



The Double Divine and the Vampires of E. F. Blieler's Three Gothic Novels

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The Double Divine and the Vampires of E. F. Blieler's
Three Gothic Novels

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A Body And Its Shadow

The Double is a singular figure, indivisible entity, unity; whether discursively constructed and dissociated or iconically configured and mirrored, The Double is halved to reveal a dualist's duality, *being* cleaved into twin aspects — one material, the other spiritual —, distinct yet congruent, conjointly and interdependently constitutive of identity. Bridging chaos and cosmos, The Double encodes and embodies the essential and overarching paradox of human ego and consciousness, the notion that being is both eternal and of a moment, finite yet infinite. This paradox stems from the pervasive sentiment that the human personality survives the dematerialisation of the tangible self, the body, that irrational insistence that we, you and I, not only exist in this world, but that, hereafter, we shall continue that existence in some parallel other-world, a world whose figuration is typically constituted through the representation of the norms of the world-we-dwell inverted: a life above skies, beneath seas, somewhere, anywhere beyond the constraints of confining Earth, materiality, causality. The gossamer soul, a liminal entity dwelling at the intersection of this temporal world and some shadowed atemporal netherworld, perseveres.

In *Der Doppelgänger*, Otto Rank postulates that an association binding soul to shadow was a conceptual constant in the minds of primitive men, one's shadow 'signifying' to its beholder both Death and Life, those inseparable companions. Contrast made it possible to distinguish the living being from its double, its 'shade'; but while light reveals shadow, darkness conceals it, shadow becoming all-pervasive across the night; even in daylight, shadow transpierces solid objects effortlessly, magically. Rank postulates that the origin of all taboo, so frequently shadow-obsessed, comes from fear of provoking mighty evil spirits that are confounded with Death¹, remarking that in folklore and mythology the association of narcissism and death is quasi-universal. Self-perception is mortal; the doppelganger's inexorable struggle is against itself. The Devil, *diabole*², Double of Deos, personates Death. As conceptualisation in the primitive mind or representation of the modern psyche, The Double is our inexhaustible object of narcissistic attraction, a reflective figure of Life in its confrontation with Death.

The Double, an intrinsically sacred motif capable of sustaining secular subjects, has been enlisted as a genre-marker. Gothic literature sends The Double, the doppelganger, ambling through plot, serially breaching taboo to generate horror while the fragmented self hosts a struggle for dominance between its parts. Due to our indelibly primitive nature and unending fascination for this bifurcating figure, the bicephalic gargoyles of the Gothic return in countless revival. Stevenson's doppelganger *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and its '*Strange Case*', and Wilde's *Dorian Grey* and his existential *Portrait* read as pure distillates of the Gothic's protagonist-antagonist; but, pointedly, the novels that contain these are but two of a host of late Victorian works that hearken back to the so-called Gothic *Horror* phase of the Regency period. That quintessential *Horror* is so unlike the Gothic that preceded it, however, it seems hardly Gothic at all. Rather than whimsically haunting secret-chamber-ridden feudal castles with pure-hearted heroes and black-hearted villains motivated by plots of purloined inheritance, *Horror* reframes myth, and in so doing reveals itself a doppelganger, offspring of an un-Gothic aesthetic that couples Romanticism to Classicism.

¹ Otto Rank, *Don Juan et le Double* (Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Payot), p. 66.

² See Ernest Jones *On The Nightmare* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), pp. 158–59.

If the Shelleys' theme of *The Modern Prometheus* hints loudly at this dynamic, the Romantic-Classical nexus can be most persuasively perceived in the diversion John William Polidori left in the care of a lady fair, published in 1819 as *The Vampyre, A Tale by the Honourable Lord Byron*. I shall argue that had Polidori been given the opportunity to endow his "trifle" with a title, he would have named it *The Vampyre: The Modern Dionysus*. Since the vampire is the reiterated 'horror' that most stalwartly reintroduces so-called Gothic *Horror* from one generation to another, it should be instructive to revisit Polidori's fiction and invest it with the long merited close reading it has never received. This founding text revolutionised melodrama, lent sense to *Varney...*, and an intellectual architecture and symbolic language to Abraham Stoker's *Dracula* that Ann Rice postmodernistically appropriated and exploited as plot in ...*Lestat* a mere decade or two ago. Although Polidori seems to have consciously designated his 'Vampyre' a Modern Dionysus, his fiend's and victims' identity being of an ineffable order, that denomination is writ small in his text, secreted within plot and prose.

When E. F. Bleiler included *The Vampyre...* in *Three Gothic Novels*³, his generic attribution went unchallenged. Bleiler explained away the work's anomalous Gothic nature by claiming that Polidori had simply set a new direction for the Gothic. The major rationale for qualifying *The Vampyre...* as Gothic at all seems to be that it is assumed that Polidori intended to draft a 'ghost-story'. More revealing of Polidori's aesthetic considerations, however, is the fact that prior to *The Vampyre*, he had authored a drama exploring *The Modern Abraham* and spent the summer of 1816 working on a Byronian portrait of *The Modern Œdipus*. It may well be that Polidori, rather than Mary Shelley, was the intellect behind the premiss of *The Modern Prometheus*. Where Polidori employed Gothic ornamentation, he did so to modernise and camouflage Classical structures and themes. On the surface, a Classical thread transects Polidori's entire *œuvre*; more profoundly, it displays his penchant to transform the Mythic into the Modern. The aesthetic doppelgänger Polidori introduced, today subsumed by the Gothic, is particularly compelling when we consider its Dionysian justification and comprehend Dionysus as the root of all aesthetic discourse in the Western tradition. Dionysus, Twice-Born Double Divine, Lord of Tragedy and Comedy, Drinker of blood-red wine and Eater of raw flesh, Lover of his Mother-Sister, Father of Himself, was the many-named but unnameable Lord of the Underworld and double mystery of the Mysteries.

Byron and The Vampyre

Polidori's fiction is as much a double as his vampire. Like the Shelleys' *Frankenstein...*, *The Vampyre* was incited by Lord Byron, who proposed that he and his rainbound companions, Percy Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (later Mrs. Shelley), her half step-sister, Clare Clairmont, and Polidori, Byron's then twenty-year-old physician, each write a ghost story to pass the damp hours of the Genevan spring of 1816. Byron rapidly exhausted whatever interest he may have harboured for his own effort, investing but a single evening in a story which was supposedly intended to feature a vampire⁴. Bleiler, conscientious enough to resurrect the text Byron offered to distance himself from Polidori's *Vampyre...*, appended the former to the latter.

Byron's tale — and the aesthetic of the tale rapidly asserts itself as an object of attention — was, perfect to form, set in the century previous to its recounting, the text opening with its narrator reaching back into already dusty memories which only remained so accessibly crystalline due to their extraordinarily sublime character: "In the year 17—", he begins. Augustus Darvell, the figure we presume destined to become Byron's vampire, "a man of considerable fortune and ancient family", is inscrutable, having "a power of giving to one

³ E.F. Bleiler, ed. *Three Gothic Novels* (New York: Dover Publications, 1966).

⁴ Byron essentially denies this.

passion the appearance of another". He will hold up one half of the fiction, while the narrator sustains the other. That Teller of the Tale introduces himself as a precocious spirit, albeit more naive than he had at the time of the events recalled realised, boasting, "I was yet young in life, which I had begun early". Summing up the balance of his fictional universe, he claims that Darvell "had been deeply initiated into what is called the world... I was yet in my novitiate". This contrast between knowledge and ignorance, mystagogue and myste, will thread the path through the temporal labyrinth connecting Neolithic gods of fertility and death to the vampire.

Byron's nameless narrator is able to work his way sufficiently into Darvell's good graces to win the latter's consent to his accompanying him on an "intended journey" — what might be construed as a journey of intent: "It was my secret wish that he might be prevailed upon to accompany me; it was also a probable hope, founded upon the shadowy restlessness which I observed in him..., and his apparent indifference to all by which he was more immediately surrounded". Soon, the narrator remarks that, having worked their way through the southern regions of Europe, Darvell's "attention was turned towards the East". This phrase's passive construction makes it sound as if it were against all will, but we are quickly assured that this was, had always been the original 'intent'.

In the Christian West, to turn towards the East is very much a turning towards the sacred: the faithful ranged in their Gothic churches prayed towards altars situated at the eastern extreme of cruciform structures, the contours of the architectural space serving to point assembled worshippers as a unified body, *corpus mysticus*, towards Jerusalem, the rising sun and resurrecting God — the massed participants becoming the body of Jesus as Man; the light of dawn, the resurrected Christ. Given the geography of Darvell and our Teller's tour, however, to be 'turned toward the East' is, more particularly, to be turned against the Roman 'Mother' and even Her Protestant churches, for our protagonists, finding themselves on the schismatic fault line dividing East from West, turn irrevocably eastward. They are off towards the land of the Turk, Sublime Porte of vampirism, somewhat precociously indulging the Orientalism that marked Romantic production.

Soon, it is discovered that Darvell is suffering from some mysterious affliction whose debilitating effects become more acute in relation to his relative eastward position. Despite or because of Darvell's weakening condition, our protagonists stand determined to undertake "an excursion to the ruins of Ephesus and Sardis". From Smyrna, our fiction pushes through "that wild and tenantless tract through the marshes and defiles which lead to the few huts yet lingering over the broken columns of Diana — the roofless walls of expelled Christianity, and the still more recent but complete desolation of abandoned mosques". This alas is where intentionality has led, to a desert landscape fertile only in its capacity to give rise to the tale, a disputed then abandoned crossroad of civilisations, ancient sites of the huntress's temples and her haunted realm of the dead, a land from whence Christianity has been exorcised and banished, and where the more recent enveloping faith of the Turk has failed to take root.

