

The Trials and Tribulations of the *revenants*: Narrative Techniques and the Fragmented Hero in Mary Shelley and Théophile Gautier

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Reanimation, as a fantastic subject, can be found in myth and literature of all times. But towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, as a result of the rapid development in the fields of medicine and science, revival from death and even physical immortality—until then belonging to the realms of magic, myth and the imagination—suddenly appeared plausible.¹

Among the first writers to explore in a literary form the consequences of uncommonly prolonged life as a real possibility was William Godwin with his philosophical novel *St Leon* (1799). His daughter, Mary Shelley, also treated the theme of immortality and the closely related subject of reanimation, but chose to do so in the form of the short story or tale. This genre, restricted in terms of length, seems at first at odds with the subject of relating, not only one life, but two—let alone the limitless time of an immortal hero. In this paper I shall examine the different narrative techniques that Shelley uses to treat this subject in three of her tales, namely: “Valerius: The Reanimated Roman” (1819, first published posthumously in 1976), “Roger Dods-worth: The Reanimated Englishman” (1826, first published posthu-mously in 1863), and “The Mortal Immortal” (1833). Each tale uses a different narrative structure, as if Shelley was experimenting on the appropriate form for such a subject. These are written as a first person narrative embedded in a frame narrative, a chronicle based on information considered as factual, and a diary-testimony; they all share, however, the characteristic of the fragment. Time and space—including the space afforded in the literary annuals Shelley was often writing for—are simultaneously material constraints and literary

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themes that will be considered in relation with the notion of the fragment, which, in Shelley's work, characterizes the human condition.

In the same form of the short tale, but from a different point of view, which entails different narrative techniques, Théophile Gautier also treats the theme of reanimation in *La Morte amoureuse* (1836) and *Arria Marcella* (1852). Two beautiful women passionate about life come back from the realm of the dead to live an ultimate love story. Ancient Pompeii, which is the scene in the second story, echoes the ancient Rome constantly evoked in Shelley's "Reanimated Roman," but what a contrast between the two ancient characters that have come back to life in the nineteenth century! While the one laments the lost glory of Rome, the other fully embraces the gift of a second existence. Gautier's view is clearly different from Shelley's—he regards reanimation as a means to access the ideal—and his narrative techniques reflect his views. Gautier's main narrative device is the dream, which, as we shall see, is unexpectedly used as a means to authenticate the story. Like in Shelley's works, time and space play an important role, even though their connection to the notion of the fragment is of a different kind in Gautier.

Apart from the enthusiastic scientific climate of her times and her father's long philosophical novel relating the adventures of an immortal, there are many other reasons why Mary Shelley should have been interested in reanimation. Most importantly, she had had, ever since she could remember, the ardent desire to bring a loved one back to life, starting with her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who died shortly after giving birth to her. Mary experienced a series of losses that intensified this feeling. Soon after the loss of her first born child when she was only eighteen, we read the following entry in her diary: "Dream that my little baby came to life again—that it had been cold & that we rubbed it by the fire & it lived—I awake to find no baby."² Mary would lose two more children at a young age and, of course, her beloved husband Percy, who drowned in 1822. It is not surprising

then that from her first literary attempt, *Frankenstein* (1818), the theme of reanimation is to be found at the heart of her work.

Due to the constraints of the annuals she was often writing for,³ most of her stories are brief, a fact about which she complained:

When I write for them, I am worried to death to make things shorter and shorter—till I fancy people think ideas can be conveyed by intuition—and that it is a superstition to consider words necessary for their expression.⁴

However, when reading the three aforementioned stories, it seems that this form, with its restrictions, contributed to the transformation of the basic theme into a variety of very different original works.

“Valerius: The Reanimated Roman” is chronologically Mary’s first short story dealing with reanimation written immediately after *Frankenstein*, in 1819, and showing that reanimation was a constant inspirational theme in her writing. In this tale, however, the means by which reanimation has been brought about are systematically silenced. Apart from the title, only a series of paradoxical phrases indicate Valerius’s unnatural situation. Phrases like “my sensations of my revival” (332), “when I lived before” (333), “since my return to earth” (337), or “before I again die” (339) make explicit his revival, but without giving the slightest hint concerning the way it came about. This silencing is supported by the fragmentary form of the tale. The first part is narrated by an external third person narrator, and the second by a character in the story, Isabel Harley—the woman who helps Valerius to cope with his new situation. The first part also incorporates the narration of Valerius himself, so that we have three different points of view concerning the reanimated character: Valerius is thus viewed by the external narrator (frame narrative), through his own narration (first fragment), and through another character’s narration (second fragment). All three narrators emphasize Valerius’s strangeness, the fact that he does not belong to the present time of the narration. The external narrator affirms that he looked like “the statue of Marcus Aurelius” (332) and that he “can compare him to nothing that now exists” (332), Valerius calls himself a “curiosity” (338), and Isabel admits that she “often paused anxiously to know whether he

respired air [...] or if his form cast a shadow at his feet" (343), thus reinforcing at all levels the credibility of his reanimation. In this story the multiple narrators are used as "witnesses" to validate the extraordinary event of reanimation, but if we accept Walter Benjamin's view that "[d]eath is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell," then Valerius, as a narrator, should have the ultimate authority since he is, in a way, positioned in that privileged spot "past the End, so as to see the structure whole, a thing we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle" (Kermode 8).⁵

