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Victorian Gothic Drama

Diane Long Hoeveler

Victorian Gothic drama can most fruitfully be examined by recognising that it was not a 'pure' genre, but rather a hybridised form that made use of a number of formulaic 'Gothic devices', such as the foreboding or premonitory dream, the uncanny double, the confusion between the real and the fantastic, the devilish villain with quasi-supernatural powers, and the use of cathedrals or exotic locales as settings. Contemporary theoretical writings on the drama of this period are relatively sparse and limited to the overviews written by Archer, Filon, Scott, and James. Critics today tend to claim that the drama of this period was concerned with exploring thematic concerns like changing gender roles, marriage and class issues, nationalistic anxieties about invasion and empire, and xenophobia (Booth, 1965; Hadley, 1995; Taylor, 1989).

Victorian Gothic Drama can also be approached by dividing it into early, middle and late periods. The early period, 1820–50, is characterised by revivals of even earlier Gothic dramas, like Matthew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (1797) or Thomas Holcroft's *A Tale of Mystery* (1801), but more importantly by new plays that were melodramatic adaptations of popular Gothic poems, stories or novels, most notably James Planché's *The Vampire: or, The Bride of the Isles* (1820), Richard B. Peake's *Presumption, or the Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), and Edward Fitzball's *Esmeralda; or The Deformed of Notre Dame* (1834). The first two early plays were consistently revived and held their popularity through the middle of the nineteenth century, indeed Dion Boucicault would write another version of *The Vampire* in 1852, featuring Alan Ruby, a Restoration vampire who is finally dispatched by Dr Rees, a student of the supernatural, with a charmed bullet (Murray, 2004: 189). And Fitzball in 1855 would write the English libretto for a four-act opera by Edward Loder, *Raymond and Agnes*, itself an earlier melodramatic adaptation of one of the inset tales within Lewis's novel *The Monk* (1796). The multiple adaptations of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* (1897)

would spawn in mutated form the later film franchises that became so prominent within the horror film genre. The third work listed above was the first of literally dozens of dramatic and filmic adaptations of Victor Hugo's novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Gradually, however, Victorian Gothic drama gave way to a middle period, 1850–80, during which time technical innovations like the 'vampire trap' or 'Pepper's Ghost' became popular in melodramas like Dion Boucicault's *The Corsican Brothers* (1852), an adaptation of Dumas' novel of the same name, and John Pepper's adaptation of Charles Dickens's novella 'The Haunted Man, and the Ghost's Bargain' (1862). Finally, in late Victorian Gothic dramas (1870–1910), a rise and prominence of 'star vehicles' occurs, such as those produced by Bram Stoker and starring Henry Irving at the Lyceum theatre: Leopold Lewis's *The Bells* (1871); W. G. Wills and Percy FitzGerald's *Vanderdecken* (1878), an adaptation of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*; W. G. Wills's adaptation of Goethe's *Faust* (1885); and Henry Merivale's *Ravenswood* (1890), an adaptation of Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor*.

A brief understanding of theatre's clientele may help to explain some of the editorial decisions made in adapting plays for the English stage and patrons. Stuart explains that the nature of the rough and vulgar audiences led to the need for a recessed stage area (1994: 91). Thus, instead of a thrust or forestage, the proscenium style of stage gained popularity during the early 1800s (Stuart, 1994: 91), hence the use of tableaux (Meisel, 1983). To offer an idea of what the typical audience was like at this time, Stuart also offers some statistics: London was undergoing an influx of poor and lower-class individuals and members of the middle class were moving out (1994: 5); one in five people signed their marriage license with an 'X', so considering that many poor could not afford marriage and many illiterate people could not write their own names, we can conclude that there was a fairly high illiteracy rate (1994: 5); by 1840 London had a population of 1.5 million people with 80,000 prostitutes (one in nine women) and '30,000 "professional" beggars' (1994: 5).

