent man understands thinking as of value in and of itself. See *Sade My Neighbor.*

[74] See Jock Mcleod, "Misreading Writing: Rousseau, Byron, and Childe Harold III."

[75] Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe touches on Hölderlin's theories of tragedy and the "re-opening" of the Kantian "wound" in *Typography.* Hölderlin's essays on tragedy are collected in *Essays and Letters on Theory.*

closer, through knowledge, but this attempt to bring closer always causes the "thing" to withdraw.

Hölderlin was continually working, primarily through his poetry, to close up the Kantian "wound," although he was tortured by the final impossibility of this task. The Byronic figure's tragedy, similarly, is that consciousness itself always already brings solitary wandering, loss of immediacy, loss of presence—of the present. Byron's philosophy is an attempt to find subjectivity "at home" in the world; he has the "urge to be everywhere at home." He wants the world to contain his ideals, to fulfill his desires, and he brings the whole world into play, and sets it in relation to his thoughts, his consciousness. But because he fails, the relationship between the traveled world and the mind does not bring a sense of the "whole," but rather of the irrevocably lost.[76] The lostness does not belittle the world, however, but makes it eternal and infinite, and hence its ravaged emptiness sets up an infinite longing rather than indifference.

[76] We can connect this to Lukacs' more sweeping statement: "Defeat is the precondition of subjectivity" (117).

II. Homelessness as Escape

Breaking out of the economics of the Hegelian dialectical circle can be seen as an escape. Many theorists, particularly Derrida, Deleuze, Ronell, and Blanchot, see the radical outside of the dialectic as a newfound freedom, albeit on the edge of possibility. Living in every way just on the edge, of oblivion, of insanity, of death, the Byronic figure creates a realm of escape, an outside where the pains of living become so mythical and immense, subjectivity may dissolve at any moment. Everyday difficulties are no worry to such a sublimely tormented well of selfhood; the existential edge lies so close, failure is on such a large scale, it hardly matters anymore. In the freedom to be passionately tormented lies the attraction for the heroine of a Rochester or Heathcliff.

One of the measures of homelessness is being somehow, perhaps impossibly, outside the pale of the family. Manfred's escape from the father comes from being hardly mortal, therefore not subject to the laws of the father, yet not himself a god, or father. "But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we, / Half dust, half deity, alike unfit/ To sink or soar" (I.II.39-41). Manfred's in-betweenness, his unfitness, creates "a line of escape," as Deleuze would call it; homelessness traces a way out. Deleuze and Guattari explore escaping as not so much a movement in any particular direction, but rather a "flight of intensity," the ability to go "head over heels and away" (6). This intense flight signifies, represents, as little as possible; it "breaks the symbolic structure" (7). Possible flight lines in Byronic love narratives lie in intense study, insomnia, anorexia, and autoeroticism.

The pallid thinker, the intellectual, and the student: many Byronic heroes, most famously Manfred, and such Romantic and Gothic Fausts as Melmoth and Victor Frankenstein (whom Mary Shelley modeled after Percy Bysshe, himself a studier of the occult) study late into the night. They study to gain Adam and Eve's forbidden knowledge, the kind that will bring them closer to the gods, that will raise them up above a society in which they feel they do not fit. They study at night to define their work hours differently than daytime industry. Nocturnal research serves to move them outside of the social code. Their knowledge does not seek to inform, to be disseminated, but rather they study to hoard, to collect and acquire what is generally not believed in, or is thought to be evil, perverse, against what is good and right. This "wrong" knowledge, a subterranean magic, dream knowledge, delves into the depths of that which can never be fully known or owned. The accumulation of knowledge without discipline, without an end of action, of scholarly merit, is to fall, like Eve, from the grace of properly bounded thought which illuminates, elucidates. In the rebellious stance of his fall the dangerous lover gathers a Luciferian darkness, casting him in the role of the demon-lover, a midnight usurper who knows and is the only one to both read and approve the forbidden knowledge behind his truelove's eyes and innocent face.

Manfred studies his books on occult knowledge, reading all through the night, greeting the dawn with bleary eyes. The Byronic figure, often a chronic insomniac, desires not only forgetfulness and oblivion but also the rest of sleep, the mind's calming from the cycle of tormenting remorse. The beginning of Manfred shows the pain of impossible sleep.

The lamp must be replenished, but even then

It will not burn so long as I must watch:

My slumbers—if I slumber—are not sleep,

But a continuance of enduring thought,

Which then I can resist not . . . (I.I.1-5)

Manfred's needed sleep and highly-strung wakefulness associate him with night journeys, done in lunar light. The stable temporality that flows with the daylight workday and with nighttime sleep is disrupted into a non-working wakefulness. Interrupting the duty of hours, he is outside the workaday world, connected to the evil deeds that happen at night, the guilty pillow, the vampire, and the night-ghoul. Blanchot writes of night as figural for an "outside"—outside the neat circle of the Hegelian dialectic. The circular return of Hegel's thesis/antithesis/synthesis, broken by the secret night of no return, dissolves in a radical outside of no return, of the journeyer who does not come home.

Byronic elucubration becomes more melancholy in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's Newgate novel, *Eugene Aram* (1831). Like the noctambulists Manfred, Faust and Melmoth, Eugene estranges himself from others by withdrawing into his occult studies. Manfred, Faust and Melmoth take this research too far—they come to know too much about the supernatural, the superhuman realm, thus becoming too great to dwell with common mortals. Eugene's fugitive retreat from the world comes from both his bloody secret—his role in a man's murder—and his insatiable thirst for knowledge, itself a means of escaping his terrible mindscape. Manfred and his ilk become demonic and otherworldly, while Eugene's night studies take him merely into a melancholy darkness. Eugene's guilt, his desire for self-annhilation, lead to the further desire to dissolve his self

in knowledge, in his books, in staying up. He holds onto his terror of guilt with a fearful grasp, all the time flinging himself into constant study. "Eugene Aram was a man whose whole life seemed to have been one sacrifice to knowledge" (433). From the beginning of the narrative, Eugene is already cursed with the pangs of remorse, the forsaken sense of an unresting torment. Eugene remarks, "It is a dark epoch in a man's life when sleep forsakes him; when he tosses to and fro, and thought will not be silenced; when the drug and draught are the courters of stupefaction, not sleep; when the down pillow is a knotted log; when the eyelids close but with an effort, and there is a drag, and a weight, and a dizziness in the eyes at morn" (469). Ronell discusses the way that addiction creates a temporal inertia when the subject is caught up in only what is immediately available, hence shutting out any thought of a future.[77] Eugene reads to attempt to make time move forward, to avoid the paralysis of his mind caught in his terrible past. The night brings on the phantoms of a lost place in temporality, and even sleep teems with the feverish dreams of the guilty soul. Insomnia needs filling with the eyes moving over pages, the pen scratching the paper.

Sidney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities* practices self-exiled destruction, a continued search to remain estranged, cast-out and ruined through his feverish night research, fueled by alcohol and despair. Keeping awake while others sleep, Dickens seems to say, undercuts the possibility for Carton to participate in the "honorable ambition, self-denial, and perseverance" that the man of "good abilities and good emotions (155-6)" should uphold. James Eli Adams dubs Carton a "dandy-dilettante" who is an affront to Carlylean earnestness.[78] Carton with "waste forces within him, and a

[77] In Ronell's *Crack Wars*, see especially pages 40-45.
[78] In *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity.*

desert all around him" is "incapable of his own help and his own happiness, sensible of the blight on him" (155-6). Like the Gothic villain whose blasted life comes from passionate failure, Carton lets his failure "eat him away" and, after a night full of research and reading the law, he "threw himself down in his clothes on a neglected bed, and its pillow was wet with wasted tears" (156). He often stays up nights like this, to help the ambitious Mr. Stryver with his cases. But the benefit of this useful work doesn't fall to Carton; in fact he uses it as a means to further alienate himself from society by dissipation which ruins his health. The intensity of his concentration when he elucubrates belies his carelessness in all other parts of his life (except for his desires to sacrifice himself for Lucie) and shows a kind of escape through loss of self cares (an "anxious gravity" [152]) which is surprising for Carton whose central problems lie in self-absorption. "With knitted brows and intent face, so deep in his task that his eyes did not even follow the hand he stretched out for his glass" (154).

Heathcliff's chronic wakefulness after Catherine's death keeps his nerves highly strung, raking his body such that his nightwalking becomes his only work.[79] Trying to sleep, Heathcliff describes his insomnia, which is caused by Catherine's wandering ghost: "I closed my eyes, she was either outside the window, or sliding back the panels, or entering the room, or even resting her darling head on the same pillow as she did when a child. And I must open my lids to see. And so I opened them a hundred times a-night" (230). Nelly describes him as a person "going blind with loss of sleep" (262). Brontë thus creates Heathcliff as a figure so self- absorbed (and "other"-absorbed, the "other" being Catherine who is, in some sense, still *his* self), that he transcends time and

[79] In his discussion of Heathcliff as a disruption of the narrative of *Wuthering Heights*, Steve Vine comments that "Heathcliff's narrative function is to open up fixed meanings and identities to otherness . . . invading the seemingly self-identical and turning it inside out" (95).

embodiment itself—still in love and haunting the moors after his death. Desire turns inward, feeding on fantasy, auto-obsession, pulling outward the deep interior of the self by wielding it as a weapon of world-decimation, through self-decimation.

While the tortured quality of this starved state is clear, escape also opens as a possibility, pointing to an explanation as to why the outlawry of the Byronic figure is attractive to love narratives. Being either so large that he might trace a line of escape out of the dreary world of commonplace concerns, or so slender he might slip out under cover of the secret night, the Byronic figure traces a path of freedom with his homelessness. Literally starving oneself, going on a hunger strike might be the only way out of an intolerable existence. When Catherine dies, Heathcliff loses all appetite for things of life in this world, including nourishment of any kind. Catherine stops eating in order to try and escape the prison of her body.[80] The young Jane Eyre also attempts flight in this manner. "Resolve, equally wrought up, instigated some strange expedient to achieve escape from the insupportable oppression—as running away, or, if that could not be affected, never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die" (11). Byron himself dieted off and on throughout his life, desiring to represent with his body the romantic figure, "pale and slender," as Eisler writes in her popular biography, "haunted by secret sorrow and wasting loss" (120). Being consumed from within, the pallid wraith might become so small, miniature he could almost disappear. The escape would free him from a dreary life into a fantasy of pure ideals, passion fulfilled.