The fragmentariness of the text also continues on another level: within the already fragmented narratives themselves. The narrative of Valerius starts with the reminder of a promise: "I have promised to relate to you, my friend, what were my sensations on my revival" (332), thus putting the narration in dialogue with some previous events that remain unknown to us. Valerius's narration also draws attention to the gaps of his story, as if to tease his listener and the reader alike, with phrases such as: "I need not trouble you with the history of my life" (333), or "Nor will I now relate what would greatly interest you" (333). Furthermore, contrary to the effect of closure—which was to become the characteristic and the strong point of the genre of the short story⁶—there are several openings to the future from both internal narrators, reinforcing once again the fragmentariness of the story. Valerius promises his silent listener that "In our proposed journey we shall have frequent opportunities of conversing and arguing" (339) and Isabel confirms this.⁷

Embedded narratives were used by Shelley to authenticate her narrative in *Frankenstein*⁸; thus, she was able to supply various points of view on the same story providing a sort of cross-referencing of the "facts." This prismatic view of the story stresses its fragmentary quality, which becomes the element that paradoxically gives coherence to the story acting as an unorthodox 'frame-work' in the sense put forth by Gregory O'Dea. According to this critic,

a frame may be an internal, cognitive structure [...] the shaping core upon which outer forms are hung or built—not an external bordering picture

frame, but an internal, shaping skeletal frame; [...] re-orientating critical conception from the path of the reader's approach (external toward internal) to the direction of the artist's fundamental shaping vision (internal toward external).

Thus fragmentariness becomes the "skeletal frame" of the narrative structure, which also illuminates the treatment of the theme.

Indeed, the reanimated character appears as fragmented as the narrative structure supporting his story. His suffering is clearly the direct consequence of his experiencing a lack of familiarity and—most importantly—continuity. He refuses to see anything, decides he will "visit no scenery" (334) and even admits in believing, at first, "in a conspiracy formed against [him]" (334). He searches desperately for anything recognizable that will give him the sense of continuity that he lacks, and his only comfort is the view of the waters of the Tiber: "These—these, at least are the same—ever, ever the same!" (334) he repeats like a spell which will keep him whole. Rome is no longer Rome, and the "wretched Italians [...] fill [him] with bitter disdain" (332). Valerius knows that the time he has "missed" creates, or at least accentuates, this fragmentariness that nothing can bridge.⁹ To express his sense of discontinuity he uses a series of anachronisms which reflect the way he views his connection with the world: "I saw ruins of temples built after my time" (335), "in my native Rome, I was in a strange city" (338). The only thing that keeps Valerius alive is the young woman, Isabel, who sets her mind to helping him establish a connection with the present: "she wins my soul and binds it up in hers in a manner that I never experienced in my former life. She is Country, Friends—all, all, that I had lost is she to me" (339); we shall return to this point.

But first, let us turn to Shelley's other two texts. As is obvious from the title, "Roger Dodsworth: The Reanimated Englishman" is also concerned with reanimation. However, the treatment of the theme and the narrative structure supporting it are entirely different. This story was based on a newspaper hoax that made quite a stir in 1826. The incredible story of the revival of a young man said to have been

buried frozen under an avalanche since the seventeenth century was first published in the *Journal du Commerce de Lyon* on June 28, 1826; by July 4 it was printed in the London *New Times* and soon in other British newspapers.¹⁰ In her tale, Mary Shelley makes use of the essay form as she intended to place her story in the *New Monthly Magazine*, which was participating in the discussion of the phenomenon.¹¹ What is striking is that, even though the text starts as a contribution to this dialogue, it quickly evolves into a sort of detailed plan for a philosophical novel on the theme of reanimation in the vein of Godwin's *St Leon*. Having insisted on the idea that such a "new fact [...] is a circumstance to which the imagination must cling with delight" (43-44), Mary Shelley shifts into fiction with the following phrase: "But since facts are denied to us, let us be permitted to indulge in conjecture" (44). Gradually the tone shifts from speculative ("we *may imagine* [...] Dr. Hotham *may well be supposed* to reply"; 45, italics mine) to fictional (with the use of the present tense: "'Indeed,' cries Mr. Dodsworth"; 45). But instead of producing a developed plot, Mary Shelley draws attention to the fragmented and sketchy quality of her narrative not only by stating that "If philosophical novels were in fashion, we conceive an excellent one might be written on the development of the same mind in various situations, in different periods of the world's history" (49), but also by asking topical questions such as "Will he be an advocate for perfectibility or deterioration?" (48). Even her final plea addressed to the reanimated Dodsworth to "no longer hide himself in obscurity" (49) is justified by the need for more information for the completion of such a task: "We have a thousand inquiries to make, doubts to clear up, facts to ascertain" (49).