As far as formalistic elements are concerned: Victorian drama used four dominant modes under which the Gothic wrote its dramatic script: the *Tableau*, a portrait-like, freeze-frame with moments that could be taken for still pictures (Stuart, 1994: 80); the *Melodrama*, or the use of music, stock characters and action (Booth, 1981; McFarland, 1987: 25). Other characteristics of the melodrama are its simplicity of themes, unambiguous plot, the triumph of virtue – like providence or *deus ex machina* – and the use of spectacle. The *Burletta*, a combination of the 'operatic mode' with the 'burlesque tradition in literature', produced a

comedic opera that deals 'in a ludicrous way' with a myth or historical tale (Dircks, 1976: 69). Dircks cites *The Vampire* as a 'typical example' of a burletta, accommodating its audience with a 'simple plot, light music, and spirited performance' and 'careful and specific instructions in the dramatic text' (1976: 75; 70; 74–5). Finally, the *Extravaganza*: 'a genre which most effectively theatricalized the growing Victorian fascination with art and literature of fantasy' and was: 'directed especially at a middle-class audience and tended to reflect its standards, concerns, and mores . . . [for example] establishing and enforcing rules of conduct . . . within the increasingly complex social hierarchy' (Fletcher, 1987: 10–11). Fletcher further argues that 'perhaps more than any other single feature, the portrayal of male characters by women illustrates the obsessive concern with sexual definition which pervades the extravaganza', while the subject is light and fanciful and the atmosphere is of extreme importance (1987: 31).

Early Victorian Gothic Drama

John William Polidori's novella *The Vampyre* (1819) was written in 1816 while he was living in Switzerland with Lord Byron, functioning as his travelling companion and personal physician. Polidori appears to have been influenced by the short and unfinished ghost story written by Byron, *A Fragment* (1819), as well as Goethe's 'Die Braut von Korinth' (1797), Robert Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) and John Herman Merivale's *The Dead Men of Pest* (1802), all of them featuring fictional vampires who are noticeably different from the aristocratic and human Lord Ruthven of Polidori's tale. Originally pirated and published under the name of Byron, the novella went through five editions in its first year (Macdonald, 1991: 190) and was praised by Goethe as Byron's masterpiece (Butler, 1956: 55). Polidori had to threaten legal action to have his authorship acknowledged, and even then he was paid only £30 by Henry Colburn, the publisher (Stiles, Finger and Bulevich, 2010: 798). The story of a seductive vampire who preys on the blood of beautiful virgins made its way quickly to the stage and during the nineteenth century there were approximately thirty-five different versions on British, French and American stages, most of them indebted to Polidori's novella as their source (Stuart, 1994: 3). James Robinson Planché, author of 72 original plays and 104 adaptations/translations, adapted Polidori's novella for an August 1820 London adaptation, *The Vampyre; or, The Bride of the Isles*. This is the best-known and longest-running version on the British stage, although it is also indebted to the French

melodramatic adaptation of the novella, *Le Vampyre: mélodrama en trois actes* (June 1820) by Charles Nodier, Pierre Carmouche and Achille de Jouffroy (Stuart, 1994: 41). Sleep-walking, hypnotic trances, foreboding dreams and visions, and optical illusions figure prominently in Planché's version and suggest that the supernatural has begun to be figured within the Gothic as a biological force that science will eventually be able to explain and control. On a lighter note, the play was moved to Scotland for its setting because the theatre troupe happened to have a set of kilts left over from an earlier production of *Macbeth*.