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[80] Emily Brontë also would often quit eating, which many have pointed to as a kind of self-destructive protest, a demand for freedom. Steve Vine argues, in *Emily Brontë*, "Brontë inscribed her desire on her flesh as hunger—and her body became, in the absence of speech, the very text of her deprivation" (20). See also Katherine Frank's *Emily Brontë: A Chainless Soul.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990.

Another itinerary of escape the Byronic figure traces lies in slipping out of the place of the ur-hetero-erotic hero into the almost invisibility of the onanist. And one of the magnetic attractions of literary representations of onanism lies in its figuration by the act and site of reading, hence creating, for the reader, the pleasures of identification, the bliss of feeling further embedded, reading, in the narrative.

Eve Sedgwick has done foundational work on the "other" sexuality, onanism, and how it became linked, in the early nineteenth-century, with certain personality traits. She quotes from an 1860 tract on the "masturbating girl" by Augusta Kinsley Gardner, explaining the disabilities of the onanist as one

> in whom the least impression is redoubled like that of a "tam-tam,"
> [yet who seeks] for emotions still more violent and more varied.
> It is this necessity which nothing can appease . . . It is the emptiness
> of an unquiet and somber soul seeking some activity, which clings
> to the slightest incident of life, to elicit from it some emotion which
> forever escapes; in short, it is the deception and disgust of existence. (quoted in *Tendencies* 124-5)

The "addiction" to activity that might fill the abyss of the soul, but never does, the repetition of thoughts and the circling restlessness of the tormented mind take us right to the heart of the Byronic erotic. For example, Childe Harold is "pleasure's palled victim" (1.LXXXIII.8). He has

> . . . grown agèd in this world of woe,
> In deeds, not years, piercing the depths of life,
> So that no wonder waits him—nor below

Can Love or Sorrow, Fame, Ambition, Strife,

Cut to his heart again with the keen knife

Of silent, sharp endurance. (3.V.1-6)

Byronism itself has always been associated with the insatiability of a self whose depths of desire and passion exceed the bounds of any satisfaction. Disappointed and sneering at a society he finds worthless, yet still looking, without even hope of success, for his sweeping ideals, lost somewhere along the way, of Beauty, Truth, and Purity, the Byronic figure is left only with himself for pleasure and pain, for a solipsistic erotic repetition. Childe Harold expresses his autoerotic subjectivity: "I *have* thought/Too long and darkly, till my brain become,/In its own eddy boiling and o'er-wrought/A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame:/And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame . . ." (3.VII.1-5). One of the reasons why late Regency and early Victorian society so disapproved of and yet was so fascinated by Byronism, was the non-productive economy of the autoerotic, ceaselessly turning inward and hence not bound by the duties and proprieties of society, of a proscribed "mature," heterosexual economy. An 1817 notice in the *British Review* of "Manfred" by William Roberts states that the "mischief that lurks in all Lord Byron's productions" lies in a "proneness to childishly erroneous impressions of human worth." These impressions do not recognize the value of people who are "the agents of a mild and regular government, those by whom the great machine of society is kept in repair, and peaceful limits imposed upon passion and ambition . . . " (quoted in Hayden 238). The onanist is childish, a threat to the social code. Thomas Carlyle's writings on Byron provide an example of this way of thinking about Byronism. Elfenbein argues that many Victorian authors defined themselves as writers by creating works where "the hero leaves

behind his Byronic melancholy to commence a supposedly more mature and socially meaningful life" (186). Carlyle sees Byronism as a naïve, immature stance, and in a bildungsroman model of development, the Byronic figure needs to grow up into a responsible adult. "Surely, all these stormful agonies," Carlyle writes, "this volcanic heroism, superhuman contempt and moody desperation, with so much scowling, and teeth gnashing, and other sulpherous humour, is more like the brawling of a player in some paltry tragedy, which is to last three hours, than the bearing of a man in the business of life, which is to last threescore and ten years" (XXVI 269). The paternalistic language of scolding serves to bring autoeroticism, tamed by being dubbed as a kind of arrested development, back into the fold of the "proper" development of sexuality: the onanist is an adolescent who needs to mature into the "straight," manly "business of life." It is not so much that his is a "wrong" sexuality but rather a dangerous "excess," as Sedgwick argues about the onanist. A critic in the *Monthly Review* writes in 1819: " . . . his restlessness of feeling often breaks through the connection of his thoughts . . . He is the real poet of passion: but he describes passion of an untamed nature, which recoils with increasing force from every weight that is laid on it . . . He is likewise too fond . . .[of] unfolding to our view the inclinations rather than the duties or the finer action of our nature" (quoted in Hayden 264). Byronic eroticism is described as "untamed," and this excessiveness, needing to be controlled, cannot hold the "weight" of duty, and is ruled only by "inclination." A "dutiful" eroticism is one that can be circumscribed, traced, understood by its placement among societal duties. But a restless autoeroticism, not appearing to need the validation or definition of the other, defines a reckless

individualism or sublime subjectivity that was increasingly threatening to a society that needed to rigorously control the erotic.

The excessiveness of Byronism's sexuality comes partially from its rebellious doubling of itself in an incestuous self-love. Manfred's love for Astarte is narcissistic; he states that they had "one heart." Astarte in many ways is Manfred's erotic externalized, an erotic based on loving, pleasuring the mirror self. Byron himself found his deepest erotic expression in his incestuous affair with his half-sister Augusta, an eroticism of the other as same as the self, of two creating a completion when brought together.

Another reason for Byronism's popular and notorious reputation was the secretive, hidden quality of this erotic, a necessary quality of its hollowing out of an obscure but infinite interiority—an erotic sublime. Childe Harold is described:

> Yet oft-times in his maddest mirthful mood
> Strange pangs would flash along Childe Harold's brow,
> As if the Memory of some deadly feud
> Or disappointed passion lurked below:
> But this none knew, nor haply cared to know;
> For his was not that open, artless soul
> That fuels relief by bidding sorrow flow,
> Nor sought he friend to counsel or condole. (1.VIII.1-8)

Elfenbein points to Byronism's representation of sexuality as a "linkage of eroticism and the confessional mode fulfilled" (18). This "confessional mode," structured such that subjectivity cannot be represented because of the self's secret infinity, depends on the paradoxical idea that, because the self is non-representational and must live pleasures and

pains solitarily, it must be witnessed because its non-representability guarantees its existence. Hence the emphasis in Byronism on confession, expression, performance, the exhibition of emotions and the "within" as erotic, yet also the importance to this paradigm of only showing enough to make it clear how hidden and inaccessible is this soul. The onanist's veiled eroticism, appearing to be self-sufficient in its profundity, defines a self that, like the Byronic Heathcliff, "is so eternally secluded in itself" (320), yet depends on fantasy, confession, witnessing.

The onanist's power, or the "deception and disgust of existence" in the above excerpt, signaling the writer's disapproval of the autoerotic type, lies in the Byronic belief in the possibility of the lone subject making or breaking meaning itself in the world. Power is seated in the self's secret infinity which can turn away from the world, yet have it at the same time. The Byronic hero draws the reader, and the romantic heroine, into the untouchability and the unknowability of his mind, with its access into an abyss of blackened meaning, which is, somehow, in an uncanny turn, representative of experience itself, and hence easily identifiable for his reader. Byron's representations of subjectivity were felt by early nineteenth-century readers, Elfenbein argues, to display so transparently emotional experience that they seemed to be "transcripts" of this experience. The readers and consumers of Byron felt somehow inside the text, as if their experience was the text. This construction could serve as the definition of desire itself: wanting that which eternally withdraws, just out of reach, yet which seems somehow to define the desirer herself, and all she desires to be. With a compelling magnetism, the one outside looks into the veiled and unknown interior, eternally secluded, yet can step in and be, herself, the autoerotic center.

Reading, interestingly enough, can also take on this structure. Byron himself was fascinated with the act and site of reading and study, especially when forbidden, secretive, and nocturnal. Greedy in his solitary consumption, he made lists of the books he had read before he was ten years old, and his letters are full of references to his reading.[81] One of the Byronic hero's appeals is as an intellectual, a brooder whose multi-chambered mind full of layered thoughts is complex enough to always leave food for more brooding. Defining a reading site is a way of describing interiority itself; the space of reading and its interior allegorize the text as interior and then, finally, the interiority of the subject herself.[82] This play of inside/outside points to the simple onanistic eroticism of reading and the way it draws an enchanted circle around the subject and the reading space, magic in its self-contained, self-pleasuring "within-ness."[83] Proust intricately describes the hiddenness of reading pleasures, and the delicate movements of consciousness and embodiment in the act. Reading becomes a "hiding-hole," where he can feel invisible yet observe what occurs on the "outside" of his reading space. [84] Reversing the common paradigms of reading as an act of incorporation and appropriation, Proust argues that, in addition to gathering the read words and their narrative into our minds, and "adding" them to ourselves, as one might add more ingredients to a dish, we also actually live our "exterior" lives, outside the text, *in* the act

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[81] See Leslie Marchand's *Byron: A Biography*, pages 38-39.
[82] Susan Stewart's *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001) continues this discourse on the interiority of reading spaces and subjects.
[83] Roland Barthes is the best articulator of the eroticism of reading; see especially *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).
[84] See especially the Combray section of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time,* 6 vols, trans. by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Modern Library, 1995), *On Reading*, and Paul de Man's discussion of reading in Proust in his *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

of reading. Not only this, but many of our memories, our past itself, can be recovered only through opening a book, as if our experience is contained between the two covers:

> There are perhaps no days of our childhood we lived so fully as those we believe we left without having lived them, those we spent with a favorite book. Everything that filled them for others, and that we dismissed as a vulgar obstacle to a divine pleasure: the game for which a friend would come to fetch us at the most interesting passage; the troublesome bee or sun ray that forced us to lift our eyes from the page or to change position . . . the dinner we had to return home for, and during which we thought only of going up immediately afterward to finish the interrupted chapter, all those things with which reading should have kept us from feeling anything but annoyance, on the contrary they have engraved in us so sweet a memory, that if we still happen today to leaf through those books of another time, it is for no other reason than that they are the only calendars we have kept of days that have vanished. (Proust 3)

Hence the seductiveness, for Proust, of reading lies in the paradox that this singular site of solitary narrative unfolds into the plenitude of activities among people, of world. Sitting with oneself with a book becomes an illusion of empowerment, of the self becoming other, of interiority expanded without bounds, and, at the same time, situated within a book. This model for reading, or allegory for the convolutions of the boundaries of selfhood, also describes the earlier articulation of sublime subjectivity made accessible

with the Byronic figure. The lone world of fantasy and the untraceable pleasures of the vast interiority of reading and autoeroticism open possibilities of a sublime escape. Reading and a Byronic autoeroticism share the creation of an erotic out of a desire for the self's infinity.