The notion of fragmentariness is again stressed on two levels: in the narrative structure—as we have already seen—and within the reanimated character with the use of oxymoronic phrases such as "youthful antique" (44) and "the dead alive" (50). Even though the character is only roughly sketched in this text and appears less gloomy than his reanimated predecessor, the idea of him not being able to bear the discontinuity of his life is expressed as an appropri-

ate—and certainly a plausible—ending to this story which remains to be told. Thus, the last conjecture proposed is that “Perhaps [...] finding no affinity between himself and the present state of things—he has bidden once more an eternal farewell to the sun” (50). This notion of not belonging to one’s time—or place—is, of course, a commonplace among the romantics; however, with the reanimation theme Shelley is giving it a more ‘tangible,’ or, we might even say, ‘literal’ expression.

What seems to fascinate Mary Shelley in this story is not only the possibility of living a second life in another time, but also the new possibilities provided by such a ‘stop’ in time for the depiction of the self.¹² Reanimation is treated here as something plausible, and the preservation of the body is viewed in relation with the consciousness of the self:

A body hermetically sealed up by the frost, is of necessity preserved in its *pristine entireness*. That which is totally secluded from the action of external agency, can neither have any thing added nor taken away from it. (44; italics mine)

It is this “pristine entireness” of the frozen body and of time that comes into glaring contrast with the living individual, who is constantly bearing the major consequence of “external agency”—that is its inevitable fragmentation.¹³

This is clearly demonstrated in the case of “The Mortal Immortal,” a story which is closely connected to “Roger Dodsworth” through the fact, noted by Charles Robinson (27), that the date chosen by Mary for Dodsworth’s assumed second death (July 16) is the same as that of the only diary entry by the Mortal Immortal. The diary¹⁴ in general is obviously related to the fragment as a narrative form, as well as to the fragmentation of the self as a theme. The time of the diary form has a peculiar quality; it consists of a series of separate presents which make up the continuity of a representation of one’s life. It is the written form of that “elaborate machinery of linguistic constructions and representations” (Donato 576), organising the fragments of memory which

constitute the consciousness of the self. In the case of the immortal hero, the diary is a means of trying to find continuity in a life which is so prolonged that it becomes an ideal illustration of the fragmentariness of the self.

In fact, this diary consists of only one entry which comprises the whole life of the immortal to that date, condensing 300 years in the space of a dozen pages. The particulars of how Winzy,¹⁵ the pupil of Cornelius Agrippa, drank, at the age of twenty-three, the elixir of life prepared by his master thinking it was a cure for love and all the misfortunes this has brought on him, are all given in a continuous narrative up to the point where his childhood sweetheart—who becomes his wife—dies of old age leaving him young-looking but worn out inside. At this point, which should have been more or less the end of his own natural span of life, the immortal hero chooses to stop his narration: “I pause here in my story—I will pursue it no further” (229). The next almost two and a half centuries are covered by a single phrase: “Since then how many have been my cares and woes, how few and empty my enjoyments!” (229). Bertha was what gave his existence continuity (“I cannot remember the hour I did not love Bertha” 220) and the story of his life ends with her. His subsequent existence becomes a series of disconnected scenes, which he considers not worth mentioning because of their discontinuity. He describes himself as “A sailor without rudder or compass, tossed on a stormy sea—a traveller lost on a wide-spread heath, without landmark or star to guide him” (229). Shelley seems to imply that even immortality cannot guarantee a sense of continuity and wholeness. To further undermine any sense of constancy, she makes her immortal a “*mortal* immortal” by making him drink only half of the elixir. As a consequence, even if immortality could offer some sense of stability, Shelley’s character cannot attain it:

To have drained half the Elixir of Immortality is but to be half immortal—my For-ever is thus truncated and null. But again, who shall number the years of the half of eternity? I often try to imagine by what rule the infinite may be divided. (229)

According to Charlotte Sussman,

In all [Shelley's] tales of the mutability of identity, a radical external discontinuity renders the character unrecognisable, or invisible, to others, while *internal continuity* conserves the individual's knowledge of himself or herself. (167; italics mine)

She traces this interest in the discontinuity of identity in Shelley's own life. Personal experience might well have been a source of inspiration in the depiction of the self-awareness of these characters, but I am arguing that what these stories are all about is, on the contrary, *internal discontinuity* as a perception of the self.¹⁶

Some critics have mentioned the composite nature that Mary Shelley shared with her first literary creation, the (*Frankenstein*) monster. Robert Olorenshaw notes that

Mary Shelley had no Christian or family name that was her own. She was Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley, that is to say, her name was composed of the disparate parts of other identities, just as her monster was composed of the disjointed sections of other bodies¹⁷;

and Marie Roberts describes her as “ideologically hybrid and disparate as the very creature pieced together by Victor Frankenstein.”¹⁸ In Shelley's reanimated characters, unity in the fragment and fragmentariness in unity are presented as two aspects of the same existence, and the Mortal Immortal becomes the embodiment of this idea in the same way as Shelley's short stories are both fragments and finished text, autonomous and interrelated.