Geography and pathology working in tandem, Darvell is finally incapacitated, forcing a stop at a "Turkish cemetery, the turbaned tombstones of which were the only indication that human life had ever been a sojourner in this vastness". Darvell reclines upon a great tomb and sends for water, describing to his janissary the hidden desert fountain from which it might be procured. Seeing his companion's stupefaction at his prescience, Darvell lets it be known that he had passed that way before. Once he has drunk from the waters of the occult source, Darvell tells our tale's teller that his life has come to its end, that he has a final request that cannot be refused. He exhorts his companion to make promise, obliging him to swear on all he holds sacred, to not reveal his death to any human. The oath taken, Darvell removes an Arabic-inscribed ring from his finger and presents it to his companion, instructing him: "on the ninth day of the month at noon, fling the ring into the salt springs which run into the Bay

of Eleusis, the day after, the tenth day..., at the same hour of the day, repair to the ruins of the temple of Ceres and wait one hour”’. The narrator remarks aloud that it was then the ninth day of the month; upon his stating this fact a change came over the “countenance” of Darvell.

At this moment, a stork, a writhing snake clamped in its beak, “perched upon a tombstone near” them and watched over. The narrator, for reasons he cannot fathom, tries to chase the bird off; the beasts only circle overhead on the wings of the stork, ultimately to return to the same spot, squirming snake still clamped in bird’s bill. Darvell instructs his companion to bury him where the bird has lighted. It was popularly believed in antiquity that storks fed on snakes. Our narrator wonders aloud at the unnatural spectacle unfolding. Smiling “in a ghastly manner”, Darvell explains that the stork has not ingested the snake simply because “it is not yet time”. At Darvell’s whispered, conclusive observation on temporality, the stork flaps off, drawing our narrator’s eyes after it. It was a matter of an instant, yet within that nearly imperceptible interval of distraction, the full weight of Darvell’s mass surrendered itself to the pull of the Earth. Within moments, Darvell’s figure darkened to become “nearly black”, as if a victim of plague; our narrator hastened to bury the remains. The story cuts off with the tale-bearer recalling that the digging of a grave was fairly rapid, the soil having previously been broken to accommodate the corpse of “some Mahometan tenant”, how he “cut a few sods of greener turf from the less withered soil around us, and laid them upon his sepulchre”. He ends with an exclamation rife with overtones of Edmund Burke: “Between astonishment and grief, I was tearless”.

This coming-of-age tour’s Pauline cartography and the associated mythologies it indexes will provide a thematic road map to purveyors of vampire tales for the century to come. Already present is an Eastern imperative. Byron sets the stage for the revealing of Darvell’s mystery in a swath of territory running from the springs of Eleusis and the Temple of Demeter (Ceres) and Persephone to the temple of Artemis (Diana) the Huntress.

The multiple breasted Artemis of Ephesus is not merely the chaste goddess of the hunt, but also a goddess of fertility so potent that she can teat all of mankind at her ample bosom. As one aspect of the Olympian triune virgin goddess, she rules over the moon and subconscious; in her inverted form of black Hekate, she is goddess of shadows, the damned, haunter of crossroads, wearer of serpents. It is revealing that Darvell turns black before being placed in the dark earth and that green shoots are placed on his grave. He has changed from an unearthly pale to an unnatural blackness. Critics might remark that this is not in keeping with vampire lore, which unflinchingly stresses the incorrupt cadaver, but Darvell is considering a different kind of return to life. Byron insistently emphasises the fairly weighty symbols of stork and snake, both concerned with birth and resurrection, which conjugate in the hieroglyph for light; confounding stork and ibis, the iconography is Isiac. Byron’s vampire seems destined to appear to reveal the *arcanum arcanorum*.

Both Sardis and Ephesus contained temples to Artemis. Byron had visited the Ephesian temple in March 1810 with John Cam Hobhouse during their own coming-of-age tour of the East. While that confirms the site’s interest to Byron, it fails to indicate any role for the temple other than an arbitrary Romantic touch — the ruined pillars — , though the failure of Byzantium and Islam to conquer the goddess is also signalled as important. It may well be that what attracted Byron was the goddess’s complexity and seemingly contradictory nature, her special attributes and power. The goddess’s paradoxical double nature is considered and reconciled by R. E. Witt:

Artemis is... a puzzling figure.... young virgin of the chase and... forest, Hellenic Artemis Agrotera, vowed to perpetual chastity and filled with loathing for sex even when it is exercised within the marriage bond for... propagation.... No less indubitably, however, there stands... an Artemis ripe for motherhood, a fertility goddess from Asia Minor with her main cult centre at... Ephesus. The ardent votaries of this Artemis are the Amazons. The Amazons... indulge, once yearly, in

sexual intercourse, but then simply for one reason, to produce girl descendants. ...Divine blending of Virgin and Mother contradicts human experience, for bringing forth a child means, for a woman, the loss of maidenhood. How are the two views of Artemis to be reconciled? The secret seems to lie in the religious thinking of the Mediterranean world as early as the Mycenaean age. The Great Goddess was revered both as virgin and as mother. Kore the daughter [Persephone] and Demeter the mother were one person looked at under two aspects.⁵

At Ephesus, Artemis leads back to the Mycenaean, the beginnings of human self-perception in the Aegean, where Witt situates the Great Mother in her many avatars. Propounding the Gaia thesis, Witt insists that the Great Mother precedes the idea of God the Father, a paradigm dictating that the Great God is the son become lover to the Great Mother, an offspring become dominant. His evocation of Eleusis, in innocent echo of Byron, clearly shows that Artemis inevitably leads to The Mother and Daughter. The Goddesses and the Mysteries seemingly promise to provide a sense-making key to the symbolic language of Byron's so-called vampire story. However, leaving his themes and motifs as simple *ébauches*, no vampire ever delineated, Byron abandoned work on his singular prose piece, leaving undeveloped-though-doubled character, place, plot, and iconography behind to be redoubled by his physician.

Polidori's *Vampyre*

Sometime between 29 July 1816, when Polidori finished reading Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon*, and 16 September, when, dismissed by Byron, he quit Geneva, the doctor found time to write a novella for an anonymous lady who challenged him to demonstrate how Byron's tale might have concluded. Borrowing the name 'Ruthven' from Lamb's *roman à clef*, Polidori produced *The Vampyre*... His rough-hewn 'vampire' prototype reads as a parable recounting Romanticism's triumph over Neoclassicism. While Romantic Sublimity assuredly does triumph over classicism's preordained Beauty in *The Vampyre*..., Polidori, loving the Classic's Beauty as Truth far too much to insult it, celebrates the authentically classical even as he denigrates official, contemporaneous Neoclassicism.

Polidori, while intuitively insightful, is less deft in handling his subject than effervescent Byron; the limits of Polidori's craftsmanship inevitably cause his tale to fall shy of its mark should that be Coleridian suspension of disbelief; yet his irreverent pomposity enlivens, his frequent self-conscious touches so amuse that we fully believe he is in command of the aesthetic he defines: Is it not in Gothic fun that our hero awaits a ship to Otranto; in ridicule that, en route for England, he abandons Athens for Smyrna; as diversion that a vampire is offered to a lady? Nonetheless, Polidori's most frequently remarked jest is his portrait of Ruthven: *The Vampyre*...'s interest, it is ceaselessly asserted, reposes upon a caricature turned effigy. Montague Summers, James Twitchell, D.L. Macdonald, David Skal unfailingly remark how Polidori has forever evened the score with his former employer by borrowing Lamb's Ruthven — her Dionysian Lord Glenarvon's darker persona — and rendering him Byron's parodic reflection. If Polidori undoubtedly does jab at Byron with his image of "Lord Ruthven in his carriage", alluding to Byron's 'imperial' replica of Bonaparte's rolling headquarters, far deeper, darker, veritably chthonic themes await decanting in *The Vampyre*.

Polidori's narrator, approaching his task in a novelistic manner, necessarily omniscient, observes body and shadow. In a dozen movements that turn on each other like a clockwork, he has a solitary "hand of time" sweep through a perfectly cyclic calendar, plot climaxing once an Amazonian term has lapsed. As a coda, he sounds a rapidly decaying 13th hour, 'Glutting the Vampire's Thirst'. The story concentrates on the actions of a doppelgänger. Like Darvell, Ruthven envelops certain contradictions; Polidori allows these to exercise themselves

⁵ R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Græco-Roman World* (London: Camelot Press, 1971), p. 141.

more frenetically than had Byron. Titled “a nobleman”, Ruthven is “more remarkable for his singularities than his rank”. A certain disdain separates him from the hubbub of life; a “dead grey eye” unable to perceive the material, inevitably pierces “through to the inward workings of the heart”. The more disdainfully Ruthven regards society, the more enthusiastic society regales in his regard. The contradiction that Ruthven incarnates most fully opposes, in Polidori’s terms, a being “material” to one “astral”. Ruthven is painted as immune to seduction from the debauched or sexually hungered: “the common adulteress could not influence even the guidance of his eyes”, his interest being seized rather by the virginal or virtuous. Ruthven seems without vice. “In spite of the deadly hue of his face”, his appeal is magnetic and he captivates society during London’s winter ‘season’.