The Byronic figure and even Byron himself, whose celebrity and mythical status made him, to the popular imagination, almost indistinguishable from his created characters, was appropriated, repeated, and plagiarized again and again, during his lifetime and after his death.[85] People who knew Byron wrote intimate accounts about him, biographies, or included his conversation in their memoirs. Annabella Millbanke, later Lady Byron, coined the word "Byromania," and she observed that "the Byronic 'look' was mimicked everywhere by people who 'practised at the glass, in the hope of catching the curl of the upper lip, and the scowl of the brow'" (quoted in *Byromania*). What Matthew Arnold described later as the "theatrical Byron" was also copied by various young dandies by "deranging their hair or of knotting their neck handkerchief or of leaving their shirt collar unbuttoned" (*Byromania* 5). Lady Caroline Lamb, whose affair with Byron was infamous for its drama, extremes, and its development in a public arena, wrote her fictionalized version of their dangerous love, *Glenarvon* (1816). In this histrionic anti-romance, Glenarvon, the Byronic villain, a ruined genius who feels too much, steels his heart, setting his sights on ruining others as he has done to himself. He is described: "Yet it was the calm of hopeless despair, when passion, too violent to show itself by common means, concentrates itself at once around the heart, and steels it against

[85] Byronism strongly influenced Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin.* For representations of Byron in books, films, and theater, see *Byromania*, especially pages 221-229.

every sentiment of mercy" (142). *Glenarvon* recounts how the dangerous lover destroys women's lives; it sees Byron as a vampire who, through his incredible magnetism, attracts women only to suck out their strength by stealing their hearts. Glenarvon warns the heroine, "My love is death" (229). The drive in the dangerous lover that makes him dangerous, revenge, takes the blackened heart and turns it into outward violence. Full of vengeance, the dangerous lover wants to assuage his pained existence through making others feel torment as he does. The latent violence in his eyes turns on the whole world a hate that desires destruction. Because the dangerous lover believes everything is fragments of his own mindscape, his self-loathing remorse is a small step away from lashing out at others; his self-punishment so easily becomes other-punishment. Vengeance makes of the past an open present; the present pertains only to the past of pained events that must be requited. The past pains must be relived presently but in a reversed way, with the punisher becoming the punished. The dangerous lover obsesses about this re-visitation, re-living, and he desires so strongly to make his violent thoughts reality that all his actions move toward this outcome. The heroine herself stands as a figure for vengeance, and the dangerous lover believes that all avenging might be satiated if he can punish her sufficiently. But in the erotic historical, as well the Brontës, love acts as an interruption, disseminating the hard direction of his thought into a soft generosity toward her redemptive figure; his vengeance turns into a violent love, a passionate embrace. This love is the flip-side of revenge, its other being. Love's violence bespeaks hatred transformed.

To conclude then, the erotics of homesickness as articulated by the Byronic hero shape a concept of subjectivity based on failure—the failure of love, of finding a home, of finding meaning. The homesick subject, always longing, points to an ideal it can never have. But at the heart of this failure lies an ontology of escape, an escape that, out of this very lostness, might complete being. And if this completion occurs, through some impossible movement, then it happens through the incommensurable flash of love.

Chapter Four
The Absurdity of the Sublime: The Regency Dandy and the Malevolent Seducer (1825-1897)

The dangerous lover moves through the nineteenth century in a complex array of variations, distortions, and divisions. As I have explicated in chapter three, the hero of Byron and the Brontës constitutes a collection of men who, in various ways, step outside, escape, cast themselves out yet still retain their power. Another way of stating this would be to point to the growth of Byron's heroes, Rochester, and Heathcliff out of the Romantic sublime. Their sublime subjectivity serves as a tool to distinguish them from many other anti-heroic lovers of the nineteenth century. Full of chaos, the Romantic sublime self spills over in excess. Such a self, like the Wordsworthian consciousness, could dissolve at any moment into nature, into unity with the world, or into the black abyss of hell and hence be utterly lost to representation. The "heights of the soul," as Nietzsche calls the sublime, reveal the incomprehensibility of an interiority that can become limitless. The key to sublime subjectivity, as Jean-Luc Nancy argues in *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*, lies in its quality of signifying nothing, of being unnamable and uncontainable. As part of this sublime subjectivity, the eroticism of Romantic dangerous lovers mesmerizes by a profound nescience, because one can never fully know the infinite. In *The Romantic Sublime*, Thomas Weiskel, refashioning the Kantian sublime to bring it into a psychoanalytic discourse, argues that the sublime is the self's internalization of the "unattainability of the object," and thus the ungraspable

becomes located within. The lover's sublime works as a measure of failure—to return to the recurring theme of this project—but at the same time holds a promise, a freedom, "a movement of being carried away, traversal, uplifting, transport" (Nancy 7-8) for the hero himself and also for his lover.[86] Because of the Romantic hero's depth of desire, infinite because he can never attain the object, he always fails, falls from grace, and becomes stricken by impossibility. Yet infinite longing marks the divinity of the superior imagination, according to Romantic paradigms, and only those who strive for the impossible can reach this type of noble failure. Along with this failure comes the unplumbable depth of the loss of the ability to know oneself or the other, and this rupture in epistemology defines the sublimity of the Romantic anti-hero.

[86] As Kant puts it, the sublime awakens in us the "feeling of a destiny that exceeds completely the domain of the imagination" (quoted in Nancy 140).

I. The Regency Dandy

Any exploration of the contemporary popular figure of the outcast, darkly tormented lover must turn, paradoxically, to the very different figure of the nineteenth-century dandy. The dandy's powers came most clearly into play in the Silver-Fork novel. Depictions of glittering high society, the Silver-Forks were also called "fashionable novels" or productions of the "dandy school." Spanning roughly 1825 to 1850, Silver-Forks were set during the Regency period and depicted this time as, famously, full of moral vacuity, dissipation, degeneration. To give a sense of the requirements for the genre, Matthew Whiting Rosa describes the Silver-Fork, *Granby*:

> There are sumptuous balls, spirited house parties, excited gambling scenes, heightened by gossipy conversation everywhere—at the breakfast table, at the morning embroidery session, at tea, at the dinner table, and in the drawing room. There is ridicule of the middle classes, an intellectual dandy with enough wit to give him edge, and a beautiful heroine less insipid than usual; there are social climbers, clever but homely daughters who despise men, and, most indispensable of all, there is Almacks. (71)

In considering the Silver-Fork novel hero, I want to draw attention to a clear historical trajectory of appropriation. As Andrew Elfenbein argues in his essay "Silver-Fork Byron and Regency England," writers of this formula, especially Benjamin Disraeli, Bulwer-

Lytton, and Catherine Gore, appropriate some aspects of Byronism in their aristocratic dandies, especially the cynical, world-weary sophisticate of *Don Juan*. Moving forward to the twentieth-century, the contemporary Regency romance culls its fashionable and dissipated rake, ultimately reformed by love, from the Silver-Fork.[87] As I have discussed in chapter one, dandiacal dangerous lovers are common in the twentieth-century historical romance, but the Regency romance in particular captures the coxcomb and wit of the nineteenth-century and places him in the context of redemption through love.[88] The Regency romance (set during the Regency of course) follows a strict formula: the wealthy aristocratic dandy's debauched lifestyle—his late-night drinking, his affairs with elegant but cruel women, his sophisticated dalliance with fine horses, clothes, balls, and gaming "hells"—points to the desolation of his life in the midst of the world of the cynical, empty *ton* and to his ultimate need of reform. The Regency romance has its own language, primarily developed from Georgette Heyer's influential Regencies, which comes directly from the dandy of the Regency period (most famously, the ur-dandy Beau Brummell) and his literary depiction in the Silver-Fork.[89] Yet unlike most Silver-Forks, Regencies show the rake's reformation; the scapegrace becomes a responsible member of his world again when he meets an unsophisticated, usually unfashionable girl who is often an orphan and poor or working for her living. She re-vivifies his interest in life and all its sober duties. Regencies take up the dandy after his fashionable life has "ruined"

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[87] Regencies are still being written today. The major publishers of Regencies are Zebra, Signet, and Jove. Important contemporary Regency romance writers are Mary Jo Putney and Barbara Cartland. Roger Sales, in "The Loathsome Lord and the Disdainful Dame: Byron, Cartland and the Regency Romance," writes about Barbara Cartland's Regency romances and the way her celebrity persona follows Byron's.