As Charles Robinson has pointed out, Mary Shelley “should be viewed as a transitional writer in the development of the style as well as the form of the short story.”¹⁹ I would argue that one of her contributions is the open ending of the short story, which is related to the romantic opposition of ‘fragment versus finished text,’ two elements that merge in order to arrive at a more elaborate depiction of the fragmented unity of self and text. The endings of these stories open up to the future: Valerius goes on a journey of discovery to England and promises his companion many—and more interesting—discussions;

Dodsworth's imaginary death inscription is posed as a puzzle for the archeologists of a future time; and the Mortal Immortal embarks on an expedition in the hope of becoming "the wonder and benefactor to the human species" (230), leaving the reader to imagine that his most incredible adventures are yet to come. Thus Shelley simultaneously resolves the problem of space restriction imposed by the annuals and finds a new way of expressing—in form as well as in content—the relation between fragmentation and consciousness of the self.

The open ending of these stories could also yield an interesting interpretation if viewed in relation with narrative theories concerning plot and ending. According to Frank Kermode, "we use fictions to enable the end to confer organization and form on the temporal structure"²⁰ (45), and Peter Brooks affirms that

[n]arrative is one of the large categories or systems of understanding that we use in our negotiations with reality, specifically [...] with the problem of temporality: man's time-boundedness, his consciousness of existence within the limits of mortality. And plot is the principal ordering force of those meanings that we try to wrest from human temporality. (xi)

Thus, this lack of closure, along with the discontinuity expressed by the fragmented structure of the stories, could be seen to reflect, at a theoretical level as well, the difficulties in narrating such abnormal relations to death, making Shelley's stories anachronistically supportive of these modern theories.

Reanimation is treated in a very different manner by Théophile Gautier. Some sort of "scientific authentication" is put forth here as well to hint at an explanation of the unnatural phenomenon, but Gautier opts for the more obscure recent discovery of an alleged natural force: animal magnetism. Thus his *revenantes* are coming back to life by a combination of an ardent desire and the magnetic connection of the soul of a living man and a dead woman.²¹ In "La morte amoureuse," Romuald, the priest in love with the dead "courtisane" Clarimonde, brings her back to life by the force of his desire. On her revival, she explains to the astonished priest that she is coming "from a far away place from where no one has ever come back"²² and that

this was made possible by his desire. This is also the case with “Arria Marcella”; Octavien manages to revive the beautiful young Pompeian along with the entire city of Pompeii. As the *revenante* explains, this was made possible through the power of his feelings that established a magnetic connection between them:

When [...] your thought darted ardently towards me, my soul felt it in this world where I float invisible to the vulgar eyes; [...] your desire gave me life, the powerful evocation of your heart has abolished the distance which divided us.²³

In Gautier’s works reanimation has to do with an unusual contortion of time, which is why it seems unclear whether it is the dead that have come back to life or the protagonist that has been transported to another dimension. For Gautier time “exists only in relation to ourselves,”²⁴ and his characters experience this fluidity of time. In “Arria Marcella,” the narrator informs us that for Octavien “the wheel of time was out of joint and his triumphant desire was choosing its place among the past centuries!”²⁵ In fact we are rather witnessing an annulment of time; as Michel Picard puts it, the *revenants* do not come back, they have always been there.²⁶

If Shelley’s concern in treating the theme of reanimation was to express the fragmentation of the self, Gautier’s main objective is to certify not only the unity of the self but also the continuation of consciousness even after death. His idea—confirmed and enriched by his reading of Goethe’s *Faust*—of a place where everything that ever was continues to exist, is expressed in “Arria Marcella.”²⁷ As Georges Poulet points out, Goethe’s realm of the Mothers was not a static, dead past, but a past alive and constantly moving²⁸; and it is from this space that the *revenants* come. The timeless realm itself, however, has no appeal or interest for Gautier. What terrifies Gautier is death in all its forms, and especially the numerous little, fragmentary deaths which operate within the self, leading gradually to inevitable total annihilation.²⁹ In his poem “La Comédie de la Mort”—where we actually find the very image of fragmentation of the self—he expresses the idea that

the human soul is a tomb and man a Necropolis.³⁰ The revived characters in Gautier's stories represent a victory over that slow disintegration of the self and the hope that this victory can be achieved if only desire is strong enough.