Aubrey, orphan of immense fortune, only brother to a pubescent girl, arrives in London, having “cultivated more his imagination than his judgement”. Disappointed by the world that engulfs him, keen on exploring vestiges of earlier ages, the youth is steeped in ruinously romantic notions of “honour and candour”. Aubrey “believed all to sympathise with virtue, and thought that vice was thrown in by Providence merely for the picturesque effect of the scene, as we see in romances”. Like Don Quixote, a cleavage between the real and imagined furnishes Aubrey with his internal contradiction. “Handsome, frank, and rich”, sought after by mothers and daughters alike, Aubrey’s romance will be more picaresque than picturesque.

Attached as he was to the romance of his solitary hours, he was startled at finding, that, except in the tallow and wax candles that flickered, not from the presence of a ghost, but from want of snuffing, there was no foundation in real life for any of that congeries of pleasing pictures and descriptions contained in those volumes, from which he had formed his study.

He was learning to disbelieve, yet there was still some other reality so far unexperienced by the inexperienced Aubrey, and sensing this, he was determined to pursue it.

Life having proved lesser than the pleasing pictures he had entertained, Aubrey was set to reconcile his mind to the real when fate introduced him to the reality of an image materialised. Noticing enigmatic Ruthven — “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” — at a “drawing-room”, Aubrey transfers his so nearly discarded notions of the hero unto him. He discovers that Ruthven, lacking in funds, is “embarrassed” and preparing to voyage abroad. Aubrey contrives to “perform the tour, which for many generations has been thought necessary to enable the young to take some rapid steps in the career of vice towards putting themselves upon an equality with the aged”, setting off at the same time as Ruthven. Through the verb ‘perform’, a sense of ritual is invested in ‘the tour’ as an initiatory ordeal engendering equality between young and aged. Ruthven embraces Aubrey as travelling companion, and, together, they break the hold of “the circling waters”.

Reiterating Polidori’s own eastward voyage with Byron, the pair cross through Flanders on, on Ruthven’s part, a rampage of corruption. Aubrey, having opportunity to study Ruthven, concedes “that though many more of his actions were exposed to... view, the results offered different conclusions from the apparent motives to his conduct”. “[H]e entered into all the spirit of the faro table: he betted, and always gambled with success.... Yet he took no money from the gambling table; but immediately lost, to the ruiner of many, the last gilder he had just snatched from the convulsive grasp of the innocent”. Ruthven’s distributes the alms of the damned and spreads an infection of degeneration wherever he passes. A polar shift occurs through contact with Ruthven’s corrosive loadstone. His London stay having left Ruthven’s black character exposed, Aubrey’s “people” implore their charge to part company from him. When Ruthven sets to work to dishonour — deflower — the daughter of a Roman countess, Aubrey does separate himself from his fallen hero, denouncing Ruthven to the girl’s family.

Alone, Aubrey arrives in Greece. Taking up lodgings with a nameless Athenian family, he passes time “tracing the faded records of ancient glory upon monuments that apparently,

ashamed of chronicling the deeds of freemen only before slaves, had hidden themselves beneath the sheltering soil". In this déclassé cradle of civilisation, Aubrey, pursuing but "ancient glory" within "sheltering soil", searches out the chthonic. His hosts' graceful daughter, Ianthe, replaces Ruthven as guide. An apparition from Delacroix as rendered by Ingres, she is Romanticism, a pure spirit steeped in the superstitions of her native soil:

Her earnestness and apparent belief of what she narrated excited the interest even of Aubrey: and often as she told him the tale of the living vampyre..., forced every year, by feeding upon the life of a lovely female to prolong his existence for the ensuing months, his blood would run cold, whilst he attempted to laugh her out of such idle and horrible fantasies: ... when she found him so incredulous, she begged of him to believe her, for ...those who had dared to question their existence, always had some proof given, which obliged them, with grief and heartbreaking, to confess it was true.

Aubrey, after hearing "all the supernatural tales of her nurse", "wondered at the many coincidences which had all tended to excite a belief in the supernatural power of Lord Ruthven". While Ianthe pursued a butterfly-like soul-life, Aubrey fell ever deeper in love with her, his practical mind staggered by his heart. So well-intentioned was his love that the social and cultural gulf that separated him from her tortured a happiness founded upon her company. Two conflicting ontological systems — her Mediterranean superstitions, his unshakeable faith in an empirical, material reality thrust upon him by "English habits" (victimisation by Gothic fiction forgotten) — assured his love could never flower. Ianthe, in her pure innocence, remained oblivious to his hopeless condition:

Often would her tresses falling, as she flitted around, exhibit in the sun's ray such delicately brilliant and swiftly fading hues, as might well excuse the forgetfulness of the antiquary, who let escape from his mind the very object he had before thought of vital importance to the proper interpretation of a passage in Pausanias. Whilst he drew those remains..., she would stand by, and watch the magic effects of his pencil, in tracing the scenes of her native place; she would then describe to him the circling dance upon the open plain, would paint to him in all the glowing colours of youthful memory, the marriage pomp she remembered viewing in her infancy...

Ianthe's beauty banished from Aubrey's mind objects demanding interpretation, pursuits so recently deemed "vital". The play of light in her hair was enough to impose forgetfulness upon a tour-performing youth become Pausanias-led "antiquary". Polidori's phrase — "her tresses falling, as she flitted around, exhibit in the sun's ray such delicately brilliant and swiftly fading hues" — invests sense in our protagonist's sole name. It is in the light of his regard that spiritual Ianthe, eternal butterfly, is portrayed flitting about. The notion of *aube*, referencing dawn and the rising sun's light, is apposed to "ray" — *rayon* —, a directional, concentrated beam of light: "Aub-ray" or solar ray of dawn; better, "King" could be substituted for "rey", invoking a Dawn King, Eastern Light. Aubrey, now come of age, becomes a solar force to oppose and compliment lunar Ruthven, binding them together anew. One evening, Aubrey announced his determination to explore a "particular destination", but Ianthe's family, "when they heard the name of the place", implored him to reconsider; the wood that must be traversed on the way is the "resort of vampyres", spirits sylvan and lusting, "in their nocturnal orgies". Should he go, they pled he return by sunset, "ere night allowed the power of these beings to be put in action". To humour his hosts, Aubrey agreed.

Next morning Aubrey set off... unattended; he was surprised to observe the melancholy face of his host, ...concerned to find that his words, mocking the belief of those horrible fiends, had inspired them with such terror. ...Ianthe came to the side of his horse, and earnestly begged of him to return, ere night.... He was, however, so occupied in his research, that he did not perceive that day-light would soon end, and that in the horizon there was one of those specks which, in the warmer climates, so rapidly gather into a tremendous mass, and pour all their rage upon the devoted country. — He... mounted his horse, determined to make up by speed for his delay.... Twilight, in these southern climates, is almost unknown; immediately the sun sets, night begins: and ere he had advanced far, the power of the storm was

above — its echoing thunders had scarcely an interval of rest; — its thick heavy rain forced its way through the canopying foliage, whilst the blue forked lighting seemed to fall and radiate at his very feet.

A land knowing but day and night had tricked solar Aubrey, lulling him into forgetfulness. Realising this, he galloped homeward. To a peal of thunder, Aubrey's horse bolted, charging through an "entangled forest" until it stopped short at a "hovel". As Aubrey dismounted, strobing blue light radiated "at his very feet". Alarmed by the horrible screams of a woman that, intermingled with salacious laughter, resonated between thunder claps, Aubrey valiantly rushed into the hut — like a romantic champion — to save the unknown from the unknown, but immediately found himself locked in battle against "one whose strength seemed superhuman". Aubrey was "lifted from his feet and hurled with enormous force against the ground: — his enemy threw himself upon him, and kneeling upon his breast, had placed his hands upon his throat — when the glare of many torches penetrating through the hole that gave light in the day, disturbed him...". Aubrey's photophobic mystery assailant ran crashing through the woods as if a wild animal.

The storm was now still... and Aubrey, incapable of moving, was soon heard by those without. They entered; the light of their torches fell upon nothing but the mud walls, and the thatch loaded on every individual straw with heavy flakes of soot, though at this moment it was apparently untenanted. There was one spot slippery with blood but it was hardly visible on the black floor. No other trace was seen of human presence having disturbed its solitude for many years.

Aubrey dispatches the party of torchlight wanderers to locate the strangely vanished woman whose cries had motivated his entry into hut and fray. "He was again left in darkness; but what was his horror, when the light of the torches once more burst upon him, to perceive the airy form of his fair conductress brought in a lifeless corpse". Aubrey "shut his eyes, hoping that it was but a vision arising from his disturbed imagination".

...no colour upon her cheek, not even upon her lip: yet there was a stillness about her face that seemed almost as attaching as the life that once dwelt there: —upon her neck and breast was blood, and upon her throat were the marks of teeth having opened the vein: to this the men pointed, crying, simultaneously struck with horror, 'A Vampyre! A Vampyre!'

Aubrey was stretched upon a litter, by his side reposed, at last, his beloved Ianthe "who had lately been to him the object of so many bright and fairy visions, now fallen with the flower of life that had died within her". In his hand, "he held almost unconsciously ... a naked dagger... which had been found in the hut". They were

... soon met by different parties who had been engaged in the search of her whom a mother had missed. Their lamentable cries, as they approached the city, forewarned the parents of some dreadful catastrophe.