[88] See chapter one for the dandyism of Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind.*

[89] Georgette Heyer (1902-1974) wrote historical romances from 1921-1974. A general consensus among historians of popular romance holds that Georgette Heyer invented the Regency romance. Pamela Regis points out in *A Natural History of the Romance* that Heyer's "influence is felt in every historical romance written since 1921" (125).

him, after he has come to realize that his life up till the heroine's entrance has been meaningless.[90] Interestingly, Elfenbein's argument about the Silver-Fork novels he discusses follows a didactic model; the message of the Silver-Fork is that Regency fashionable society is amoral and flawed and must be renounced for a middle-class model of domesticity. While this is certainly not true of the majority of Silver-Forks, the most important ones *do* typify an often desultory and confused didactic bildungsroman. But the reform of the Silver Fork dandy happens through politics (Pelham) or an emotional downfall (Vivian Grey) not through romantic love.[91]

Very different from the Romantic self which always presents itself at the limit, many early and slightly pre-Victorian representations of the dangerous lover have a relation to sublime interiority characterized by being more conscious of surfaces than depths. The Silver-Fork novel hero exemplifies a move from the hero whose meaning lies in an interior abyss to one who *means* by social performance and who always attains the object of his desire.

The dandy is obsessively attentive to fashionable dress, creating an inimitable style that everyone, of course, tries to imitate, and which often develops into outrageous foppishness. His central interests in life lie in his wit, his ability to manipulate and lead a transparent fashionable world, his creation of an exclusive, secret society of *ton*.[92] As Ellen Moers points out in *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm*, control stands as a central

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[90] Other similarities between these two popular genres should be noted. Both are excessively formulaic, and the Silver-Fork, after an early period of experimentation, was produced by the publisher Henry Colburn in an assembly-line fashion, similar to the contemporary mass-produced romance. Also, both display an obsessive attention to minute details of clothing, food, and other material goods.

[91] We can find such reform in Dickens. In many of his developmental narratives, specifically those of Pip and David Copperfield, final earnestness is prefigured by the knowledge and guidance of wiser heroines—Biddy and Agnes respectively.

[92] See Dorian Grey's dandyism later in this chapter.

concern for the dandy—control of his own appearance, of his manners, of fashions and of the people around him. The Romantic sublime self's dissolution and quality of always spilling over express deep desires to control and an ultimate frustration (e.g. Heathcliff, Rochester, and Byron's Corsair). The dandy's unique ability to obtain all that he desires, or at least to appear to, and to be the object of desire often creates a cynical end of desire. Ultimate control might lead to a final deadening of all the life that relies on chance, accident, and unpredictability—one of the Regency romance dandy's difficulties. Like the narrator of *Don Juan*, the tone of the Silver-Fork holds the superficialities of fashionable life up to a satirical light, seeing through the pettiness of all human endeavor. The cynical, worldly voice easily reads humanity's greed for fame, beauty, and fortune.

Unlike the self-exile of the Byronic hero—the man who fails to live in the everyday world of people—the Silver-Fork dandy is eminently successful as a social animal; he lives and moves as a defining element of what it means to be *inside*. The dandy, unlike the Romantic anti-hero, lives to represent, to present; he is a play of surfaces, of image, of an aesthetic subjectivity. In Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham* (1828), the title character decides to "set up a *character* . . . I thought nothing appeared more likely to be obnoxious to men, and therefore pleasing to women, than an egregious coxcomb: accordingly, I arranged my hair into ringlets, dressed myself with singular plainness and simplicity (a low person, by the by, would have done just the contrary), and, putting on an air of exceeding languor, made my maiden appearance" (25). A dandy's role required, as Domna Stanton points out, the epicure's "divination of the trivial" (39). Hence the dandy's only spirituality lies in an ultra-refined relation to the material object, specifically here personal appearance (the cut of his clothes), food and horses. The

character Russelton in *Pelham*, said to be modeled after Beau Brummell, finds at a young age that he cannot write poetry, so he instead becomes a poet of appearance. "Finding, therefore, that my *forte* was not in the Pierian line, I redoubled my attention to my dress; I *coated* and *cravatted* with all the attention the very inspiration of my rhymes seemed to advise" (73). The text to be deciphered is not a bottomless interior, as with the Romantic hero, but rather the most superficial drapery. That most social of acquirements—manners—are also seen as a site of transcendence. "What a rare gift, by and by, is that of manner! how difficult to define—how much more difficult to impart! Better for a man to possess them, than wealth, beauty, or even talent, if it fall short of genius—they will more than supply all" (31).

Pelham "almost die[s] with rapture" (49) over a *foie gras*. Taste takes precedence over emotional experience: a bad dinner is "*the* most serious calamity . . . for it carries with it no consolation: a buried friend may be replaced—a lost mistress renewed—a slandered character be recovered—even a broken constitution restored; but a dinner, once lost, is irremediable; that day is forever departed; an appetite once thrown away can never, till the cruel prolixity of the gastric agents is over, be regained" (123). With a vast emptiness inside him that can never be filled, the Byronic hero is the figure of insatiable hunger. The dandy satisfies himself by filling himself up in a very un-Romantic way: *by eating.*

While Pelham goes into raptures about the culinary arts, he initially casts a satirical eye on romantic passion. He comments on an acquaintance, "I hear he is since married. He did not deserve so heavy a calamity!" (27) Mr. Trebeck in Thomas Henry Lister's *Granby* (1826) (an early Silver-Fork with its heels still in the eighteenth-century

novel of manners—e.g., Maria Edgeworth and Fanny Burney) was also modeled after Beau Brummell. Trebeck "wished to astound, even if he did not amuse; and he had rather say a silly thing than a common-place one" (54). William Hazlett commented that Brummell's sayings "were predicated on devaluing the important through 'utmost nonchalance and indifference' on the one hand, and on the other, on 'exaggerating the merest trifles into matters of importance" (quoted in Stanton 43). The dandy's unattainability lies not in a deep interior—a blighted spirit—but rather in superficial externalities such as his genius for inimitable style, a brilliant social intercourse so dazzling it can't be grasped, a performance of personality that is unreadable not because of its obscure hiddenness but rather its over-signification in the realm of the marketplace. It appears sometimes that the dandy's soul can be located by discovering the name of his tailor, his florist, and his horse dealer. Emotions, even subjectivity, take on an inauthenticity and so clearly mirror fashionable desire outside him that the Byronic idea of the utter singularity of the soul is dissolved out into the social world. According to Bulwer-Lytton's son, he intended Pelham as "a person who took to himself the form and color of the society in which he moved" (quoted in Christensen 46). The sublimity of the dandy takes on a humorous banality; it is the "heights of the soul *from which even tragedy ceases to look tragic*" (my emphasis, 42)—the other half of Nietzsche's quotation above.

Interestingly, the dandy's influence on the social world was more complicated and far-reaching than as merely the first word of fashion. Bulwer-Lytton was obsessed with

Byronism and dandyism in his own personality and dress, as well as in his fiction.[93] Yet he often argued vehemently against the Byronic stance; in the beginning of his career he made a call for reform: "The aristocratic gloom, the lordly misanthropy, that Byron represented, have perished amid the action, the vividness, the life of these times" (quoted in Christensen 7). He even argues that his Pelham "put[s] an end to Byron's Satanic mania" (quoted in King and Engel 278). Clearly, his stated project with Pelham is to empty the Byronic hero of his sublime meaning, but this evacuation points again and again to Byronism itself.[94] The dandy's relation to the sublime lies in his opposing it, his consistent gesturing to its outside. Many Silver-Fork heroes define themselves precisely in distinction to the Byronic pose. At the end of *Pelham*, the title character apologizes for not being Werther-like: "forgive me if I have not wept over a "*blighted spirit*" . . . and allow that a man who, in these days of alternate Werters [sic] and Worthies, is neither the one nor the other, is, at least, a novelty in print, though, I fear, common enough in life" (230).

However, Moers points to characteristics of the dandy which might begin to explain the later romantic appropriation of the dandy, and they also provide a key to his eroticism. She discusses the subversive aspects of dandyism—the irony of Brummell's status as the perfect gentleman. "The dandy," Moers asserts, "stands on an isolated pedestal of self" (171). Albert Camus felt the dandy stood for the individual in revolt against society, Moers explains. Paradoxically then, the dandy places himself inside,

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[93] In *Edward Bulwer-Lytton: The Fiction of New Regions*, Allan Conrad Christensen details Bulwer's devastation upon Byron's death, his affair with Byron's ex-mistress Lady Caroline Lamb, and the repetition of this character in his writing. Other dandified literary figures who brought these interests into their fictions were Disraeli, Dickens, and Wilde.

[94] The prototypical Byronic hero in *Pelham* is Sir Reginald Glanville and *Eugene Aram*, *The Haunted and the Haunters* and *Falkland* also center on Gothic, tormented heroes (see chapter three for a discussion of these characters).

even as the creator of the inside, yet he uses this inside to foreground his superiority, the elevation which locates him both above and as other.

Trebeck in Lister's *Granby* expresses the isolation of misanthropy and thus serves to bring the dandy more clearly into the trajectory of the dangerous lover by his insolent disdain of earnestness, of real work and caring in the world. "Gracefully indolent," he had a "reputation of being able to do a great deal if he would but condescend to set about it" (52). As Caroline, Trebeck's love interest, thinks to herself, "There was a heartlessness in his character, a spirit of gay misanthropy, a cynical, depreciating view of society, an absence of high-minded generous sentiment, a treacherous versatility, and deep powers of deceit" (77). Trebeck's brilliance, his superior sparkle, tends to be not of this world; his misanthropy ruins him for feeling deep passion for others, for showing any passion to a society he rules by its superciliousness. His cynical life represents exactly the kind of man who has run through his successes too quickly; like Childe Harold he has "felt the fullness of satiety . . ." (I, 34) and he is "secure in guarded coldness . . . and deem'd his spirit now so firmly fixed" that it is "sheath'd with an invulnerable mind" (III, 82-85). While seeming somehow "used up" by depleting the sources and life of the world, Trebeck might also, like the Byronic figure, have an interior void, where the endless riches of life and love he obtains instantly drain away.