The drama opens as the heroine, Lady Margaret, has a foreboding dream that warns her not to marry the hypnotic Lord Ruthven, but she is powerless to resist his gaze: 'I could not even turn mine eyes from this apparition' (Planché, 1986: 53). McFarland addresses many of the changes made by Planché: the name changes (and costuming) are intended to reflect the Scottish locale, and he adds a comic buffoon, McSwill, to 'supply the broad comedy that Planché's audience demanded' (McFarland, 1987: 30). Nine songs were added so that, according to the Act of 1737 which had limited 'legitimate' drama to the approved theatres at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, the play would qualify as a 'musical' (McFarland, 1987: 30, 29). This licensing act was in effect until the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 which then did require melodramas and burlettas to obtain a license before performance. Planché's vampire, in contrast to the ones in his sources, receives a human lineage – traced to a tyrant – which makes him 'a heinous sinner rather than a non-human, blood-sucking monster' and establishes some sympathy for him (McFarland, 1987: 30–1). Interestingly, this also makes him a supporter of the aristocracy through the sacrifice of the working-class Effie so that Margaret could be 'spared' (McFarland, 1987: 31). Class becomes an issue again with the creation of the working-class Robert as the hero. This difference is 'a change that no doubt was calculated to appeal to the proletarian audience' (McFarland, 1987: 32). The violence occurs offstage, as Ruthven carries Effie offstage for her demise and he himself is also shot offstage. Also, the ending reaffirms one of the melodrama's most cherished tenets: that providence will come to the rescue and provide a happy ending with solid closure and survival of the family unit.

Many theatre historians have addressed the play's ending by discussing one of Planché's many contributions to the theatre: the 'vampire trap'. The vampire trap consisted of two doors made of India-rubber on springs and built into the stage with a blanket tied securely underneath them (Emmett, 1980: 78–9). A 'slide' is used to allow actors to walk on the doors and is then pulled at a signal from the prompter (Emmett,

1980: 79). In trapping the stage in this manner the actor may disappear from the audience's unhindered view instantly while landing safely elsewhere. In *The Vampire* the 'vamp trap' allowed Lord Ruthven to seem to disappear into the walls of the stage. This most Gothic aspect of the drama, suggesting the immateriality of the material, confirmed for the audience the continued existence of the spiritual or transcendent realms in the midst of increasingly realistic dramatic fare.

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) is, along with Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, one of the seminal Gothic texts of the British tradition. It too was quickly adapted for the stage, first by Richard B. Peake as *Presumption, or the Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), a play that was thought by many to be impious, so much so that it was picketed and leaflets were distributed against its performance (Cox, 1992: 386). Despite all of the negative publicity, the play was a success, with the *Theatrical Observer* (1 August 1823) claiming that: 'The moral here is striking. It points out that man cannot pursue objects beyond his obviously prescribed powers, without incurring the penalty of shame and regret at his audacious folly' (Cox, 1992: 387). In this version, the creature is nameless, but listed in the Larpent version as 'the demon' (Cox, 1992: 387), while Forry has noted that in this adaptation the creature is 'Calibinized' (Forry, 1990: 22), perhaps revealing the extent to which Shakespeare's works were still part of cultural parlance. In this version, Victor has been driven to impious experiments because he has been separated from his true love, Agatha De Lacey. Elizabeth is now the sister of Victor and Clerval is engaged to marry her; Fritz, a servant to Victor, is introduced, along with his wife Madame Ninon, and 'gypsies' and 'villagers' also appear in order to explore class issues. Clerval and Elizabeth sing of their love for each other, while Victor darkly acknowledges his belief in the devil, who he is sure is motivating him to pursue his strange and dangerous scientific experiments: 'It's the Devil – for I'm sure *he's* at the bottom of it, and that makes me so nervous' (quoted in Cox, 1992: 392). Through a series of complications, Agatha finds herself suddenly confronted by the Demon, who at first causes her to fall into a river, and then rescues her just as Victor appears and shoots the Demon in order to free Agatha from his arms (Act 2). This melodramatic adaptation of the novel retains the Gothic trope of the identificatory locket, but as there is no Justine in this version, the locket is worn by Agatha and never given to William, although William is snatched by the Demon and never seen again. The most Gothic scene of the drama occurs in the last act, when the stage directions make it clear that the Demon creeps into Agatha's room and strangles her: 'In a large glass – Agatha appears on her knees with a veil over her head. – The Demon with his hand on her throat – she

falls – the Demon disappears – after tearing a locket from Agatha's neck' (Cox, 1992: 423). The fact that this dream-like scene is 'reflected in the glass' to audience members recalls the earlier history of Gothic drama, its tendency to obscure onstage the most violent and Gothic moments of any play, just as gauze had been used earlier to introduce the ghosts in James Boaden's *Fountainville Forest* (1794), an adaptation of Ann Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest* (1791).