As the facts were made known, Ianthe's parents, horror-struck, expired. In suddenly emptied dwellings, Aubrey became lost in fevered delirium, tormented by nightmare visions of himself begging Ruthven to spare Ianthe's life. With Aubrey thus ailing, Ruthven reappears from parts unknown and, unsolicited, dedicates himself to nursing Aubrey to health. Recovering his senses, Aubrey is shocked to find this personage his dreams had confounded with the undead at his side; yet, swayed by Ruthven's faithful, loving ministries, Aubrey, Sun-king, forgives Ruthven, Lunar-spirit, obliterating from remembrance his numberless crimes. The pair resume Aubrey's interrupted activities, revisiting the scenes of his excavations; but Aubrey is haunted by Ianthe or his memory of her: she appears, pale-faced, stigmatised, wherever within the "Athenian neighbourhood" he rambles; at time he finds her "wandering amidst the underwood, in quest of the humble violet". Heading farther afield, they undertake a mechanically dull search of an unknown pre-Hellenic past. One day, as they filed through a narrow gorge, they fell into an ambush during which Ruthven suffers a mortal wound. To save his friend, Aubrey contracts a ransom if only the robbers convey his comrade to a nearby hut. The honourable brigands agree, fulfil their end of the bargain and are duly

rewarded. After two days in this hut, Ruthven extracts a promise from Aubrey to keep his demise secret from any and all in England for the term of a year and a day. Aubrey so swears in much the same spirit as he pledged to Ianthe's parents to rest clear of the wood after nightfall. Upon Aubrey's utterance of the oath, Ruthven breathes his last. Aubrey withdraws to rest, but, haunted by his pledge, cannot. At dawn's first ray, Aubrey starts off to the

...hovel in which he had left the corpse, when a robber met him, and informed him that it was no longer there, having been conveyed... to the pinnacle of a neighbouring mount, according to a promise they had given his lordship, that it should be exposed to the first cold ray of the moon that rose after his death.

Horrified at this irreligious news from a sacrilegious messenger — black iteration of the Christian resurrection⁶ — , Aubrey hurries off to bury the cadaver left exposed upon (rather than beneath) the heavy stone, but Ruthven's remains have vanished. He rationalises that robbers, having stripped the corpse, buried the body and with it the trace of their crime.

As if at Ephesus all the while, Aubrey arrives “at Smyrna” with Ruthven's effects. While waiting for a vessel “to convey him to Otranto”, he notices that the blade recovered at the scene of Ianthe's death sheathes perfectly in a scabbard belonging to the late Ruthven, their curious design unmistakably wrought by the same master, dried drops of blood aligning perfectly. Anagnorisis yields peripeteia: Aubrey now knows that it was Ruthven who had plucked his “flower of life”.

Aubrey returns westward, reversing his journey, surveying the wreckage left in the wake of Ruthven's passage. At Rome, the family of the maiden he had sought to protect has been dishonoured. Aubrey's ‘tour’ has indeed returned him a changed man. At Calais, he boards a ship; “a breeze, which seemed obedient to his will, soon wafted him to the English shores” and the bosom of his familial estate. Here, sister Aubrey, fresh virgin of eighteen, awaits. Neither worldly or urbane, having “none of that light brilliancy which only exists in the heated atmosphere of a crowded apartment”, as unlike “light” and “airy” Ianthe as a “voluptuary”, this chaste and modest maiden lives for her brother's approbation. Her charm is “melancholy”, “a soul conscious of a brighter realm”. Due to Aubrey's absence, she has not yet been presented to society. Thus “it was now... resolved that the next drawing-room... should be the epoch of her entry into the ‘busy scene’”, whose performance constitutes a feminine equivalent to ‘the tour’. It would seem that the circuit will be closed, that beginnings have led to endings identical to beginnings. A comic structure emerges.

Many adventures had accumulated since that fateful ‘drawing-room’ at which he first laid eyes upon Ruthven, but Aubrey was back at another elegant London occasion, now as his sister's escort and protector. The scrum of London society being too much the same, Aubrey retired to a shadowed corner. Wrapped in thought, he was soon startled by a hand laid upon his back and words murmured in his ear by a voice uncannily familiar: “remember your oath”. Reversing the logic of this world, afar, he could perceive if not the voice's source, its master. The Vampyre plied the crowd, past transgressions evidently forgotten.

Aubrey clutched the arm of an acquaintance and struggled to make for his transport home. There, he paced the floor of his apartments at a loss for thought. Collecting himself, he returned to recover his unprotected sister and verify his senses. Indeed, it was Ruthven who so successfully plied the elevated crowd. Aubrey found a private salon, consigning his sister to a matronly chaperone. When the crowd began to thin, he sought his sister out. Cutting through the gathered personages, Aubrey excused himself; who should turn to reveal his singular features but Ruthven. Aubrey

...sprang forward, seized his sister's arm, and... forced her towards the street; at the door he found himself impeded by the crowd of servants... and while he was engaged in passing them, he again heard that voice whisper close to him — ‘Remember your oath!’ — He dared not turn...

⁶ Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20.

Aubrey's behaviour becomes increasingly perplexing. Marked by forbidden knowledge, he is presumed deranged. As his nameless sister, now granted supervised independence, continues through a most 'busy season', Aubrey is ostracised. When informed of his sister's betrothal to the Earl of Marsden, Aubrey quickly gives the union his blessing, relieved she is pledged to anyone but Ruthven. Yet when he perceives a miniature of the Earl framed in a locket dangling over his sister's heart, his torment is carried beyond limits: the portrait is of none other than that fiend he knows too well. Realisation of the triumph of Ruthven speeds Aubrey towards a relapse of his delirium. He is sufficiently lucid, however, to calculate that it has been 365 days since he pledged a year and a day of silence and that the nuptials are planned for the morrow. Ruthven insists he is obliged to leave for the continent by dawn; the wedding Aubrey is desperately trying to delay must be hastened. Seeing no other recourse, Aubrey betrays his soul-damning oath by revealing Ruthven's death. Aubrey is dismissed as mad. The marriage goes forward. Enraged, Aubrey bursts a blood vessel; ruddy-faced, he dies haemorrhaging. Midnight passes. The guardians send for sister Aubrey. She has disappeared. Putting down his pen, Polidori taunts, she "had glutted the thirst of a Vampyre".

Polidori's uniquely unsatisfying final line hardly justifies a tragedy's heap of cadavers; we have been left nothing cathartic to retain, but grim spectacle climaxed by surprise. Rather than cleansing and renewing, the ending pollutes. In the dead, Sun-king departed, the vampire — intoxicated on Miss Aubrey's blood — now dispatched to wreak another leap year's havoc on a disbelieving world, *The Vampyre* yields but grotesque comedy and Byron's effigy.

As many deformities as strokes of genius compete for attention in *The Vampyre*... While with Polidori causality does not spur the rationalising contortions of Ann Radcliffe, the obvious lack of it inevitably leads to the appearance of maladroitness: the crowd that happens by with torches in "a wood, where no Greek would ever remain, after the day had closed"; the malleable, amenable robbers always ready to lend a hand whenever plot bogs down; Aubrey's weak-willed readiness to forget Ruthven's transgressions. Ruthven's nameless victim, Lady Ruthven, Aubrey's sister, seems only to have served as Ruthven's final refreshment to augment Aubrey's suffering (rather than inflict it on her), sibling identity sufficing. Could not Ruthven have found some other maiden? Somewhere "between astonishment and grief" we, like Byron's narrator, are left "tearless".

Roman à clef

It appears Polidori's genius was accidental, residing in the starkness of fortuitous detail recycled until congealed into canon: the throat punctured by vampiric dentition; the moonlight circumstance and empowerment of evil; the being capable of hurling men about as if babes; the menacing forces of nature which announce the coming of the vampire: the speck in the air which presages things more ominous, the sudden anaemic dusk, the will-driven winds and tides, the troubled dreams; the empirical, orphaned hero driven to madness; the ascendant villain, that seductive and sophisticated aristocrat run amok in a modern world; the incestuous ties that bind them. Perchance, Polidori has tersely summarised, catalogued, bequeathed to posterity now familiar attributes, images seemingly torn from delirium and nightmare projected onto a fictional realm representing contemporary bourgeois quotidian experience. Yet in remarking these surface, now familiar elements of a profaning being, we are blinded to the interior sacred contents with which Polidori has invested his story. It is this cleverness that earned *The Vampyre*... Goethe's highest praise. Yes, the facile landscape of huts and roving mobs, bandits and heroes, tormenting secrets and guilty suspicions have been purloined from the likes of Godwin, yet remarkable differences, concordant with the foundation Byron laid in that sketch he could not bring to completion, exist, separating Polidori's *Vampyre* from anything written since Lucius Apuleius.

Why has Polidori transposed the setting from Ephesus to Athens? Why is Aubrey so unrelentingly searching? For what object? What dangerous road leads him out of Athens on his expedition? Why is he so absorbed by Pausanias? Who are the torch-bearing souls wandering woods in the dead of night? Why can't Ruthven leave Aubrey and those he loves alone? What mother has lost her daughter? What is the significance of Ianthe?