However, even those characters who have managed to maintain their individuality after death do not escape the fragmentariness which seems to threaten all existence. It is not the first time, we are told, that Clarimonde is dead (137). Her repeated revivals, about which we learn nothing, constitute a disturbing discontinuity in her existence; and as for Arria, she first appears to Octavien as the truncated imprint of a beautiful body at the Studj museum in Naples, all that has survived of her in the world of the living (237). Their fragmented lives and bodies, and the emphasis on what is lacking in their dwelling place—no moon, no sun, no earth, no air,³¹ no love³²—together with their ardent desire to remain with the living, all point to the difficulty of maintaining a sense of self and wholeness. Despite those signs, however, their attitude shows a remarkable sense of continuity. Contrary to Shelley's *revenants*, they immediately adapt to the new situation, which they seem to have been waiting for. Their continuity in fact stems from their egocentricity; their only concern is their connection to their lovers, with whom they form a unit. Their existence depends entirely on their relationship with the man that has brought them back to life: "Since you still love me, I have to stay alive" (146) says Clarimonde to her lover; and Arria pleads her father to let her "enjoy this existence which love has given [her]" (269).

In fact, the ones with a really fragmented existence seem to be the living characters of Romuald and Octavien. Here comes into play Gautier's main narrative technique in his fantastic stories, the use of dream narrative.³³ In "La morte amoureuse" the atmosphere is dreamlike from the first time Romuald sees Clarimonde; but as the fantastic becomes too incredible, Gautier abandons the dreamlike atmosphere and has recourse to the realm of the dream itself in order to make the revival acceptable, but also to illustrate the divided existence of the hero. From the moment he revives Clarimonde,

Romuald leads a double life: one as a priest at a remote parsonage, and another as a wealthy aristocrat in Venice, “at night, as soon as [he] had shut [his] eyes” (117). As the story progresses, reality and dream change places, and it is his life as a priest that Romuald considers a dream—a nightmare. The dream life, compared to the real life, is pleasant, the atmosphere is relaxed and even seems ‘natural’³⁴ up to the disastrous ending where Clarimonde is destroyed in her tomb by Romuald’s spiritual guide. The same feeling permeates Octavien’s fantastic adventure in “Arria Marcella”; all uneasiness is quickly dispelled and the hero can enjoy a day in Pompeii. This reversal is intensified by the fact that, in Pompeii, it is Octavien who appears as a fantastic character and not the long gone dwellers of the city.³⁵ The dream, becoming familiar and no longer disturbing, loses its fantastic characteristics and gains in ‘reality’—and so, of course, does the fantastic story.³⁶ In the end, Arria Marcella meets the same fate as Clarimonde, and the double life ends abruptly; this return to ‘normality,’ however, does not restore the sense of wholeness to the main character. In contrast with Shelley’s stories, Gautier’s closure for his tales of reanimation is final and pessimistic. Both adventures leave the living characters detached from their time; it is impossible for them to become whole again, since for Gautier this is something that one cannot manage alone; it can only be achieved through a communion of souls.

Throughout Gautier’s stories it is obvious that both the *revenantes* and the protagonists are desperately clinging to the consciousness of the self, which the former do not want to let go, while the latter hope to give it endurance by forming an attachment with creatures that have survived death. And if this self needs a counterpart to be completed, this does not constitute a paradox; it is rather in accordance with Gautier’s belief—closely related to Plato, but also to Swedenborg³⁷—of two souls completing each other and forming a perfect unit. In this sense all his heroes in search of their perfect match, are in search of wholeness, which can only come from a union of souls.

We have seen that the underlying unorthodox 'framework' of Shelley's stories is the notion of fragmentariness; in Gautier's tales it is the dream which fulfils this function. In other words, Gautier emphasizes that all these fantastic adventures are only a dream—something that even the most incredulous reader can accept—only to move on to assert that dreams are real. The ingenious way with which Gautier uses the dream is based on the following syllogism: the content of the dreamlike experience in the tale cannot be contested, as it has all the attributes of a dream, including the impossibility of verification, which, in the case of the dream, would necessarily be absurd because of the dream's very nature. This impossibility of 'verification,' which applies to literature in general and especially, according to Todorov, to the fantastic,³⁸ applies even more strongly in the case of a dream within a fantastic tale. In order for these dreams to abide by the rules of internal coherence of the tale and seem real within the framework of the tale that contains the dream narrative, Gautier has carefully placed within the text 'proofs' of their "reality." But while Todorov places the dream in the group of 'excuses' that show that nothing supernatural has taken place in the narrative ("réel-illusoire" 50), thus placing "La morte amoureuse" in the "fantastique-merveilleux" (58), for Gautier the dream is put forth as an authentication of an experience which is placed within the domain of the 'real.' Indeed Gautier, like his friend Gérard de Nerval considered the dream a second life,³⁹ and this idea is expressed throughout all his work.⁴⁰ The dream is for Gautier the gateway to another dimension, the means to make the impossible possible, and this is what many of his heroes seek to achieve.⁴¹ Gautier regards this desire man has for the impossible as a guarantee that it can be made possible. Seen in this light, the dream in Gautier's tales not only includes and allows the fantastic revival, but is also a symbol of the fantastic itself. The *mise en abyme* of the dream within the fantastic serves, then, to tell the reader how these stories—and the genre itself—should be perceived.