Victor Hugo's very popular novel *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831) was similarly adapted fairly quickly for the British stage following its translation into English in 1833. There were three nineteenth-century English stage adaptations, two by Edward Fitzball (1834; 1836), and one by Andrew Halliday (1871), all of them giving Hugo's novel a happy ending while erasing its republican politics and social criticism (Szwedky, 2010: 469). Fitzball was in fact so prolific that during his 35-year career, he wrote 170 dramas, most of them melodramas. The one that is most consistently Gothic, however, is Fitzball's first attempt at adapting Hugo's novel, *Esmeralda*, in which the heroine lives, Quasimodo dies, and Phoebus arrives at the last minute with a pardon for Esmeralda from the king. The drama was popular enough to be included in *Miller's Modern Acting Drama: Consisting of the Most Popular Pieces Produced at the London Theatres* (vol. 3; 1834), and it was revived at the Adelphi in 1840 (Szwedky, 2010: 472). The scene that was most famous in all adaptations was the climactic event of the novel, Quasimodo's call for 'Sanctuary!' as he descends the cathedral's walls in an effort to save the condemned Esmeralda. Fitzball stages Quasimodo's rescue of Esmeralda from the axe in a particularly sensational moment as he delivers this speech:

Forbear this hellish rite! She is innocent and shall not die. Men-at-arms, move one step towards me – the strength of worlds is in this determined hand – this uplifted axe shall strike him dead that follows Esmeralda to the shrine. Comfort, Esmeralda! To the sanctuary – to the sanctuary! 'Tis the refuge of the guilty – shall be of the innocent. The sanctuary! (Fitzball, 1834: Act 2, 3)

Fleeing into the cathedral, Esmeralda is locked inside a tomb by Frollo, the villain, until she is freed by the efforts of Quasimodo, who reveals the secret to unlocking the tomb by pressing the hand of a statue. As Szwedky notes, this scene is particularly reminiscent of Matthew Lewis's subterranean convent rescue scene in *The Monk* (Szwedky, 2010: 485).

Middle Victorian Gothic Drama

The English Opera House, where Planché's drama premiered in 1820, burned to the ground in 1830, but was rebuilt as the Lyceum, the scene of Bram Stoker's own career as a producer of Gothic-inflected dramas. Critics have argued that the structure and themes of Stoker's novel need to be placed within the context of the theatre in which he spent his adult life (Richards, 1995: 145). Belford claims that '*Dracula* is all about Irving as the vampire and Ellen Terry as the unattainable good woman' (1996: 106), while Moss compares *Dracula's* absence of a mirror reflection to the theatrical trick commonly known as 'Pepper's ghost' (1999: 128). In 1862, inventor Henry Dircks developed what he called the Dircksian Phantasmagoria, a technique used to make what looked like a ghost appear onstage. He tried unsuccessfully to sell his idea to theatres, but the method, as he developed it, would require theatres to be completely rebuilt just to support the effect. Later in the same year, Dircks set up a booth at the Royal Polytechnic to display the invention, where it was seen by John Pepper, who realised that the method could be modified to make it easy to incorporate into existing theatres. Pepper first showed the effect during his own adaptation of a scene from Charles Dickens's Christmas novella turned melodrama, *The Haunted Man, and the Ghost's Bargain* (1862), to great success. Though he tried many times to give credit to Dircks, the title 'Pepper's ghost' became permanent. According to Helen Groth, Pepper's 'Ghost' first succeeded as a theatrical device when it was combined as an optical illusion with Dickens's uncanny tale of a man named Redlaw, compelled somewhat like Scrooge to confront the consequences of his past deeds. It is at this moment, when Redlaw's spectral double appears to grant his wish that his memory be erased, that the device of the Pepper's ghost is used. His wish is accompanied by a curse that condemns all those who come in contact with him to the same fate:

Confronted with the brutal consequences of his desire, Redlaw ultimately repents, and his punitive ghost lifts the curse. Dickens's insistence on the civilizing power of memory, its ability to suppress the chaos of individual desire and to foster social responsibility, nicely complemented Pepper's own didactic use of illusion to promote rational responses to seemingly inexplicable supernatural events. (Groth, 2007: 43)

In addition to the popularity of Pepper's Ghost, the 'vampire trap' made a return to the London stage, most famously in Charles Kean's 1852 production of *The Corsican Brothers* at the Princess's Theatre. Now labelled the 'gliding' or 'Corsican Trap', the device produced

what Yzereef calls 'one of the most thrilling supernatural scenes in the mid-century Victorian theatre' (1992: 4). As he notes, Act 1 ends with the ghost of Louis dei Franchi appearing before his brother Fabien in a visionary tableau that reveals how he was murdered by the villain Château-Renaud. In order to stage this effect, Kean had to use a double to play one of the identical twin brothers on the stage and he had to employ three different scene painters to design the various visionary tableaux, one of which has the ghost of Louis dei Franchi pointing to the vision of his own death, while his mother and brother stand transfixed in front of the scene (Yzereef, 1992: 6). Kean also had to revive the 'Corsican Trap' so that, while playing the role of Fabien, he could remain on stage writing a letter to his brother while another actor, portraying the murdered Louis, rose slowly through the stage floor on the trap and enacted the murder scene that had occurred some days earlier in France. Anxious about a pain he feels in his side, Fabien writes to his brother, inquiring about his situation, and he receives the supernatural news he most dreads:

He folds the letter, seals it, during which Louis dei Franchi has gradually appeared rising through the floor, in his shirt sleeves, with blood upon his breast; and as Fabien is about to place his seal upon the wax Louis touches him on the shoulder. Fabien then looks up and exclaims, 'My brother! Dead!' (Boucicault, 1996: 105)

The pain that Fabien had felt earlier is in exactly the same place that his brother had been stabbed:

I felt a sudden pang, as if a sword had pierced my chest. I looked round and saw no one. I laid my hand upon the place, there was no wound. My heart felt crushed, and the name of my brother leapt unbidden to my lips. I looked at my watch; it was ten minutes after nine. (Boucicault, 1996: 104)

The playscript goes on to detail this most Gothic scene in the drama:

Louis waves his arm towards the wall, and disappears; at the same time the back of the scene opens and discloses a glade in the Forest of Fontainebleau. On one side is a young man wiping blood from his sword with a pocket handkerchief. Two seconds are near him. On the other side, Louis extended on the ground, supported by his two seconds and a surgeon. Act drop slowly descends. Tableau. (Boucicault, 1996: 105)

The clocks in Fabien's house all stop at ten minutes after nine, the hour when he learns his brother has been killed. George Henry Lewes found the scene to be 'more real and terrible than anything I remember', while

Queen Victoria was also impressed, and recorded in her diary that the scene 'was beautifully grouped and quite touching. The whole, lit by blue light and dimmed with gauze, had an unearthly effect, and was most impressive and creepy' (quoted in Yzereef, 1992: 13). Bram Stoker was also strongly influenced by this production, reviving it in the 1880s as a vehicle for Henry Irving. Stoker observed that its power derived from the uncanniness of the twin brothers seeing themselves, one living and one dead, at the same time:

Another feature [of *The Corsican Brothers*] was the 'double'. In a play where one actor plays two parts there is usually at least one time when the two have to be seen together. For this a double has to be provided. In *The Corsican Brothers*, where one of the two SEES THE OTHER SEEING HIS BROTHER, more than one double was required. (Stoker, 1906: 170; his emphasis)

As Kendrick has noted, the Corsican trap: 'is an extreme example of the lengths to which stagecraft was pushed by the desire for horrid effects . . . [T]echnicians had to make ghosts rise, demons appear, wounds drip blood, ghastly fires burn – all with the most rudimentary equipment' (Kendrick, 1991: 126).