D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf claim that the name 'Ianthe' was appropriated from Byron. Through 'Explanatory Annotations' to *The Vampyre* they speculate upon Polidori's characters' names, treating *The Vampyre*... as *roman à clef*. Given the parallelism between Aubrey and Ruthven's passage through the Low Countries and Polidori's own crossing with Byron, correspondence between the biographic and fictional cannot be ignored. Yet when it is proposed that a character dressed as a mountebank at the London gathering that begins the work is "a caricature of Lady Caroline Lamb"⁷, we might either be sceptical or think Polidori more clever than otherwise. Macdonald and Scherf's only evidence seems to be that Polidori borrowed Lamb's Byron-character's name from *Glenarvon* and engraved it on his vampire's calling card. They do accurately note that Byron dedicated the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Progress* "to 'Ianthe', the eleven-year-old ... Charlotte Harley, daughter of Byron's one-time lover Lady Oxford" and embellish the coincidence, asserting that in Byron's comments on this child, they detect an anticipation of 'Leila' of 'The Giaour' — Byron's poem that turns on proto-vampirism —, Leila being a Houri. That Byron in his Dedication 19 refers to Ianthe as "the 'Young Peri of the West'" provokes further comment that in Persian traditions, a 'Peri' descends from the fallen angels⁸. While the association may be appropriate for someone named 'Leila', a name long linked to Mesopotamian ghouls, it remains far afield for an Ianthe who is the vampire's victim. They also remark that Byron "describes her eye as 'wild as the Gazelle's' (Ded. 28). Her name means 'Flower of the Narcissus'". In this, they again reference Lady Oxford's daughter. Through Byron's gazelle-eyed Ianthe, they strive to connect a specific Polidori passage to biographical Byron:

As she danced upon the plain, or tripped along the mountain's side, one would have thought the gazelle a poor type of her beauties, for who would have exchanged her eye, apparently the eye of animated nature, for that sleepy luxurious look of the animal suited but to the taste of an epicure.

The phrase is curious: the gazelle, the idyllic landscape, the notion of a "sleepy luxurious look" destined to "the taste of an epicure" are readily mystifying. In illuminating the context from which 'Ianthe' was torn before being pasted into the fiction, we should also be able to glimpse from whence this name signifying 'Flower of Violet' derives. Stridently repeated references to Pausanias, present within the very paragraph that rhapsodises on Ianthe's grace, provide a key to penetrating this mystery, but only in recalling Darvell's dying imperative to have his ring tossed into "the salt springs which run into the bay at Eleusis" can we appreciate to what depths Polidori dove to retrieve what Byron had tossed out and forgotten. Indeed, Macdonald and Scherf's 'misunderestimation' of Polidori can be calibrated through their contrasting the two authors' treatment of the imposed oath and, more generally, the symbolic framework each mobilises:

The precise significance of the oath in Byron's fragment is unclear, since the fragment breaks off immediately after it is sworn. But Darvell's friend commits himself to more than silence: he also agrees to throw a ring into the Bay of Eleusis and then to visit the temple of Ceres. Since these locations were associated with the Eleusinian mysteries, the actions are presumably designed to bring about Darvell's return from the dead; then the oath would prevent the friend from interfering with his plans⁹.

⁷ See Macdonald & Scherf's second explanatory note 33 [sic], *The Vampyre And Ernestus Berchtold; Or The Modern Edipus: Collected Fiction of John William Polidori* (Toronto: University Toronto Press, 1994).

⁸ Ibid, notes 37, 38.

⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

Byron harnesses complexity and the Mysteries; Polidori will only manage passive facility:

Polidori resorts to the simpler technique of having Strongmore [Macdonald & Scherf insist on using 'Strongmore' in place of 'Ruthven', based on a marked up 3rd edition copy of *The Vampyre* emended by Polidori] revived by moonlight; and he has the robbers who have killed him, not Aubrey, place the corpse in the moonlight. Thus Aubrey's involvement in Strongmore's plans is only passive¹⁰.

Myth provides a template of understanding to Polidori's seemingly most haphazard plotting, arbitrary details, ostensible amateurishness. The Homeric "To Demeter" names 'Ianthé' as one of the maids, daughters of Okeanos, who accompanied Persephone to the Nysian Plain on the day she was carried off to become Queen of the Dead¹¹. They were off to find Earth's most singularly beautiful flower; it was Persephone. This ties Ephesus and Byron's tale to the *locus dramaticus* of Polidori's novella. Polidori has invented a novel sort of *roman à clef*. Aubrey, with his frequently consulted Pausanias, is unearthing ancient rituals and the gods they invoke. By effecting their rebirth, Polidori resurrects the classic from ruins; through his efforts a mysterious cathartic Dionysian potion will be recovered to nourish the vampire.

In reading Pausanias or the texts he references, the great difficulty comes from the inconstancy of the panoply of divine actors, not only are there complex personalities to deal with, but parallel traditions and migrating names as well. Carl Kerényi, commenting on the intersecting figure of Mother and Daughter, writes that "in the duality which was always retained at Eleusis, Demeter represented the earthly aspect, Persephone another, rather ghostly and transcendent"¹². They form a doppelgänger — Aubrey was not arbitrarily introduced as one admired by mothers and daughters alike. Byron's narrator and Darvell, Aubrey and Ruthven, Ephesus and Eleusis: they are doubles all.

Darvell ordained that his companion was to throw his ring into the waters of salt springs that empty into the Bay at Eleusis, the Kephisos. As Pausanias notes, "Beside the river is Erineos, the place where Plouton descended, they say, when he carried off the Maiden" and "Eumolpos and the daughters of the Keleus performed the holy rites of the two goddesses"¹³. We can assert a Polidorian familiarity with Thomas Taylor's translation of Pausanias, more likely his 1796 *The Description of Greece by Pausanias with notes in which much of the mythology of Greece is unfolded from a theory which has been for many ages unknown* than the more contemporaneous 1812 edition. Byron used the earlier edition when trekking the Ottoman East with Hobhouse in 1810. A 23 June 1816 Byron-to-Hobhouse letter from Evian, written less than a week after the Darvell fiction was begun, confirms Taylor's pertinence and provides incidental information on 'Ruthven':

I have taken a very pretty little villa in a vineyard... called Diodati... I have rooms ready for you and Scrope, and all "appliances and means to boot". Bring with you also for me some bottles of Calcined Magnesia, a new Sword-cane, procured by Jackson — he alone knows the sort (my last tumbled into this lake), some of Waites red tooth powder and tooth-brushes, Taylor's Pausanias [my emphasis] and I forget the other things.
...To-morrow we go to Meillerei..., and Vevey, with Rousseau in hand, to see his scenery, according to his delineation in his Héloïse....
All your letters (that is two) have arrived — thanks, and greetings: — What — and who — and the devil is 'Glenarvon'? I know nothing — nor ever heard of such a person; and what do you mean by a brother in India?...
Yours ever most truly, B.
P.S. — I left the Doctor at Diodati; he sprained his ancle [sic].
P.S. — Will you also particularly remember to bring me a largish bottle of the

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "To Demeter" (Richardson, N.J., *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), p. 417.

¹² Carl Kerényi, *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter*, Ralph Manheim, tr. Princeton University Press, 1967.

¹³ Pausanias, *Guide to Greece* Volume I, tr. Peter Levi (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 107.

strongest Pot Ash... that child and childish Dr. Pollydolly contrived to find it broken...

As he had explored Greece, Taylor's *Pausanias* in hand, Byron proposed to visit Vevey via *Héloise*, leaving Pausanias to childish "Pollydolly". Hobhouse and Pausanias joined Byron and Polidori on August 26.

The Mythic

The Neolithic myth which frames the double Genevan vampire tale is paradigmatic of nascent agrarian cultures. It relates a story of mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, gods, representing our complex natures and Nature's complexities, who become lost in and emergent from one another, figures which multiply mitotically, doubling and exponentially redoubling themselves, all the while gaining in profundity. At the myth's most deeply shaded depths, two figures appear, one recognisably feminine, the other generally, if intermittently, masculine. Frequently we find before us a "gentle" man, nearly effeminate in his courtly nature, who then reveals himself a ferocious and savage hunter periodically become the hunted. The canonical rendition of the epoch-changing myth concerns divine mother Demeter and her family.

Much as her mother had hidden brother Zeus away from their infanticide father, goddess Demeter took her virgin daughter Persephone afar to a remote isle. Aware that patricide Zeus had promised the girl to brother Plouton, Demeter hid her. With her daughter secreted, The Mother left to worship at the temple of the Great Goddess, who, as Rhea, was her own mother. Mother, daughter, child: Rhea, Demeter, Persephone: these personalities share an interpenetrating, entwining identity.

Zeus, discovering Persephone's whereabouts, sped the goddess of Sexual Rapture to the Maiden, commanding Artemis Diana and Athena Pallas to accompany Aphrodite. They were to lure the Maiden to where Plouton might take her. "The three goddesses arriving, find Proserpina at work on a scarf for her mother; in which she had embroidered the primitive chaos, and the formation of the world"¹⁴. They entreat the Maiden to come flower gathering with them and the daughters of Okeanus in Elysian Fields.

In a paradisiacal meadow lying close by briny sea, the Maiden spots the rarest of flowers, a Narcissus, and plucks it. The Earth "gapes", as if the root of the plant had burrowed directly into Hades. Out comes the Many-named Lord of the Underworld. The Maiden lets out a piercing cry. None but "gentle-tempered" "Hekate of the shining headband... from her cave" and far off Demeter admit to hearing the echoing scream. According to Taylor's translation of Minutius Felix's *Discourse on the Mysteries*, Persephone, "as she was gathering tender flowers, in the new spring, was ravished from her delightful abodes by [Plouton]; and being carried from thence through thick woods, and over a length of sea, was brought by Plouton into a cavern, the residence of departed spirits, over whom she afterward ruled with absolute sway"¹⁵. Kerényi notes the Homeric poet has

...the underworldly brother of Zeus, drive his horses out of the gaping earth in heroic style. He lifts the girl into his chariot and takes his ravished bride on a long journey over the earth before turning back to his subterranean realm. The place where this happened was pointed out by the river Kephisos near Eleusis. It was called Erineos after a wild fig tree (*erineos*) which stood nearby. ...[T]here was a close tie between the wild fig tree and the subterranean Dionysos: his mask was cut from its wood in Naxos¹⁶.