Moving the dandy forward exactly one hundred years, the Duke of Avon in Heyer's *These Old Shades* (1926), like Pelham and Trebeck, suffers from ennui as he strolls languidly about in jewels, a waistcoat of flowered silk, a long purple cloak, rose-

lined.[95] Emotions "fatigue" him; passion brings a "sneer" to his face. Always cynical and sarcastic except in his "foppish appearance" that expresses a serious interest only in rich clothing and such externals rather than an inner life, the Regency dandy here represents the exhausted self, living in the boredom of utter lassitude, of weariness. The Duke's ruthless cynicism only fails when it comes to revenge on those men who had slighted him in the past and blocked his intrigues with women. The Duke's hardened behavior earns him his nickname, "Santanas." He is so hardened; he is represented as having "no soul"—lost in his youth through ruthless treatment by others. His devilish depletion begins to break down when he "buys" a beautiful young boy out of forced labor in a sordid inn and makes him his page.[96] The boy worships the Duke like a "slave," and what seems to be a homoerotic situation develops. However, the page is really the heroine in disguise, which the Duke has guessed from the start. His Grace has taken in this girl/boy, Leonie, as part of his complicated revenge plot: he knows Leonie is the first born of the House of Saint-Vire, switched at birth with the son of farmers so that the estates would not pass to a hated brother. With the Duke, the cynical demeanor and depthless emotional life of Pelham become transformed in the twentieth-century historical romance. Living at the limit with reckless carelessness, the Duke represents, along with the dandy, some central aspects of erotic Byronism. In this character two types

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[95] This Signet Regency Romance, which has all the hallmarks of the Regency formula, is set in eighteenth-century Paris. While this setting may seem odd, it expresses the contemporary use of the word "Regency" to represent aristocratic, luxuriant dissipation rather than an actual historical period.

[96] The erotic relationship with one's page dates back at least to Byron, who had homosexual relations with his pages. During and after Lady Caroline Lamb's affair with Byron, she would dress up as his page, finally as a frenzied attempt to gain access to him after he refused to see her. She is also reputed to have written most of *Glenarvon* in a page uniform. The page uniform also appears in Victorian pornography as the mark of the "slave" in a sadomasochistic sexual liaison.

of Byronism are appropriated.[97] The secretive misanthrope whose pain appears as plots of revenge against those who ruined his life comes from "The Giaour" and "The Corsair," and the life of idle love and cynical worldliness are clearly *Don Juan* characteristics.

Leonie amorously ensnares the Duke and saves him from his self-hatred by the complicated mix of her dependence on him, her willfulness, and her crass volubility. The unfamiliarity of the heroine astonishes emotions out of the Duke, such as care and sentiment, moving him into the romance's transcendental discourse of love. Leonie's outspokenness punctures the Duke's urbane, cool sarcasm and his levity about life which has led to its final meaninglessness to him. Leonie's existence outside the codes of elegant society, her difficulty in reading these codes, creates a breakdown of this semiotic system for the Duke. Replacing the fashionable devil-may-care mask, the discourse of love fashions an interiority for the Duke.

The mix of Byronic sublimity with early nineteenth-century anti-heroic epicurism already appears in another particularly Victorian translation of the Romantic dangerous lover. Disraeli's Silver-Fork dandy, in *Vivian Grey* (1826), moves from being a Pelham-like star to a self full of a melancholy sublimity, tempered from the wild passions of Byron and the Gothic, softened from tragedy to a pallid sadness. Vivian Grey exemplifies what I would call a "hinged" sublime. The "hinge" refers to the way which the Silver-Fork dandy throws out non-meaning here and there and how he will

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[97] This mapping of appropriation is similar to the way French writers of the nineteenth century appropriated Byron to create their dandies. Domna Stanton discusses two Byronic models in relation to the French dandy in *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in 17th and 19th Century French Literature*. Stanton describes the French dandy as a combination of Harold, Lara, Conrad, and Manfred, creating "the dandy's hidden essence." From *Don Juan* comes "the apparent self" who exhibits "the elegance, seductiveness, and nonchalance" (Stanton 37).

sometimes, suddenly, point to a secret interiority of meaning. And this hinge turns on failure; when the brilliantly successful dandy begins to fail, he moves toward sublimity, as well as the kind of Byronism that later dangerous lovers exemplify.

Vivian Grey's astonishingly influential personal charm and his genius for literary quotation and wit bring him, at a young age, to the center of the *haute ton.*[98] While a dandy, he is far more ambitious than the typical picturesque type; he "was a graceful, lively lad, with just enough of dandyism to preserve him from committing gaucheries, and with a devil of a tongue" (17). His constant study is of human nature, how to please and win over others. The hidden soul with its brilliancy and infinity is again contrasted with the glittery externality of the apparent dandy in two classifications of dandies. The intellectual Silver-Fork dandy, as opposed to the merely picturesque one, often hides behind his bright, frivolous façade the activity of the researcher who studies both books and the ways of men.[99] Pelham comments that "there has not been a day in which I have spent less than six hours reading and writing" (201).[100] He also often hides the ambitious politician, and, sometimes, the romantic soul which feels deeply. As Matthew Whiting Rosa argues, the dandy, as a fashionable fop, needs to be a literary man, yet he has to hide his hours and hours of study. Intellectuality, like every other accomplishment, needs to appear effortless for the illustrious young buck. Hence a secret interior, a Byronic private soul, distinguishes the intellectual dandy, a superior man among men.

In his bid for a place in Parliament, Vivian Grey wheedles his way into the good graces of several influential politicians only to find, when his prize seems within reach,

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[98] *Vivian Grey* was described upon its publication as a "sort of Don Juan in prose" (quoted in Wilson 81).
[99] Matthew Whiting Rosa created the classifications of the intellectual and the picturesque dandy.
[100] James Eli Adams, in *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*, discusses the dandy as a man of letters in Dickens, Carlyle, and Tennyson. See chapter three for my discussion of the Byronic elucubrator in Bulwer-Lytton and others.

his "friends" turning against him for petty and backbiting reasons. Forced to fight a duel, he accidentally kills a man whom he deeply esteems. Vivian weeps "as men can weep but once in this world" and he flees the country, disaffected with society, bitter with his life and his own false and manipulative ways. "He felt himself a broken-hearted man, and looked for death, whose delay was no blessing" (175). Vivian Gray appears here as a tempered Byronic hero, a softened Manfred. Vivian Grey's fallenness doesn't lead him to exile, or to transcendental homelessness and all the world-hating bitterness that a Manfredian Byronic hero would feel. Manfred and his ilk become demonic and otherworldly, while Vivian Grey's torments take him merely into a melancholy darkness.[101] The melancholy sublime, as Weiskel argues, differs from what I will call a powerful, Satanic one because, in the latter, the realization of the self's abyss, of the terror of annihilation and harm, leads to an aggressive identification with what terrorizes, what causes failure. This type of identification leads to various forms of grandly destructive impulses, to a laying waste on a large scale. Mournful sublimity lacks the grandeur of Manfred and the malevolence of Melmoth or Heathcliff. The melancholy sublime comes from another kind of identification with this aggressive instinct, one that causes feelings of defeatist guilt, partially or wholly sublimated, which brings about a gloomy, thoughtful sense of loss. The Romantics' freedom to delve into transcendence, leading to a positive, Wordsworthian sublime, or a negative Byronic one, shifts to a wearied worrying, a feeling of agitation and oppression.

Vivian Grey finds himself desired by the *ton* in Europe for very Byronic reasons; he represents now a gloomy mysterious figure. He retains his ability to please fashionables, to be an astute satirical eye on the empty manners of the upper classes. A

[101] Pushkin's Eugene Onegin also goes the way of melancholy.

disappointed man, he is not exactly a ruined one. His world is not Byronically blackened; rather, it is painted in subtle tints of blue. Melancholy evacuates the present of immanent meaning, leaving only a pale semblance of life, an empty play of glittering movement. Gently lost, not angry, Vivian Grey falls in love with a woman who might be his salvation, but he is doubly cursed when she dies suddenly of consumption. In the end, Vivian disappears in an apocalyptic storm, not as a part of its own elemental power—as Manfred would feel—but rather as another stroke of bad luck, a closing stroke in a promising life which ends in failure. Vivian Grey, unlike Manfred or the Corsair, sees his failure as stemming from a lack within him, a failure to see deeply enough, to understand fully, to make a positive decision at the right time. Hamlet-like, Vivian Grey is sad for the whole world; he mourns it, caresses it with his lamentation. Like a young Werther, he falls into the *Heiligtum des Schmerzes*, the worship of sorrow.

In addition to heroes who fail and are overcome by melancholy or a cynical recklessness or weariness, another trait of both the Silver-Fork novel and the contemporary Regency romance is the satirizing of certain aspects of the Byronic pose. Byron in some sense preempted such a stance by himself ridiculing the Byronic pose in *Don Juan*. We have already seen some of this deliberate un-Byronizing in *Pelham*, and its manifestation in the Victorian period takes on a moral taint. Thackeray and Carlyle, representing a Victorian disapproval of the wasteful, selfish and idle type, famously criticize what they see as the silliness and final immorality of the dandy and the particularly Byronic aspects of the dandy.[102] Rosa argues that Silver-Forks culminate in

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[102] Trollope treats the Byronic Corsair with levity and satire in *The Eustace Diamonds* (1872). Lizzie Eustace longs for a Corsair and finds one, at least for a while, in Lord George. But, pointing to the Byron of Don Juan rather than the Corsair; he is not an erotic or even romantic figure. Lord George appears to *play* the role of the Corsair, as he would play a comedic part. An example of Lizzie's hard-headed

Vanity Fair (1848). Thackeray here does even more explicitly what many Silver-Forks have already done—criticize the moral vacuity of Regency society and particularly of the Regency dandy.[103] Jos Sedley represents the puffed-out, indolent, false self, a heap of clothes who can only repeat again and again a few simple stories about himself that have little basis in fact. His only success lies in his resplendent personal appearance: "A very stout, puffy man, in buckskins and Hessian boots, with several immense neckclothes, that rose almost to his nose, with a red striped waistcoat and an apple-green coat with steel buttons almost as large as crown pieces (it was the morning costume of a dandy or blood of those days)" (29). A picturesque dandy, he revels like Pelham in food and drink, yet unlike Pelham he represents merely an empty joke, an attempted gesture at a once successful performance which now only tries to shore up usefulness, waste, the dead end of everyone's scorn.