Late Victorian Gothic Drama

Henry Irving's name is, along with that of Bram Stoker, associated with the success of the Lyceum Theatre. In fact, the theatre was guaranteed its success with the first performance of Irving as the guilt-stricken murderer Mathias in *The Bells* (25 November 1871), a role that 'catapulted him to stardom' (Belford, 1996: 48). Irving was the first actor to be knighted and, although he was scorned by George Bernard Shaw for his aversion to the modern 'problem' plays of Ibsen, Irving continued to be popular and successful, mainly because of the power of his alternating performances of 'Victorian melodramas with reputable Shakespearean productions' (Hughes, 2009: 12). Irving's first great success was in Leopold Lewis's *The Bells*, adapted from *Le Juif Polonaise* (*The Polish Jew*) by Emile Erckmann and Alexandre Chatrain, and he continued to perform in the lead until shortly before his death in 1905. Like the Dickens novella and the even earlier Gothic melodrama, Thomas Holcroft's *A Tale of Mystery*, *The Bells* is predicated on the idea that evil deeds from the past have the power to return and 'haunt' the protagonist until restitution is accomplished. In the case of *The Bells*, the past returns in the form of a haunting vision of the itinerant Polish Jew who had been murdered and robbed by Mathias fifteen years earlier.

And again, the 'Corsican trap' was used to bring this ominous vision up out of the stage floor in order to float in front of Mathias's haunted eyes. At the conclusion of Act 1, Mathias hears the bells:

'What is this jangling in my ears? What is tonight? Ah, it is the very night – the very hour! [Clock strikes ten.] I feel a darkness coming over me. [Stage darkens.] . . . Shall I call for help? No, no, Mathias. Have courage! The Jew is dead!' But just as he is reassuring himself, 'the back of the scene rises and sinks', revealing in tableau: 'the JEW is discovered seated in a sledge . . . the horse carrying Bells; the JEW's face is turned away; the snow is falling fast; the scene is seen through a gauze; lime light . . . vision of a MAN dressed in a brown blouse and hood over his head, carrying an axe, stands in an attitude of following the sledge; when the picture is fully disclosed the Bells cease . . . [He] starts violently upon seeing the vision before him; at the same time the JEW in the sledge suddenly turns his face, which is ashy pale, and fixes his eyes sternly upon him; MATHIAS utters a prolonged cry of terror, and falls senseless.' (quoted in Kendrick, 1991: 159–60)

During the fifteen years that Mathias has prospered and grown rich on the murdered Jew's money, he has also raised a daughter who is on the verge of marrying the handsome Christian, and wedding plans are underway when the horrific haunting from the past recurs to Mathias's appalled eyes and ears. The ringing of the bells on the Jew's sled are heard by Mathias throughout Acts 2 and 3 until he goes completely mad and imagines a trial scene, where he is led before a judge and the entire courtroom to be hypnotised in order to enact the murder scene before their eyes. He dies from the shock of reliving and confessing to his earlier crime in front of the entire community. At the play's conclusion the wedding guests find the dead Mathias in his bedroom, in bloodstained brown clothes, to the ringing of the Jew's bells. In ways that are similar to *The Corsican Brothers*, *The Bells* tries to depict the interconnection between the material and immaterial worlds, while the internal, psychic world is portrayed in two ghostly, hallucinatory tableaux. According to the leading contemporary critic, Clement Scott, the performance of Irving in this final scene was mesmerising: 'the young actor had held his audience fast as in a vice, and, most wonderful of all, in a scene probably the most risky and exhausting in the long catalogue of the modern drama' (Scott, 1899, vol. 2: 49).