Kerényi characterises the place to which the Kore allowed herself to be drawn as "a dangerous region, but in all likelihood it was not originally connected with the name Plouton.

¹⁴ Thomas Taylor, *Bacchic & Eleusinian Mysteries* (San Diego: Wizzards Bookshelf, 1980), p. 91.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁶ Carl Kerényi, *Eleusis* (Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 35.

Dionysus himself had the strange surname of ‘the gaping one’ formed from the very word employed by the poet of the Homeric hymn. The notion that the wine god in his quality of Lord of the Underworld was the girl's ravisher does not appear on the surface in the hymn. We should hardly have been able to detect it in the background if an archaic vase painter had not shown us Persephone with Dionysus. It was not always forbidden to narrate or depict this version¹⁷ — though it would become part of the ineffable. Walter F. Otto agrees that the special relationship Dionysus holds with the ‘prince of the underworld’ is not merely associative, for as Heraclitus writes, “if it were not Dionysus for whom they held their processions and sang their songs, it would be a completely shameful act to the reverent; Hades and Dionysus, for whom they go mad and rage, are one and the same”¹⁸. “Nysa was, without doubt, the name of a divine mountain country... In that land Persephone, as she was playing with the daughters of Oceanus and picking flowers, was supposedly snatched away by the god of death, who suddenly erupted from the earth”¹⁹. From Nysa, Dionysus, “god of Nysa”, derives his name.

According to *Orphic Hymn 46*, he himself grew up in Persephone's home, and *Hymn 53*, says that he sleeps in the house of Persephone in the intervals before his reappearances... The cry of the *Lenai*, ‘giver of riches’, points in the same direction. The dead of the Golden Age, who wander over the earth as invisible guardian spirits are called this by Hesiod. One might also think of the ‘night festivals’ of the god, and that he himself was called the ‘nocturnal one’. He leads his nocturnal dances by torchlight. How correct E. Rohde was when he declared that the world of the dead, too, belonged to the kingdom of Dionysus!²⁰

Byron's Temple of Ceres

From the Great Mother's temple, Demeter sensing catastrophe, descended towards Persephone's reverberating scream; “mighty Deo” tearfully wandered Earth for nine days, taking neither food nor drink, remaining unbathed, combing the Earth “with bright torches in her hand”. Kerényi writes that Demeter bore “the name of *Pheraia*, the torch-bearing goddess seated on a running horse”²¹. Torchlight serves to illuminate the obscure. The Homeric Hymn's reference to “nine days” suggests that Demeter bears torches by day and night in order to apperceive one become darkness.

On the tenth day of Demeter's passion, dark “Hekate carrying a light in her hands, met her”, hailing “Mighty Demeter, bringer of seasons and splendid gifts”. The pale light in Hekate's hands reflects the returning moon. To Demeter's question — Who had seized Persephone, heavenly god or mortal man? — Hekate could not answer, for she had only heard the cries but not seen. Night and Day shall be contrasted directly, for at Hekate's instigation, Demeter asks Helios Who Sees All to identify Persephone's assailant. Helios illuminates: “...no other immortal is to be blamed save cloud-gathering Zeus who gave her to Hades, his own brother, to become his buxom bride. He seized her and with his horses carried her crying down to misty darkness”²². Imperceptible at night, the Lord of Darkness becomes visible in the sun's presence. Helios explicates: “Not an unseemly bridegroom among immortals is Aidoneus, Lord of Many, your own brother from the same seed; to his share fell honour when in the beginning a triple division was made, and he dwells among those over whom his lot made him

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Walter F. Otto, *Dionysus* (Robert Palmer, tr. Indiana University Press, 1965), p. 118.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

²¹ Carl Kerényi, Carl Jung, (*Essays on a Science of Mythology: The Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis*, R. F. C. Hull, tr. New York : Bollingen Series XXII, 1950), p. 198.

²² Homeric Hymn “To Demeter”, p. 78–82.

lord”²³. Helios's “triple division” depicts a cosmos stratified into the heavenly, terrestrial, and subterranean, native and sequestered realms of the divine, animal, spiritual.

In her search, the goddess reached Eleusis, where the Rharian Plain meets the sea. Disguised as a poor woman, she sat nearby a freshwater source doubly called the *Parthenion*, ‘the Virgin’s Well’, and *Anthion*, ‘the Well of Flowers’, and wept. (A systematic apposition of flower and virgin pervades the mythos.) This well is the unseen passage through which The Maiden vanished. The daughters of Kelios, Lord of Eleusis, coming to the well, discovered the “unsmiling” matron and took pity. Demeter, claiming to be an escaped slave who had fled to that place, proposed her services as wet nurse. The girls led her to their home, a well-built palace. The mother of the youths was amazed by the goddess who entered her home in a blaze of light. The earthly mother, infant son upon her lap, offered to surrender her seat to the divine mother, but Demeter demurred, assuming a subservient position. Offered Dionysian red wine by her hostess, Demeter refused, “it was not right for her, she said, to drink red wine”, a sign that the identity of her daughter's ravager was known to her. She requested a drink of water, barley and wild mint instead.

Demeter stayed with the household as nurse to the infant. She anointed him with ambrosia, held him in her divine arms, and, night after night, secretly placed him like a firebrand in blazing flames; he grew like a god. The child’s mother decided to keep watch by night to see what care the strange old woman bestowed upon her son. When she spied him being placed into the fire like a log, she screamed and reproached the old woman. At this affront, the goddess was possessed by rage. She declared that while she would have made the boy a god, he should now die after his mortal course was run. She revealed herself The Goddess and ordered a temple built to commemorate her visit. At this, the mansion was filled with a great light, a radiance as if that of lightning bolts. The queen was staggered; she dropped to the floor the babe, who began to cry, awakening the household.

With her temple built, the mournful goddess, still angered, distracted, distraught, prevented grain from growing. Zeus dispatched Hermes to Hades to gain Persephone’s release. Hades placed his mistress on his chariot: ““Persephone, go to your dark-robed mother, with a gentle spirit and distemper in your breast...””. “She mounted the chariot, and next to her mighty Argeiphontes took the reins.... He drove them and then halted near the fragrant temple where fair-wreathed Demeter stayed. When she saw them, she rushed as a maenad does, along a shady woodland on the mountains...”²⁴; Demeter welcomed her daughter as a Dionysian votary would greet her returning god upon Nysa.

To Demeter asking if she had been given to eat in the land of the dead, Persephone claimed to have eaten but a pomegranate seed that Hades offered her as she left the underworld. Having tasted of the blood red fruit, Persephone will be obliged to divide her time, coming up from the misty darkness “whenever the earth blooms with every kind of sweet-smelling springflower”, but consigned to the land of the dead the remainder of the year. Hekate then appeared to become lady-in-waiting to Persephone; Rhea, as a messenger from Zeus, to bid Demeter to allow the earth to bring forth fruit, white barley and long ears of corn. With the intergenerational triadic identity reconstituted, the myth reaches resolution.

The Mysteries’ Mystery

For over a millennium, all this and more was commemorated in the rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries, whose secrets endure. Otto confidently describes them as “a pious encounter between the living and the queen of the underworld”²⁵. The place of disappearance, the well

²³ Ibid., p. 84–88.

²⁴ Homeric Hymn “To Demeter”, p. 377–86.

²⁵ Otto, op. cit., p. 120.

where the goddess paused, was incorporated into the *Kallichoron*, ‘Well of the Beautiful Dances’, so called because of ritual Mystery dances of deep antiquity that took place upon the open plain on a terrace that radiated around the well. The temple complex eventually incorporated the well into its structure. Within the sacred precincts, a processional path joined a cave, The Plutonion — symbolic seat of Hades — , to the chamber of initiation, the Telesterion — place of seeing.

Once a year, initiates would gather in Athens at the Temple of Iakkhos, avatar of Dionysus. Filing through Athens’s Sacred Gate, a processional would wend through the wilds towards the temple at Eleusis, beyond Athens’ frontier. Preceded by a horse — the goddess Demeter embodied —, the Basilinna — wife of the sacral king of Athens — , the Hierophant of Eleusis, and torchbearing *Dadoukhos*, Iakkhos’s high priest would advance with an icon showing the god in his infantile aspect bearing a torch. This image would accompany the two baskets of the goddesses to the Temple. Dark-robed *mystai* followed these officials as they journeyed from day into night. Emulating the goddess, the unwashed *mystai* would have fasted and practiced abstinence for nine days, to be ripe for discovery on the tenth. Their journey along ‘the Sacred Road’ was a tightly structured ritual, each marker, bridge, obstacle representing a step in the imparting of occult knowledge, or in the preparation of the *mystai* to receive it.