George Osborne, while something of a dandy, puts on a performance of erotic Byronism. "George had an air at once swaggering and melancholy, languid and fierce. He looked like a man who had passions, secrets, and private harrowing griefs and adventures. His voice was rich and deep. He would say it was a warm evening, or ask his partner to take an ice, with a tone as sad and confidential as if he were breaking her mother's death to her, or preluding a declaration of love" (202). Yet Thackeray's continual deflation of George as not worthy of Amelia's love, as a superfluous being

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conniving about her "romantic" Corsair: "But these Corsairs are known to be dangerous, and it would not be wise that she should sacrifice any future prospects of importance on behalf of a feeling, which, no doubt, was founded on poetry, but which might too probably have no possible beneficial result. As far as she knew, the Corsair had not even an island of his own in the Aegean Sea . . ." (130).

[103] *Pelham* manages to have it all, attracting readers who want to understand and be a part of fashionable life while subtly critiquing this life as well.

whose selfishness wounds others, serves to point to Byronism as merely a gesture, since George is never any of these things; he's only a selfish cad.

The contemporary Regency romance picks up the false Byronic pose along with its "real" Byronic heroes. In the Regency, true Byronism lies in the man who, although failed and deeply wounded, can be redeemed by love. Heyer's *Venetia* (1958) centers around Lord Dameral, the "Wicked Baron" whose reputation for orgies and liaisons with "sullied" women precedes him when he visits his country estates to escape his debts. At first Dameral appears dangerous and Byronic to Venetia, although she doesn't fear him, and is hardly even impressed by this magnetism. "He bore himself with a faint suggestion of swashbuckling arrogance. As he advanced upon her Venetia perceived that he was dark, his countenance lean and rather swarthy, marked with lines of dissipation. A smile was curling his lips, but Venetia thought she had never seen eyes so cynically bored" (32). And it is this boredom that the hardheaded, unshockable Venetia breaks through, to discover the ardent, earnest young man encrusted by layers and layers of disillusionment. Dameral immediately falls in love with Venetia and reforms his ways. Everyone in the North Riding, often to his or her disappointment, finds the Duke to be a trustworthy, responsible man, if somewhat provocative and cynical. The character Oswald, a young and silly boy, obsesses about Byronic darkness, but everyone sees through his attempts to be Byronic to attract Venetia. "The top of his desire is to be mistaken for the Corsair. He combs his hair into wild curls, knots silken handkerchiefs round his neck, and broods over the dark passions of his soul" (36). Venetia's aunt plays with Byronism by dieting like Byron did, drinking vinegar, soda water, and then eating

biscuits. Sublime insatiability has become merely a plan for dieting or a pose to attract women, both of which are unsuccessful.

In the contemporary Regency romance much of the ability to see through society's transparent materialism resides in the heroine; while she is generally outside fashionable society, she does not desire to be in it. A domestic traditionalist, the Regency heroine must convert the hero into seeing fashion and even society itself as worthless. His reformation comes in the elevation of the couple over social ambitions. The Silver-Fork dandy, on the contrary, when he is written into a didactic bildungsroman narrative, must finally step down from his rebellious pedestal of self and find his life's work among and for people, as Carlyle and others promote.

In summing up all that I've argued above about the dandy (and perhaps even in contradicting some of it), there always remains some quality about this figure that can not be fully explicated. Like the dangerous lover, the dandy's mythic stature, his symbolic stance of always pointing to something larger and indefinable, create a character that is both complete and difficult to permeate. His wholeness of meaning (or meaninglessness) and his success belie dissection, linearity, teleology. Moers writes similarly of the mesmerism of the dandy, represented by Beau Brummell. "There remains an indescribable firmness to the Brummell figure, something compounded of assurance, self-sufficiency, misanthropy, nastiness, even cruelty that made him feared in his lifetime and will never be explained away" (38). The "firmness" or complexity of the dandy character frees him to represent a plethora of identity traits, contradictory posturings, and moral messages. His flatness can be spread out to signify almost endlessly, and from this

comes the difficulty in describing definitively his relationship to Byronism and the dangerous lover.

II. The Malevolent Seducer

Another Victorian translation of the dangerous lover connects him to an Iago tradition of purposeless malignity. A force for meaningless evil, for destroying the possibility of grace for others, for general, wholesale harm, Iago characters do not even have the excuse of psychologized misanthropy. Their evil participates in a paucity of unique signification; it comes out of some impersonal force of destruction that resides outside of reasoning and sense. Often, as in *Othello*, such absurdity of malevolence causes a concatenation of death and destruction; evil spins out of control, affecting a whole scene and all those characters within it. Iago characters open a wound in the world which, in the paradigm of the contemporary romance, is "healed" by the heroine's love. The evil seducer fascinated the mid-nineteenth-century popular imagination through seduction narratives in the penny magazines of the 1840s and 50s. Sally Mitchell points to the repetition of these narratives in magazines such as the *Pioneer*. The story would include an aristocrat who would seduce a lower class girl, usually ruining her and then disappearing, or being punished by remorse. Clearly a class allegory and certainly a kind of reaction against Byronism, these narratives represent the dangerous lover not as an unquiet soul searching for absolution or death, but rather as *only* dangerous (but still titillating in his dangerousness). Mitchell also points to numerous sensation novels that contain seduction narratives, such as A.J. Barrowcliffe's *Normanton* (1862), *The Soiled Dove*, *Jessie's Expiation* (1867) and James Malcolm Rymer's *The White Slave* (1844-5).[104]

[104] For discussion of the class element in these seduction narratives, see Anne Clarke's "The Politics of Seduction in English Popular Culture, 1748-1848."

Iago-like anti-heroes often serve, for the Victorians, as transgressors of the social norm, whose punishment leads to a reaffirmation of normative reason. Another type of dandy narrative appears with Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861). In the heartless rake Frank Levison, the dandy is vilified.[105] Unlike the most successful dandies of the Regency, Levison overdresses. Richard Hare describes him as having "perfumed hands" and "dainty gloves." "He would wear diamond shirt-studs, diamond rings, diamond pins; brilliants, all of first water" (97). Like the dandies of the Silver-Forks, he runs into debt, living a high and frivolous life, and he also tries out politics. Yet in many ways he is unsuccessful as a dandy; while he seduces many women, he finally becomes merely a source of harm for those around him. His seduction of Lady Isabel (Mrs. Carlyle) points to the didactic thread of the novel; such idle, wasteful, and cruel men are harmful to society as a whole. Motivated by no purpose, Levison seduces, murders, and divides families, without any sort of magnetism, personal power, or clear desire. As a purely transgressive force, he still does not create a serious rift or interruption in given norms, as a rebellious Romantic would seek to do, but rather serves only to uphold the generally understood moral structure based on heterosexual marriage and monogamy. While we might bring this anti-hero into a Sadean discourse, in this sense he is not Sadean. Sade seeks to outrage, as Pierre Klowossowski asserts, and to outrage is, among other things, to establish a site of singularity in normative generality, in universal reason. "With this principle of the normative generality of the human race in mind, Sade sets out to establish a countergenerality that would obtain for the specificity of perversions, making exchange between singular cases of perversion possible" (Klowossowski 14). The Victorian anti-

[105] The seduction narrative at the heart of *East Lynne* contains a similar condemnation of the dissipated rake as the narratives mentioned in the previous paragraph, yet the class element is different; Levison's most important seduction is of Lady Isabel.

hero, on the contrary, can be recuperated into a heterosexual discourse of crime and punishment.

East Lynne is one of many Victorian novels that centers on the two-lover motif. The heroine is given a choice of two lovers, representing either the propriety of the secure gentleman situated in steady society (Mr. Carlyle) or the abyssal secretiveness of the lost stranger, generally utterly villainous (Levison). To some extent reminiscent of the relationship of the Gothic heroine to the villain and her lover as discussed in chapter two, this paradigm usually posits the Victorian villain as the most fascinating of the two for the heroine. In her essay "Dombey and Son: Carker the Manager," Anne Humpherys argues that the Gothic villain is split into two different types in early Victorian Gothic. One is a type of Byronic hero who doesn't commit a deep crime or sin but still feels a misanthropic guilt and melancholy (like the later Vivian Grey, Rochester, and the many less dangerous contemporary romance dangerous lovers, especially in the "sweet" genres—see chapter one), and the other acts in villainous ways yet doesn't contain the psychological depth of the Gothic villain. This second type Humpherys calls the melodramatic villain. Generally it is the latter who plays the villain in the Victorian two-lover motif, although the variations of this character abound. Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Anthony Trollope, among many others often work within this genre, or create subtle variations on it.

Steerforth in *David Copperfield* (1846) begins by condescending to David when they are children at Salem House. Steerforth's domineering and dictatorial manner, with his upper-class appearance of experience and knowledge, immediately charms the slavishly passive and class-obsessed David. David falls in love with Steerforth, and their

homoerotic relationship blinds David to Steerforth's savage sadism—generally worked against those of lower classes, such as the schoolteacher Mr. Mell whom Steerforth torments because his mother lives on charity in an almshouse. Yet Steerforth holds this charm, the charm of cultural capital, which creates the self-ease and assurance David always wishes he had. "There was an ease in his manners—a gay and light manner it was, but not swaggering—which I still believe to have borne a kind of enchantment with it. I still believe him, in virtue of his carriage, his animal spirits, his delightful voice, his handsome face and figure, and, for aught I know, of some inborn power of attraction besides (which I think a few people possess), to have carried a spell with him to which it was a natural weakness to yield, and which not many persons could withstand" (124-25). The fascination of the dangerous lover is an attraction to the powerful and the desire for an immolation at the feet of this seemingly superior individual. Not a dangerous lover only to David, Steerforth also becomes one to Emily. Emily could choose the simple, honest, working-class Ham (and even David appears as a possibility for a time), but she chooses the "demon lover"—the conventionally inaccessible, hence eroticized Steerforth. Unlike the pure Byronic hero who is fallen and survives as a failure, a character like Dickens's Steerforth once fallen must die to the narrative, be effaced by it rather than transcend it or hold its immanent meaning.