Fitzball had earlier adapted the legend of a doomed ship forced to sail for ever as punishment for a crime as *The Flying Dutchman, or the Phantom Ship: a Nautical Drama, in three acts* (1826), a highly Gothicised melodrama for the Adelphi, and Richard Wagner's opera (1843) had revived the theme to great success throughout Europe, so much so that the Lyceum attempted its own version, *Vanderdecken*,

in June of 1878, with Irving in the main role of the demonic immortal. The play was not a creative or financial success; however, it does reveal the interest that Stoker and Irving had in staging material with a supernatural theme. In this adaptation of the *Flying Dutchman* legend, Vanderdecken is compelled to sail the seas for ever in a phantom ship with blood-red sails and a ghostly crew. Much like the Wandering Jew, Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, or Maturin's Melmoth, this man is forced to wander for ever for some crime, but he has been given a way out through a pact with the devil: he will be free if he can find a woman who will truly love him and offer herself up in sacrifice for his soul. Every seven years he is allowed to depart the ship and seek this bride, and Irving's adaptation explores Vanderdecken's pursuit of a beautiful Norwegian named Thekla, who ultimately renounces her mortal fiancé for the mysterious and demonic stranger.

Irving's greatest success as an actor came in his performance as Mephistopheles in an adaptation of Goethe's *Faust* (1808; 1828). Stoker is believed to have been instrumental in encouraging Irving to perform in Wills's adaptation of this work (Murray, 2004: 181), which turned out to be the greatest financial success that the Lyceum ever had. As Murray has noted, Wills's version of the Faust story contains elements that would recur later in Stoker's *Dracula*, like a demonic villain, horrific dreams, the shape-shifting of human to animal and mysterious lights (Murray, 2004: 182), but much of this is stock Gothic paraphernalia and had long been in use in any number of Gothic texts. The Lyceum's production takes place in Nuremberg around 1550, with Mephistopheles tempting the ambitious Faust to sell his soul in exchange for eternal youth and the love of the beautiful young virgin Margaret. A magic potion puts Margaret to sleep so that Faust can sexually possess her, but the act kills Margaret's mother (much like the climactic scene in Lewis's novel *The Monk*). Margaret gives birth to a baby which she then kills, and she refuses the escape from justice that Faust offers her, preferring to pay for her sins. While her soul is saved, Faust is damned, carried away by the triumphant Mephistopheles (again, the similarities to the conclusion of *The Monk* are obvious). This play was the first to use electric flashes in a fight scene on stage, but Henry James was not impressed with the technology and George Moore referred to it as 'the fricassee of Faust, garnished with hags, imps, and blue flame' (quoted in Murray, 2004: 183).

Irving's 1890 production of the melodrama *Ravenswood* focused on the theme of forced and destructive marriage and seems to be influenced, according to Wynne, not simply by Walter Scott's novel, but also by the Gothic and doomed marriages depicted in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth*

the Wanderer (1820) and J. Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Schalken the Painter' (1839), and the marriage of the actress Genevieve Ward to a Russian aristocrat forced by order of the Czar himself. Stoker's later novel *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909) appears to be an imaginative retelling of Ward's marital melodrama, complete with a 'bride-to-be emerging from a burial crypt for a midnight wedding to a man who fears that she may be a vampire' (Wynne, 2006: 251). Set in Scotland amid property disputes between rival clans, *Ravenswood* compares Lucy's father to a vampire in his stealing of Edgar's estate, while also providing in Edgar's suicidal ride into quicksand the fulfilment of a legend: 'when the last Lord of Ravenswood to Ravenswood shall ride, to woo a dead maiden to be his bride, he shall stable his steed i' the Kelpie's flow, and his name shall be lost for evermo' (quoted in Wynne, 2006: 255).