At the Rheitoi, neophytes paused to bathe and purify themselves in brackish water. A great burst of light, visible for miles, would sweep across the Bay of Eleusis to reach the eyes of the *mystai* as a visual echo of their cries of “*Iacchus! Iacchus!*”. Kerényi, having recalled how in *Ion* Euripides had the chorus portray the waters of the bay, the starry skies, and the “ever-flowing streams” dancing with the *mystai* of the procession, notes that in *The Frogs*, Aristophanes insists that the cry resounds not only near the Bay of Eleusis, but “in the underworld, in the abode of the blessed who in their lifetime had been initiated at Eleusis and now continue to dance in the Elysian Fields. Thus heaven, earth, and underworld are drawn into the dance”²⁶. The *mystai* would dance across the sacred meadows; enter Eleusis and its sacred precincts; drink the barley and mint beverage; then, approaching the underworld, confront both The Mother and The Queen of the Dead in the Telesterion. According to the Christian writer Hippolytos, initiates would witness a divine birth; perhaps they would also learn the identity of the ravisher and fruit of the rape. Under the temple fire the Hierophant chanted, ““The Mistress has given birth to a holy boy. Brimo has given birth to Brimos!””²⁷.

The sum of these acts and the knowledge revealed in their execution constituted the ‘Greater Mysteries’. Over time, they became associated with ‘Lesser Mysteries’, rites held within Athens by the banks of the Ilissos at the Agrai, Artemis’s sacred hunting grounds. There, too, a divine source was hidden within Athen’s primeval Dionysian temple. Before being initiated in the autumnal Mysteries, one would have penetrated the vernal Lesser Mysteries, the liturgical calendar separating fruitful period from barren. The Lesser Mysteries occurred concurrent to the *Anthesteria*, the Athenian flower festival, a festival of the dead. “Apart from the fact that the mysteries of Agrai by the river Ilissos were dedicated to Persephone, the ravished daughter of Demeter, and to Demeter herself, one more tradition concerning them has come down to us: that they were connected with Dionysus. ...The close connection of the Lesser Mysteries and the Dionysian festival cycle... and particularly with the ‘Day of the Pitchers’, the *Choës*, is attested by a monument that was found in the bed of the Ilissos”²⁸.

‘*Choës*’ derives from the same stem as the Greek word for ‘libation’ (‘*chi*’) from the verb ‘to pour out’, most understandable in reference to the god of wine. Imposing an association with the dead, however, ‘*choai*’ designates the type of libations poured out to the departed soul at

²⁶ Kerényi, *Eleusis*, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

funerals, spilled on the earth, whereas other words are employed for other types of libations²⁹. On *Choës*, contemporaneous to Dionysus's epiphany, the dead were believed to return to cohabit the terrestrial with the living, reclaiming their earthly dominions, to be dispatched to the underworld at the *Choës*'s end. The *Choës*, central element of the three-day *Anthesteria* flower festival, framed the mid-winter's full moon, running between sunset of the *Anthesteria*'s first day, which for Athenians marked the beginning of the second day, through the evening of the second day, that is, the start of day three by classical accounting. We have a tragic period dominated by darkness consisting of a revolution of the earth, or a little exceeding. Considering the conjunction of festivals of flowers and the dead, it is difficult to ignore that Persephone had gone to gather flowers when she was dragged into the netherworld, and that, to this day, flowers are the only gift habitually bestowed upon the dead. On or around *Choës*: Dionysus was 'called' from the sea by the Basilinna and fourteen selected maidens (the *gerarai*); his appearance in a wheeled ship, the *carrus navalis*, incited nocturnal revel; the new vintage was mixed, poured, consumed; the souls of the dead appeared and returned to their terrestrial dwellings; the Lesser Mysteries were engaged; wreaths of flowers and gifts were bestowed upon children who had completed their third year; Dionysus, like the dead, recovered his home, claiming as his own the wife of the king of Athens. The shadow Dionysus's earthly mate, the wine-pouring Queen of Athens, cast was the flower-gathering Queen of Hades. Theogamous union between Dionysus and Basilinna was consummated in a structure called the *Boukolion*, meaning 'ox-stall', situated by the 'Dionysus', the theatre. Pausanias records that "the most ancient sanctuary of Dionysus is by the Theatre"³⁰; Aristotle describes the *Boukolion* as the primeval Athenian king's residence.

"In Athens, and in all probability on the day of the *Choës*, the ceremonial entrance of the god in a ship set on wheels occurred. It was thought, therefore, that he came from the sea..."³¹.

While the sea must have been instrumental in propagating Dionysian beliefs, this rite was not to memorialise some original appearance, but to show that Dionysus emerges not only by the sea but from it; he is of the sea and its unfathomable depths. "The cults and myths are as explicit as possible about the fact that Dionysus comes out of the water and returns to it, and that he has his place of refuge and home in the watery depths"³². In a universe divided into hierarchically ordered realms enveloping divinity, animal-life, soul-life, should air contain celestial divines; earth, animal-life; what tangible element of the natural world is left to personify the soul-inhabited underworld but the sea?

It seems probable that Dionysus, himself paraded in the form of his great masks through Athenian thoroughfares aboard his *carrus navalis*, has left us with mid-winter festivals called 'carnival' in which flower-draped 'floats' carrying costumed masked figures engaging in libellous behaviour, libidinous dance, lascivious drunkenness, are drawn through city streets. While the god's sudden appearance occasioned joyous tumult, his disappearance remains infinitely more obscure. In some traditions Dionysus is swallowed by waters like the setting moon; in others, he is chased into the sea when his devotees suddenly turn against him. At Cheronee, women feigned to search for him before concluding that he had found sanctuary with the Muses. If it is hardly surprising that the god of theatre and the arts was said to dwell with the Muses during his absence, it is revelatory to consider that the triadic Muses were water nymphs, daughters of Okeanus and guardians of the source through which Dionysus accesses the underworld. Elsewhere his effigy in straw was thrown into sacred wells, dispatching him back to the underworld. The 53rd Orphic hymn dictates that he went to rest in

²⁹ Thanks to David Proctor, Susan Setnick, Tufts Perseus Project.

³⁰ Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*, op. cit., V I, p. 56.

³¹ Otto, op. cit., 63.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 162.

the sacred dwelling of Persephone: “Khthonion Dionysos, ... annual God, who laid asleep in Persephone’s abode...”. Persephone, Queen of Death, resides in Darkness. Were immortal Dionysus to accompany the dead from the underworld, he must be of them and it.

The Goddesses’ god

Non-Hellenic Dionysus was accommodated to the Greeks by being mythologically born of Zeus and Semele, daughter of Cadmus of Thebes (descendant of Zeus), making Dionysus both an Olympian and part of the incestuous Theban royal family, producers of such infamous progeny as Oedipus and, let’s add, Polidorus. In this tradition Dionysus becomes ‘twice born’ after Semele, having insisted on beholding her divine lover, died awestruck before her divine son reached human ‘term’. Zeus implanting the embryonic god in his calf, delivered him forty days later in a second birth. He left the divine infant upon Nysa to be cared for by maenads, Amazonian nurses. Another tradition has Dionysus born of Demeter, or, mother and daughter replacing each other, Persephone. Kerényi notes that in the version figuring Persephone as Rhea’s daughter, “Persephone bore by her own father the subterranean child Dionysos as a kind of second, subterranean Zeus. None other than she can be meant when an *arrhetos* is mentioned among the mothers of Dionysos”³³, ‘*arrhetos*’ signifying the ineffable. This is the secret birth of the Mysteries: Death giving rise to Life.

Perhaps regal Semele was a human agent through whom the goddess could act. Construe Semele as a mere metaphor for seed, replace her with Demeter or Persephone, and Dionysus would not only be the son of Zeus, but his brother through his sister and his own altern, shade. Semele died when Zeus made himself manifest; yet Semele, it is said, is Persephone, child, grandchild, sister, and niece of Zeus, synonymous with her mother and grandmother, Demeter and Rhea, sister of Zeus and mother, too, descendants all of cruel Kronos, Father Time.

A single mytheme relates the circumstance of Dionysus’s death. The Titans dismembered the infant god, tearing him into seven pieces. As they were devouring the sacred remains, irate Zeus hurled blue lightning, leaving nothing but soot of the sacrilegious feast. The last remaining piece of the infant rose upon Nysa as the renewed god. Dionysus was regenerated from a fragment of himself, the seventh undevoured piece of the dismembered babe. Should arms, legs, head and torso have been consumed, what was left? What regenerative properties of the seventh piece allowed Zeus to reproduce the child? Persephone’s sacred basket reputedly contained a phallus. Dionysus, ravisher of the Maiden, is the fruit of the Mysteries. The god, dema-deity thriving in death and fragmentation, is permanently reformed to bridge the triple realms. Otto fleshes out the underworldly being behind the masks:

This is the meaning of the famous myth of Zagreus, whom the Titans... assault, tear into pieces, and devour. ... Zagreus means ‘great hunter,’ and it is this Dionysus whose bloodthirsty hunting the maenads imitate. And just as Dionysus is equated with Hades, so Zagreus is the ‘chthonic’ Dionysus. Aeschylus calls him the son of Hades. The well-known idea that he was the offspring of Zeus and Persephone is already found in Callimachus. And thus he is also called ‘he who wanders in the night,’ as Dionysus is called the ‘nocturnal one’... For Callimachus, Zagreus is only a special name for Dionysus³⁴.

Could the flash of light that rolled across the Bay of Eleusis on Mystery Night be an expression of the Zeusian lightning bolt that transforms living into dead, Semele into Persephone, mortals into divines, divines into mortals? Indeed, triple divisions collapsing, colliding, imploding, the events surrounding the infant of the Eleusinian myth are but an inversion of the myths of Dionysus’s birth, death, and resurrection, a divine nurse caring for a human child in the former, human nurses caring for a divine child in the latter. Does not Demeter — divine Mother — finally assume the place of the Eleusinian mother in taking the

³³ Ibid., p. 133.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 191.

infant from her? A divine mother and a human child who nearly escaped death mirrors the story of a divine father and a divine babe who nearly forfeited immortality.