In Dickens' story of two lovers, both flawed, *Dombey and Son* (1847), Edith comes to have a choice between her husband, Mr. Dombey, who stands for the frigidity of an obsession with business and money—his coldness freezes all those around him—or Carker, who can be placed firmly in the Iago tradition. With his melodramatic flair, he is a theatrical, gestural dangerous lover who seems to have no interiority, hiding his abyss

behind his large grin and debonair façade. Like many anti-heroic lovers, he wears a mask and controls his emotions so no one can see the emptiness inside. "He had his face so perfectly under control, that few could say more, in distinct terms, of its expression, than that it smiled or that it pondered" (457). A kind of cat or predatory animal, he "pounces" on his victims and, metaphorically, tears them up. "Coiled up snugly at certain feet, he was ready for a spring, or for a tear, or for a scratch . . ." (387). Yet, as Humpherys argues at length in "Dombey and Son: Carker the Manager," Carker begins as a caricature of the villain, yet he develops and changes. His divining cleverness and sensitivity to the subtle emotions and desires of others complicates him and explains the fascination he holds for woman in the novel, specifically Florence, Alice and Edith. While these women all come to hate Carker, he represents for each of them the attraction of the dangerous lover. Florence's reaction to him, while never that of a lover, expresses strongly his magnetism:

> This conduct on the part of Mr. Carker, and her habit of often considering it with wonder and uneasiness, began to invest him with an uncomfortable fascination in Florence's thoughts. A more distinct remembrance of his features, voice, and manner: which she sometimes courted, as a means of reducing him to the level of a real personage, capable of exerting no greater charm over her than another: did not remove the vague impression. And yet he never frowned, or looked upon her with an air of dislike or animosity, but was always smiling and serene. (385)

Florence's "wonder and uneasiness" has an undeveloped erotic aspect to it and is also a response to his mysterious otherness. Carker's seduction of Alice appears at first to have made her his worst enemy, but she suddenly relents when it comes to the possibility of Carker's death. Edith's response to Carker at first seems to be merely a proud desire to use him as a tool for revenge. Running away with Carker will punish Dombey for his sadistic treatment of her. And Edith punishes Carker as well by only pretending she will become his mistress and then renouncing him when he has become a means for escape. Yet Humpherys argues convincingly that Edith's response to him is an attraction of similar temperaments and that in their relationship we see Carker as a handsome and sensual man. Carker's erotic villainy places him firmly in the trajectory of the dangerous lover, and yet he does not stand outside as a blackened, world–decimating type such as Manfred or Heathcliff. While there are moments when the reader is persuaded to identify with him because he is shown to have an interior life, Carker's evil never holds an erotic sublimity.

When Maggie Tulliver first meets Stephen Guest in Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), she sees in him "the half-remote presence of a world of love and beauty and delight, made up of vague, mingled images from all the poetry and romance she had ever read, or had ever woven in her dreamy reveries" (311). Stephen Guest's "diamond ring, attar of roses, and air of nonchalant leisure, at twelve o'clock in the day" and his characterization as "the graceful and odiferous result of the largest oil-mill and the most extensive wharf in St. Ogg's" (193) mark him as the idle dandy, backed by cultural and economic capital. The erotic intensity Maggie feels in his presence comes not only from his figure symbolizing an aestheticized and ideal world but also from his very

inaccessibility and taboo status as her cousin Lucy's lover. His dangerousness comes from the way he envelops a lost and thus paradisiacal world for Maggie who is drawn to him as she is drawn to other self-destructive rebellious passions which we have seen at play in her childhood, as in the scene where she cuts off her hair, or when she runs away to live with the gypsies. "Something strange and powerful there was in the light of Stephen's long gaze, for it made Maggie's face turn towards it and look upwards at it" (357). Stephen Guest's seduction of Maggie comes from his selfish and spoiled misdirection rather than a deliberate desire for another's harm, such as a character like Carker or Steerforth feels. Neil Roberts argues that Stephen Guest is an outsider to the moral world of the novel; "he is the useless product of other men's labour" (99).[106] He is certainly an outsider to Maggie's world, a stranger to her experience up until the moment she meets him; and it is this strangeness that intoxicates Maggie. When she succumbs to "that strong mysterious charm which made a last parting from Stephen seem the death of all joy" (379), Maggie finally closes the book on the possibility of being accepted into the society of St. Ogg's.

Interestingly, *The Mill on the Floss* contains the two lover motif, but Eliot divides the Byronic hero/villain into two men, equally unfit to be proper lovers for Maggie. While Stephen Guest is not exactly a melodramatic villain, he does become the seducer. Philip Wakem takes the place of the more proper lover in the lover's triangle because he loves her deeply and isn't attached (although because of their families having quarreled, their relationship is also impossible), yet he represents the kind of lover Humpherys

[106] Yet Gillian Beer argues the opposite: that the choice of Stephen for Maggie would be one that parallels social forms. The lack of agreement of Stephen's status in society mirrors that of the prototypical dangerous lover who generally has all the power of cultural capital yet is also in some way exiled or outside.

discusses in her schema. Because of his hunched back, he feels he has been "marked from childhood for a peculiar kind of suffering" (271). He has a Byronized melancholy torment about him without having committed any crimes, and his deformed figure marks him as marginalized and Cain-like.[107] Maggie's choice of Stephen leads to her destruction and final death.

To take a slightly different turn here, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) does not contain the two-lover motif, yet it is an interesting combination of the Silver-Fork narrative (at its most didactic) and the seduction one. The character of Dorian Gray works as an important transitional figure in the dangerous lover trajectory. Dorian represents the philosophy of the dandy with his worship of the beautiful, yet he is also a dangerous seducer and rake, driving numerous women and men to ruin and suicide. As Basil remarks, "Why is your friendship so fatal to young men? There was that wretched boy in the Guards who committed suicide . . . There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England, with a tarnished name. . . What about Lord Kent's only son, and his career? . . . What about the young Duke of Perth?" (147) Dorian, akin to the vampire, the rake of the seduction narrative, and Gothic villains, ruins lovers in order to feed his desire for all types of tabooed and marginal experiences, to further his attempts to reach the depths of selfish pleasures and abasement. This spiral towards "sin" begins with the dandy's divination of materiality—food, wine, clothing, art.

> Fashion, by which what is really fantastic becomes
> for a moment universal, and Dandyism, which, in its
> own way, is an attempt to assert the absolute modernity of

[107] *Can You Forgive Her?* and *A Tale of Two Cities* also contain the two lover narrative, with Carton and Vavasor as the anti-heroes. See my discussion of them in chapter three.

> beauty, had, of course, their fascination for him. His mode of dressing, and the particular styles that from time to time he affected, had their marked influence on the young exquisites of the Mayfair balls and Pall Mall club windows, who copied him in everything that he did, and tried to reproduce the accidental charm of his graceful, though to him only half-serious, fopperies. (127)

But the "worship of the senses" is not enough for him; he wants to live a new "hedonism" which will explore every kind of passionate experience. The dandy in his purist form shows no true passion. Finally Dorian moves very far away from the Silver-Fork dandy: "There were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realize his conception of the beautiful" (143). Even in Thackeray's critique of the dandy in *Vanity Fair* he is never a force for evil.

Basil Hallward, drawn by the aesthetic experience of gazing on Dorian's still-beautiful person, tells Lord Henry about the kind of seduction Dorian is able to practice. "When our eyes met, I felt that I was growing pale. A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself" (6). The homoeroticism of the narrative points to the way Wilde's representation of the "dangerousness" of our hero comes from society's fear of same-sex desire. Clearly Dorian's evil influence on men and his later punishment by disfiguration and death is shot through with homophobia. The secret expression of his

sin, locked away in the attic, has much to do with a figurative meaning of being in "the closet"—forced to hide one's desires and sexual activities.

Dorian's "strange and dangerous charm," which comes from his evil knowledge and abilities as well as the beauty of his appearance and appointments (and hence his wealth and position), represents the dangerous lover of the contemporary romance as he appears in the beginning of the narrative. Never redeemed by love as a contemporary romantic anti-hero would be, Dorian dies, a self exhausted by passionate experience which is never enough to fulfill him.

Dorian's Gothic double—a painting which changes to reflect his evil deeds while his own appearance remains youthful and innocent-looking—has Dorian's sins and evil deeds inscribed on its face. Like many other dangerous lovers, such as the Cain-like Byronic figure, Dorian's unspeakable interiority is marked on an exterior surface, the painting. Thus the existence of the unrepresentable relies on a surface inscription, which could be read by anyone. Basil sums up this central truism that drives the plot: "Sin is a thing that writes itself across a man's face. It cannot be concealed. People talk sometimes of secret vices. There are no such things. If a wretched man has a vice, it shows itself in the lines of his mouth, the droop of his eyelids, the moulding of his hands even" (146). Of course, when the inscription is destroyed, the man is destroyed, pointing again to the paradoxical play of surface /depth of the dangerous lover.