The dream is of course also closely related to the fragment, since fragmentariness is its inherent quality both in terms of experience and

in terms of structure. Thus, even though Gautier's tales appear to be less fragmented in structure, the underlying frame of the dream gives them a fragmented quality similar to Shelley's. Through the treatment of the reanimation theme, the general romantic preoccupation of "how to pass from the fragmentation of perception to a totality"⁴² is thus expressed by both authors, but in relation to their own personal preoccupations. Shelley's sense of a fragmented life and self and Gautier's fear of death and his desire to maintain all that which time annihilates are constants in their respective work. For Shelley, the search for wholeness is a strictly personal matter. Thus, even though Valerius and Winzy have both found their ideal partner, the feeling of fragmentariness persists—Winzy is doomed to stay alive alone, and Valerius cannot overcome his sense of being disconnected, even though he admits to having met the woman who "wins [his] soul and binds it up with hers" (339). Their strong individualism defines their view of the world, which is typically romantic. Even Valerius, who talks nostalgically of the Roman republic when "the history of an individual was that of his country," is in fact displaying an anachronistic romantic attitude, refusing to integrate into the new society he finds himself in—and being thus paradoxically in tune with an era with which he insists he has nothing in common. For Gautier, by contrast, wholeness can only be achieved through an ideal union. His reanimated characters owe their second chance in life to this connection of souls, and it is only the schemes of overzealous Christians⁴³ who destroy the connection, sending to oblivion the revived women and condemning their lovers to a truncated existence.

Reanimation was a subject that had all the necessary characteristics to fascinate the romantics: its almost mystical nature and the possibilities it afforded to the imagination as a literary theme are only the most obvious. The reanimated character provided a new mould for the romantic hero, affording the author a way to give concreteness and plausibility, to give a 'reason,' to the romantic feelings of not belonging and make the romantic character more sympathetic even while he appears increasingly detached from the common man. These charac-

ters could in fact be viewed as the epitome of the romantic hero as expressed by Friedrich Schlegel in his famous fragments, where he asserts that “Man is but a fragment of himself.”⁴⁴

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NOTES

¹The experiments on electricity and the magnetic cures conducted by Franz Anton Mesmer in Paris struck the popular imagination. When the Italian Luigi Galvani (1737-1798) managed, in 1786, to give artificial movement to the limbs of a dead frog, the enthusiasm that followed made many scientists believe that the first step towards the discovery of the principle of life had been taken. Galvani’s nephew, Giovanni Aldini, also conducted experiments in reanimation during the years 1802/03 in London, using the bodies of executed criminals. In England many believed that animal electricity existed and that, if it could be brought under control, it would be possible to bring back to life people that had died from drowning or suffocation. See Lecourt 110.

²Quoted by Anne K. Mellor 10.

³Mary Shelley wrote 21 stories for gift-books or periodicals between 1823 and 1839.

⁴Mary Shelley, letter to Maria Gisborne, June 11, 1835, quoted in *Collected Tales and Stories* xiii. All subsequent references to Mary Shelley’s tales will be referring to this edition.

⁵This vantage point, equivalent to the one of the author, seems however to add to the confusion of Valerius, who may no longer be “in the midst” (to use Kermode’s expression) like the rest of men, but is positioned “aside” rather than “above” and remains, like the others, very much in the dark concerning the meaning of his existence.

⁶What is commonly known since Edgar Allan Poe’s essay “The Philosophy of Composition” (1846), and his review on Nathaniel Hawthorne’s collection of short stories *Twice Told Tales* (1842) as the “unity of effect”; Poe states that a work of fiction should be written with a specific end in view, which has to be both “novel” and “vivid,” and the emotional response that the author wishes to provoke. All elements of the composition should be treated with this end in mind.

⁷“You will have frequent opportunities of conversing with him” (343).

⁸See, among others, Nita Schechet, *Narrative Fissures, Reading and Rhetoric* ch. 1; and Gregory O’Dea, “Framing the Frame: Embedded Narratives, Enabling Texts, and Frankenstein.”

⁹"[...] the tremendous change operated in the world [...] by the slow flow of many ages, but which appeared to me in my singular situation as the work of a few days" (337).