Stoker wrote *Dracula* while continuing to serve as Irving's manager at the Lyceum, and certainly, as numerous critics have observed, the composition of *Dracula* reveals numerous traces of Stoker's knowledge of various theatre productions. During Stoker's lifetime, however, only one stage performance, basically a crudely staged reading of the novel, occurred on 18 May 1897, a 'copyright performance, put on purely to protect the plot and dialogue from piracy' (Ludlam, 1962: 109). Billed as *Dracula or The Un-Dead*, the play lasted more than four hours, and had five acts with a total of forty-seven scenes read by a cast of fifteen. The prologue itself had nine scenes and was set in Transylvania. When Stoker asked Irving what he thought of the performance, Irving replied: 'Dreadful!' (Ludlam, 1962: 114). This copyright performance allowed Stoker's widow to sue successfully against the German expressionist film adaptation *Nosferatu*, produced by F. W. Murnau in 1922. The play was finally adapted with her approval by Hamilton Deane, an Irish actor in Irving's travelling theatre company, who wrote a stage version that was first performed in June 1924 at the Grand Theatre, Derby. After a successful run in the provinces, the play opened in London at the Little Theatre on 14 February 1927. Deane's adaptation began immediately in Jonathan Harker's Hampstead house rather than in Transylvania, with the two additional scenes set in Harker's study and then in Mina's boudoir. In the epilogue, Dracula is hunted until he is found in a coffin at Carfax, and then staked by Van Helsing. Deane played the role of Van Helsing and hired Raymond Huntley to take the part of Dracula, introducing on stage for the first time the famous black cape that would be Dracula's signature for his filmic appearances. Panned by London critics as a 'hack' work, and 'the world's worst' play, *Dracula* was an immediate success with the public, with so many audience members fainting that Deane decided to hire a nurse to stand in the aisles, adding

to the play's notoriety (Ludlam, 1962: 157–62). Victorian Gothic drama concludes, then, with the successful stage production of *Dracula*, the immediate predecessor to the vampire theme in films, which at this date includes more than 170 different versions.

Victorian Gothic drama is an interesting hybrid – part melodrama, part morality play, part proto-technical spectacle. As a literary genre, it straddles two important periods in the history of the dramatic form – the earlier era, with its heavy use of the supernatural in such classic Gothic dramas as *The Castle Spectre* – and the later period that saw the development of the twentieth-century horror film genre with its steady proliferation of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* adaptations. Victorian Gothic dramas continued to investigate religious and spiritual issues, a topic that has long been one of the most important in this genre. *Vanderdecken* and *Faust* employ the supernatural, but increasingly these plays moved beyond their source materials, which were largely based on a medieval worldview, or perhaps their failures as vehicles suggests that their audiences had moved beyond such a cosmology. *The Corsican Brothers*, arguably the most successful of the high Victorian Gothics, invoked the supernatural and spiritual realms, but in this work the supernatural is invoked as a type of 'natural supernaturalism', a scientifically inflected, self-consciously referenced supernaturalism that could be neatly stylised in the use of the 'Corsican Trap'. *Presumption* privileged the devil's continued literal existence, while *The Bells* worked to internalise the conscience of a guilt-stricken sinner, suggesting an increased privatisation of the religious impulse. With its melodramatic focus on the fetishised and virginal female under assault by a demonic male figure, the Victorian Gothic drama not only recalls the assaults on Angela (*The Castle Spectre*) or Esmeralda, but it also looks forward to one of the horror film's most cherished tropes: 'the final girl' (Clover, 1992), who comes through innumerable attacks to survive the film while sexually compromised women are sacrificed to a sadistic male libidinal gaze. There is no question that contemporary viewers of the horror film, whether sadistically (Mulvey, 1992) or masochistically (Clover, 1992) aligned, owe a visual and cultural debt to the many advances and experiments made by the Victorian Gothic drama.

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