III. The Vampire

It seems fitting to end this trajectory with a figure that has been haunting it all along, with a figure who himself is also always located *afterward*, after death, after the end of all narrative movement and life. One of the repeated refrains of this project, found both in its overall structure and meaning as well as its theoretical underpinnings, is the narrativity of the "too-late." The drama of the dangerous lover begins when it is already over, after the hero feels his being has no meaning anymore. The story is generated out of this death of ideals, of futurity. Heidegger's discussion of the ontological structure of the life of the subject as always being-toward-death, as always in a relation to his death rather than origins, structures any understanding of the dangerous lover narrative. The dangerous lover narrative always fails; its being and life always come out of an initial failure of possibility. The collection of anti-heroes who most exemplify this paradoxical afterlife begins with Melmoth, who has sold his soul to the devil and symbolizes all lost and homeless beings such as Cain and the Wandering Jew. Out of Byron's fascination with cursed, unredeemable figures comes the character Manfred, whose story begins with an all-consuming longing for death and ends with his actual death, which pales in meaning when compared to the power of the death-in-life of the beginning of the story. Childe Harold has used up his life in idle dissipations when his story starts, and his journey begins without object or return. The Giaour opens on a blackened, sterile life, full only of a desire for vengeance which, once slaked, means death. Lara returns to his homeland after many years of travel in a state of afterlife:

There was in him a vital scorn of all:
As if the worst had fall'n which could befall,
He stood a stranger in this breathing world,
An erring spirit from another hurled;
A thing of dark imaginings, that shaped
By choice the perils he by chance escaped;
But 'scaped in vain, for in their memory yet
His mind would half exult and half regret. (I.17.1-8)

This "stranger in this breathing world" mourns the past, mourns life and a place among the living. Heathcliff's origins are always obscured, and his resulting estrangement from the society of the narrative points from the beginning to a cursed existence. Because the narrative begins at the end, when Catherine is dead, Heathcliff becomes a figure of mourning and loving the dead. Rochester enters the story of *Jane Eyre* sneering at the world from his blighted life, feeling everything is lost to him. But Rochester enters into a new life with his redemption through love. Max de Winter of *Rebecca* steps into the heroine's life an embittered, restlessly roving man, homeless and self-exiled. Revivified through the love of the heroine, his afterlife becomes more fully imminent than his life before the beginning of the story. The hero of the erotic historical romance follows in this trajectory of those who begin already ended.

The figure of the vampire literalizes the undead state of the dangerous lover. The vampire's near immortality links him to Cain, the Wandering Jew and those livid characters in Byron who live eons of pain in a matter of days. In John Polidori's introduction to his *The Vampyre* (1819) he points out that vampirism was often

considered as a punishment after death for some dark crime committed when living, and the punishment encompassed not only the torment of a lonely and desolate immortality, but also the compulsion to visit the curse on those most loved by the man when alive. Byron's Giaour is just such a cursed soul:

> But first on earth, as Vampyre sent,
> Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent;
> Then ghastly haunt the native place,
> And suck the blood of all thy race;
> There from thy *daughter, sister, wife*,
> At midnight drain the stream of life;
> *Yet loathe the banquet which perforce*
> Must feed thy livid living corse (755-762)

The dangerous lover often vampirizes those who love him, as in Manfred's driving Astarte to take her own life; Glenarvon's seduction of his victims, which leave them pale and lifeless; and the hero of the modern gothic romance and the erotic historical whose mysterious and terrifying eroticism fascinates the heroine into a helpless passivity. The Victorian seduction narrative often likens the seducer to a kind of vampire like Dorian Gray, or a frenzied animal like Carker who might attack with fangs.

The vampire, like the dangerous lover, steps out of timeless myth. In both myths eroticism might bring about death, transformation, or a transcendence of time and place. Both trace their roots to the Gothic demon who rises out of a supernatural realm of superior strength, agility, and the ability to change shape and form. As Laurence Rickels points out in his *Vampire Lectures*, those who were already marginalized figures in

society were thought to return as vampires after death. In medieval Eastern Europe alcoholics, thieves, excommunicated people, non-Christians (specifically Jews), those who died under a curse and suicides were some of the excluded who might not stay dead. Dangerous lovers come down through myth with a similar constellation of vampiric symptoms; they are often alcoholics (Carton, Rhett Butler, and numerous erotic historical romance heroes), thieves (Conrad, the Corsair and many other pirates); they are seen as unholy or cursed (Manfred, the Gaiour, Cain-like figures, Rochester, Heathcliff, and contemporary heroes linked with demonism, especially in gothic romances); they are effeminate or gay-coded (Rhett Butler, the dandy) and they desire death above all else (Manfred, Carton, Heathcliff, etc.)

Tom Holland argues that vampires after Byron descend from the Byronic hero and, further, that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), surely the most influential version of the vampire story, was largely based on Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), a story Holland notes was originally told by Byron, which his sometime doctor heard, recorded, and embellished.[108] Contemporary film versions of vampirism, as well as such popular narratives as those of Anne Rice, represent an even more eroticized, sophisticated, celebrity vampire haunting the fashionable world and full of Byronic decadence, satiated ennui, melancholy and pallid beauty.

There is an interesting and tenuous link between the vampire and the dandy, with Byronism as a background influence for both. Curiously, Lord Ruthven of *The Vampyre* appears to be something of a Regency dandy, and he has many of the characteristics that the Silver-Fork will later incorporate for its hero. The story opens in a familiar way,

> It happened that in the midst of the dissipations attendant

[108] See Holland's "Undead Byron," especially pages 155-56.

> upon a London winter, there appeared at the various parties of the leaders of the *ton* a nobleman, more remarkable for his singularities, than his rank . . . His peculiarities caused him to be invited to every house; all wished to see him, and those who had been accustomed to violent excitement, and now felt the weight of ennui, were pleased at having something in their presence capable of engaging their attention. (265)

Lord Ruthven has "the reputation of a winning tongue," and he loves to gamble, especially when it means he can ruin promising young men, Dorian Gray-like. He moves through the drawing rooms of London with a magnetic aloofness, "a man entirely absorbed in himself, who gave few other signs of his observation of external objects, than the tacit assent to their existence, implied by the avoidance of their contact" (267). He has, like so many dangerous lovers, "the possession of irresistible powers of seduction" (269). Lord Ruthven, like all vampires, is a dangerous lover of the melodramatic villainous type, and he eroticizes a sexual cannibalism, an act that involves a violent erotics of seduction. Because the vampire must always be invited in, he represents the paradoxical fascination and repulsion of sex that is desirable because it is dangerous, because it might lead to pain, expulsion and/or death. This desire to be ravished, to be "taken," has a role in so many of the demon lover narratives discussed here, especially with the contemporary erotic historical romance.

When Jonathan Harker first meets the vampire of Stoker's *Dracula*, his charm and personable qualities relax Harker after his frightful journey. Although when Dracula is later encountered in England he is repeatedly described as a kind of crazed animal with

a "hellish" look and flaming red eyes, here in the beginning his gently seductive and thoughtful manners draw Harker to him. Like the many melancholy heroes we have encountered he remarks, "I love the shade and the shadow, and would be alone with my thoughts when I may" (26). Dracula is another night brooder like Manfred or Eugene Aram who must do his work under cover of the darkness, when others are safe within their beds. Cast out of the everyday activities of the living and the permanent stasis of the dead, Dracula haunts the night caught in a liminal state between death and life. Like a melancholy insomniac, he is unable to live in the light of day. Dracula mourns the many who have died during his very long lifetime, both by his hands and by other means. Rickels explains that Dracula represents, like Heathcliff after Catherine's death or Manfred, unmitigated mourning. Dracula apologizes for his melancholia in one of his few speeches: "my heart, through the weary years of mourning over the dead, is not attuned to mirth" (26). Dracula must die in order to open the possibility for a future which comes from Mina's repurification after being "sullied" by Dracula and her engendering of a new narrative through her baby by Harker. That Mina can become a part of the heterosexual couple again and can escape the "outside" as represented by vampirism, points to the future of the dangerous lover narrative. Thus we are brought full circle to the collection of dark, mysterious strangers in the twentieth century whose crimes do not need to be expiated by death, or by the punishments and inquietude that might happen after death, but instead their immanence comes on earth and in life, and their terrible self-exiled bitterness is absolved by love in the contemporary romance.

Afterword

I would like to conclude this project by circling back to the beginning, by synthesizing the theories I have used to embody the dangerous lover. Or, in other words, where has this itinerary taken us; where have we arrived? The most important threads that need to be traced and marked in order to understand the contemporary positing of dangerous love are tied to theories of inarticulateness, lost causes, and dead ends that become beginnings. The dangerous lover moves continually in relation to failed events, presences, and beings.

In some sense, all the evils of the world are brought to bear on this character—he commits them and they are done to him; he sins and is victimized by the heaviest moral travesties. Melmoth loses his soul to the devil and must move continually to drag other souls into the same hell. The passionate idealism of the Byronic hero, perverted by too much experience too soon, by reaching the limits of knowledge with too great an intellectual power and exhausting the stores of the world too quickly, causes his fall from the grace of transcendence, of immanent meaning. He fights his fate with violence against others, passionate self-destruction, dark dealings with demonism and night hauntings. Closely aligned with death—the death of meaning, the death of being, the death of salvation—the movement of this figure mourns the loss of his ideal self, of a meaningful world, of a being that fulfills and can fulfill others.

The cursed figure of the dangerous lover begins his narrative after his world has been blighted; his story exists in a spectral afterlife—*after* life has failed, *after* possibility itself has been long gone. His relation to meaning has become secretive, furtive, and any relationship he is able to establish with the other takes on this inarticulate quality, described by secret whispering, speeches that point to obscured meanings on the other side of life.

The dangerous lover's eroticism haunts the heroine, takes over her sexual being as a ghost or vampire might; she confronts a terrifying coming together with sublime annihilation, dark transcendence, unspeakable acts. She desires the unknown, the impossible, the ineffable when she desires the dangerous lover. She steps into an outside when she takes his hand, an outside that holds the possibility of freedom, of death, of an infinite mourning or an entering into transcendent meaning.

The erotic anti-hero, so deeply condemned and condemning, arrives in the twentieth-century with the weight of the world on his shoulders. The eternal outcast, the Cain or forever cursed wanderer is appropriated into a narrative whose final meaning is grace, revivification, and immanent meaning through love. Love is the religion of the twentieth-century romance and through a narrative that is constantly failing and dying, love opens up as a transcendent truth which will repair the fabric of being, which will bring authenticity and presence to the self and other. The Gothic villain who could not speak need now only say "I love you" and his torments end in enchantment.

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