¹⁰"Dr. Jas. HOTHAM, of Morpeth, in Northumberland, returning from Switzerland, is stated to have reported that a most extraordinary event had lately passed at the foot of Mount St. Gothard, a league from Aizoli, in the valley of Levantina. At the bottom of a kind of cavern, the body of a man, about 30 years of age, was perceived under a heap of ice, proceeding from an avalanche. [...] What was the astonishment of every body, when the individual having recovered the use of his faculties, declared that he was ROGER DODSWORTH, son of the Antiquary of the same name, born in 1629 [...]" Tuesday, July 4, 1826, *New Times*, quoted in Charles E. Robinson, "Mary Shelley and the Roger Dodsworth Hoax" 21.

¹¹Robinson 25.

¹²By 'stop' in time I am referring to the time 'missed' when the character was frozen which enabled him to live in another future time that he should not have been able to reach in his normal life span. Both of these extraordinary elements of the story read in the press provide new possibilities for the storyteller.

¹³The insistence on the name in the titles of these stories is another element that points to the question of the consciousness of the self.

¹⁴Here the form of the diary is designated by the date appearing at the beginning of the text, which is connected with the notion of anniversary: "July 16, 1833—This is a memorable anniversary for me; on it I complete my three hundred and twenty-third year!" (219). The anniversary is another artificial divide which, by means of its repetitiveness, gives a sense of continuity of the self.

¹⁵From the Scottish word "winze" meaning "curse," Charles E. Robinson, *Collected Tales and Stories* 390.

¹⁶Sussman talk only of "The Reanimated Roman" and about Shelley's tales "of the mutability of identity" in general, without mentioning "The Mortal Immortal." The (half) immortal hero is an extreme example of the fragmented self which characterizes all of Shelley's heroes. I therefore believe that the opposite of what Sussman states is actually valid, that is, that those characters suffer from internal discontinuity and are perceiving their state of being in connection with external continuity (i.e. Rome and the Tiber in "The Reanimated Roman").

¹⁷ Olorenshaw 169.

¹⁸Roberts 86.

¹⁹*Collected Tales and Stories* xiv.

²⁰He gives as an example of this need of man to "humanise" time through narrative the common conception of the ticking of the clock: "The interval between the two sounds, between *tick* and *tock* is now charged with significant duration. The clock's *tick-tock* I take to be a model of what we call a plot, an organization that humanizes time by giving it form; and the interval between *tock* and *tick* represents purely successive, disorganized time of the sort that we need to humanize" (45).

²¹For a detailed analysis on Gautier, magnetism and immortality, see Anastasaki, "Théophile Gautier ou l'immortalité à rebours".

²²"[...] je viens de bien loin, et d'un endroit d'où personne n'est encore revenu: il n'y a ni lune ni soleil au pays d'où j'arrive; ce n'est que de l'espace et de l'ombre; ni chemin, ni sentier; point de terre pour le pied, point d'air pour l'aile; et pourtant me voici, car l'amour est plus fort que la mort, et il finira par la vaincre"; Théophile Gautier, "La morte amoureuse," *Récits fantastiques* 139.

²³This and the subsequent translations of Gautier's stories are mine. The original reads thus: "lorsque [...] ta pensée s'est élancée ardemment vers moi, mon âme l'a senti dans ce monde où je flotte invisible pour les yeux grossiers; la croyance fait le dieu, et l'amour fait la femme. On n'est véritablement morte que quand on n'est plus aimée; ton désir m'a rendu la vie, la puissante évocation de ton cœur a supprimé les distances qui nous séparaient"; Théophile Gautier, "Arria Marcella"; *Récits fantastiques* 266.

²⁴Théophile Gautier, article in *La Presse*, March 31, 1846, quoted by Georges Poulet, *Études sur le temps humain* 1: 325.

²⁵"[...] la roue du temps était sortie de son ornière et son désir vainqueur choisissait sa place parmi les siècles écoulés!" (262).

²⁶"L'annulation du temps rend naturellement contemporains les vivants et les morts: les «revenants», en fait, ne reviennent pas, ils ont toujours été là," Picard 62.

²⁷"En effet, rien ne meurt, tout existe toujours; nulle force ne peut anéantir ce qui fut une fois. Toute action, toute parole, toute forme, toute pensée tombée dans l'océan universel des choses y produit des cercles qui vont s'élargissant jusqu'aux confins de l'éternité. [...] Pâris continue d'enlever Hélène dans une région inconnue de l'espace. La galère de Cléopâtre gonfle ses voiles de soie sur l'azur d'un Cydnus idéal" (266-67).

²⁸Poulet 330.