Dionysian feast days fell during the period from mid-Autumn through mid-Spring's Greater Dionysia, held at the full moon following the vernal equinox, six months before and after the celebration of the Greater Mysteries, forty days after the Lesser Mysteries. It would seem that these occasions demarcate the temporal contours of Dionysus's terrestrial kingdom. Forty days after Eleusinian Mystery Night (early November), as the season of darkness commences in earnest, Dionysus asserted himself at the temple at Delphi, instituting a six-month period of his supremacy. Plutarch notes that oblations to Dionysus were made at Delphi: "the Hosioi made a secret sacrifice in the temple of Apollo at the very same time when the thyiads were awakening Liknites, the infant Dionysus in the cradle"³⁵. Dionysus inhabited the Delphic temple for the dark half of the year, Apollo returning with the light: Dionysus and Apollo, Dark and Light, a divine doppelganger. When with the flowers Persephone returns to Earth, Dionysus disappears beneath the waters to lord over Hades.

The Modern Dionysus

With Aubrey about to leave Athens on his fateful exploration, his host appeared with "melancholy face" to see him off. "Ianthe came to the side of his horse", absent her mother. This dawn-lit tableau mirrors the nocturnal incident in which the horse, rushing like a maenad, leads Aubrey to a mystery destination and refuses to advance, as if she were determined to stand by Ianthe's side. Consistent with our mythological template, a Zeus-hurled thunderbolt triggers this key incident. At this signal, Aubrey's mount — Demeter embodied — charges through an entangled forest. The mare pulls up at the place of "orgies" that Ianthe's father, Okeanus, had warned of: the Telesterion. The blue light falling before Aubrey "to radiate at his very feet" confirms Mystery Night's arrival. Aubrey hears a woman's scream — Persephone's — , enters the hovel, struggles with a shadowy assailant who disappears in a burst of light. Aubrey soon encounters the torchbearers, priests, and assembled mystai whose appearance along the Sacred Way has driven Aubrey's attacker crashing into the woods. When the torchbearers enter they discover nothing in the desolate dwelling but Aubrey, soot-laden thatch, and a bloody "spot" on black earthen floor, the screaming woman having vanished. Taylor explains that "Proserpina was carried by Pluto through thick woods, and over a length of sea, and brought into a cavern, the residence of the dead: where by *woods* a material nature is plainly implied",³⁶ derived through the antique meaning of *silva*. This adventure marked Aubrey's autonomous initiation into life's mysteries, yet, profoundly, through her scream, Ianthe remained his 'conductress'.

If establishing the torchbearers' identity helps rescue Polidori's plot from the ridiculous, certain curious details, if not invalidating this reading, seem to taint it. It is uncanny that the soot-encrusted, straw-thatched hovel with its blood stained floor lacks a victim. If Aubrey has come upon "the resort of vampires", drinkers of blood, why should the floor be soaked in it? While the vanished woman is discovered to be Ianthe, we are never told the source of carnage making the earthen floor slippery. When Aubrey, placed on a litter by the side of the remains of his love, was carried off, he "held almost unconsciously... a naked dagger of a particular construction, which had been found in the hut". This detail seems uselessly nonsensical. And why would Aubrey again share his company with dark and evil Ruthven?

But one explanation can simultaneously resolve all these 'mysteries'. As his deprecating comment on Epicureanism indicates, Polidori's story unfolds within a sustained Neoplatonic projection. The frequent mud-walled huts scattered across the landscape must be viewed as

³⁵ Signalled by Otto, *De Isiride et Osiride*, 35.

³⁶ Thomas Taylor, *The Eleusinian & Bacchic Mysteries*, op. cit., p. 100.

temporal abodes: bodies that contained the spirit, once abandoned, are then marked by soot, the residue of material man, a substance originating in the lightning-struck, Titan-fragmented and incinerated body of the Dionysian infant and his killers. The insistence on straw, element associated with Dionysus in death, affirms this. Ianthe's spirit has quit a "hovel" to live a "Kashmere butterfly" upon a plane spiritual. "There was a stillness about her face that seemed almost as attaching as the life that once dwelt there". Ianthe, life-blood drained, imbued with a new kind of beauty, becomes Persephone. Even after her death, Aubrey sees her still gathering violets in the Athenian neighbourhood.

When Aubrey takes responsibility for the communication of Ruthven's effects to a next of kin, death obliges him to revisit that hovel of Mystery Night.

There were several daggers and ataghans ...examining their curious forms, what was his surprise at finding a sheath apparently ornamented in the same style as the dagger discovered in the fatal hut ...he found the weapon, and his horror may be imagined, when he discovered that it fitted... the sheath he held in his hand... the particular form, the varying tints upon the haft and sheath were alike...

At first glance, it seems we have been transported into a detective story, a mystery; Aubrey has found the murder weapon, but we had earlier been told that Ianthe had only teeth marks on her neck. Compounding Polidori's ineptitude, a vampire needs no knife! Yet to ceremonially spill sacrificial blood upon the earth as a chthonian libation, a *choai*, requires use of a consecrated blade, a Dionysian high-priest's: Ruthven's. The knife is described as "adapted to ensure the death of the victim". What was sacrificed prior to the rape of Ianthe? We do not know; tradition required a young goat, bull, or male infant. The bloodied floor also marks the *locus classicus* where the earth gaped; it is but the symbolic affirmation of the Rape of the Maiden, the trace of her burst hymen recalled through the haft and sheath. Replacing Persephone, Ianthe, 'Flower of Violet', was deflowered at Erineos. It was Hekate's lunar Ruthven, Dionysian 'nocturnal one', who accomplished the deed, but it is Helios' solar Aubrey, an Apollonian diurnal figure, who inexplicably finds himself clutching the bloodied blade as he is transported back to Athens along side his lover's now abandoned body. The transmission of this article underscores the link between the two protagonists: inseparable, interdependent, unique, they form a true doppelganger.

Kerényi maintains the ineffable goddess was summoned as a *Visio Beatifica* out of darkness; when the Hierophant commanded, "a great light burst forth..."³⁷ and the Queen of the Underworld appeared. Polidori, leading his protagonist to the Telesterion, site of full initiation, describes this very occurrence: Aubrey...

...was again left in darkness; but what was his horror, when the light of the torches once more burst upon him, to perceive the airy form of his fair conductress brought in a lifeless corse. He shut his eyes, hoping that it was but a vision arising from his disturbed imagination; but he again saw the same form...

Polidori then writes that "Their lamentable cries, as they approached the city, forewarned the parents of some dreadful catastrophe". As on Mystery Nights of yore, cries of "Evoie" and "Iakchos" rang throughout the night. Yet the clearest indication of the symbolic order that confronts us comes through a short, gnarled sentence which causes us to start more assuredly than that which ends the story: "They were soon met by different parties who had been engaged in the search of her whom a mother had missed". This mother is The Mother, DeMeter. The goddess is searching, this self-same night, for her lost daughter. Demeter will soon come to the nearby *Kallichoron*, Dionysian passage to the underworld. Were not Hekate and Helios alone and conjointly able to send her to the Kephisos?

Polidori, tendering a story that remains little known to this day, drew his image clearly, contrasting Aubrey's sketching on paper with Ianthe's told tale: "in tracing the scenes of her native place; she would then describe to him the circling dance upon the open plain, would

³⁷ Kerényi, *Eleusis*, op. cit., p. 92.

paint to him in all the glowing colours of youthful memory, the marriage pomp she remembered viewing in her infancy". The marriage was Persephone's; the circling dance was that performed around the *Kallichoron*. Although Ianthe had quit her temporal abode, Aubrey remained upon the material plane to mix again with Ruthven in a vacillating, alternating power relationship, just as Apollo and Dionysus, bound at the *omphalos*, divided supremacy of the Delphic temple. If a nonsensical measure exists within Polidori's Milesian tale, it may be that Ruthven did not extract his oath, the initiatory *apporheton*, and die immediately upon Ianthe's death, beginning his haematological new year at that point. But, just as Mardi Gras anticipates Easter, and *Choë's* the Greater Dionysia, Mystery Night was celebrated some forty days before the birth and rebirth through death of Dionysus. Ruthven's corpse was "conveyed to the pinnacle of a neighbouring mount" to be exposed to the first "cold ray" of the moon. The mount is clearly as much Nysa as the sacred Parnassus.

The Vampyre is ultimately comic: Aubrey's solar westward journey home, Ruthven evidently in close pursuit, balances Aubrey's accompaniment of Ruthven in their eastward voyage. Although crepuscular Aubrey, red-faced and convulsed, died haemorrhaging from Ruthven-inspired lunacy, it seems no more likely that he will not soon be reappearing to share — under similar circumstances — a new eastward journey with Ruthven than the sun will fail to rise tomorrow. Ruthven and Aubrey, Darkness and Light, share the year. The equating of Ruthven to a Dionysian agent, Aubrey to an Apollonian, returns us to Byron's Darvell, for Apollo's sister — Aubrey's in our *roman à clef* — is none other than Artemis-Hekate, the maternal virgin goddess venerated at Ephesus where in the East Black Darvell awaits by a hidden source for his ring to be returned from Eleusis, thereby completing a Saturnian cycle and effecting his return from beneath the all-embracing sheltering soil.