²⁹However much Gautier wanted the consciousness of the self to continue after death, his rational thought on the subject forced him to acknowledge the impossibility of such a survival: "C'est inadmissible, dit Gautier, vous figurez-vous mon âme gardant la conscience de mon Moi, se rappelant que j'ai écrit au *Moniteur*, quai Voltaire 13, et que j'ai eu pour patrons Turgan et Dalloz? [...] Nous admettons parfaitement l'inconscience avant la vie, ce n'est pas difficile de la concevoir après [...] moi je n'ai peur que de ce passage où mon Moi entrera dans la nuit, où je perdrai conscience d'avoir été"; Théophile Gautier, septembre 1860, quoted by Anne Ubersfeld 329.

³⁰"Toute âme est un sépulcre où gisent mille choses; / Des cadavres hideux dans des figures roses / Dorment ensevelis. / On trouve toujours les larmes sous le rire, / Les morts sous les vivants, et l'homme est à vrai dire / Une Nécropolis. [...] / Tout autour de leur cœur sont debout les momies, / Et l'on y reconnaît les figures blémies / De leurs amours anciens"; Gautier, *Poésies complètes* 25-26.

³¹See footnote 22.

³²“[...] j’ai froid d’être restée si longtemps sans amour,” “Arria Marcella” 267.

³³For the function of the dream in Gautier’s work see Elena Anastasaki, “The Functions of the Dream in Théophile Gautier’s *contes fantastiques*.”

³⁴“Je me laissais faire avec la plus coupable complaisance, et elle accompagnait tout cela du plus charmant babil. [...] je ne voyais rien là que de parfaitement naturel”; “La morte amoureuse” 139.

³⁵“Le bouvier aperçut Octavien et parut surpris [...] ne trouvant pas sans doute d’explication à l’aspect de ce personnage étrange pour lui”; “La vue d’Octavien, coiffé de l’affreux chapeau moderne, sanglé dans une mesquine redingote noire, les jambes emprisonnées dans un pantalon, les pieds pincés dans des bottes luisantes, parut surprendre le jeune Pompéien”; “Arria Marcella” 255 and 257.

³⁶Once Gautier has linked the fantastic to the dream in this way, and has shown the dream to be a—at least seemingly—real experience in the frame within which the dream narrative is included, he implicitly leads the reader not to treat the fantastic as a dream, but to allow the state of the dream to permeate the reader’s attitude towards the fantastic. By having Romuald accept, while awake, his adventure “avec cette facilité que l’on a dans la vision d’admettre comme fort simples les événements les plus bizarres” (139) and Octavien acknowledge that he is neither asleep nor mad (254), but still not resisting the fantastic adventure and even determined not to find anything extraordinary (256, 264), Gautier gently shows the reader the way he should view the fantastic, that is from the perspective of the dream, as if he himself was in a dream, and judge it by its own rules, from the inside. That is, accept it the same way he would accept a dream—albeit a lucid one—while asleep.

³⁷Plato in his *Symposium* [189c - 193a] develops the idea of the androgyne who, split by Zeus, is eternally seeking his other half; Swedenborg’s influence seems to be reaching Gautier via Balzac’s *Séraphîta* (1835; cf. Savalle). Gautier will further develop Swedenborg’s idea of two souls forming an “angel of love” in his *Spirite* (1866).

³⁸For Todorov the fantastic exists only while the feeling of doubt is maintained, and any form of verification would shift the text in the genres of either the *étrange* or the *merveilleux*. He posits the hesitation of the reader as the first condition of the genre of the fantastic; cf. Todorov 29, 36. Gautier approaches the fantastic in a different way, demanding of the reader that he does not hesitate, without however falling into the *merveilleux*; i.e. he does not pose the fantastic under the ambiguity “reality or dream” discussed by Todorov, but is promoting the idea of the reality of the dream.

³⁹“Le rêve est une seconde vie. Je n’ai pu sans frémir ces portes d’ivoire ou de corne qui nous séparent du monde invisible”; Nerval 291.

⁴⁰For example, in *Jettatura* he expresses the idea that: “à un certain point de vue, le rêve existe autant que la réalité”; Théophile Gautier, *Jettatura, Récits fantastiques* 427; and, writing about Nerval, Gautier mentions “la force de projection du rêve, cette puissance de créer hors du temps et du possible, une vision presque palpable”; Gautier, *Portraits et souvenirs littéraires*, quoted in Poulet 334.

⁴¹Octavien admits that “la réalité ne le séduisait guère” (250), and his experience in Pompeii is described as “un de ses rêves les plus chers accompli” (256). Similarly, the hero of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1836) admits that “l’impossible m’a toujours plu” and that “tout ce que je peux faire n’a pas le moindre attrait pour moi”; Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* 273, 274.

⁴²Donato 581.

⁴³The priest Sérapion in “La morte amoureuse” and Arria’s converted father in “Arria Marcella.”

⁴⁴“Jeder Mensch ist nur ein Stück von sich selbst”; Schlegel no. 1043, p. 115.

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